ABSTRACT

SCRC Series: Lewis Clarke Oral History Project – MC 00191
Field Notes: S. Giacomo Vincelli (compiled April 20, 2012)
Interviewee: S. GIACOMO (“JACK”) VINCELLI
Interviewer: Yona R. Owens
Interview Date: Thursday, March 28, 2012
Location: Raleigh, North Carolina to Canada via Skype
Length: Approximately 94 minutes

Vincelli discussed his family history, his days as a student, and several projects of interest. He shared anecdotes about Henry Kamphoefner, Lewis Clarke, and some of his fellow students. He concluded with some thoughts on landscape architecture.

Tape Log
00:00:00 Introduction, graduated in 1960 from NCSU School of Design
00:00:34 Where grew up and how got interested in landscape architecture
00:03:10 Rode train to Raleigh in 1955, impression of Southerners, meeting Thurlow, Kamphoefner then Clarke
00:04:46 Description of buildings where classes were held, the Barracks, Brooks renovation, move in
00:06:30 More about arrival in Raleigh, living accommodations, 4th Dorm, Vetville, trailers
00:11:48 Married in second year, daughter could only drink goat’s milk, hard to find or afford in Raleigh, worked for Clarke part time
00:14:44 Degree program was grueling, reputation was part of decision to attend
00:16:45 Reasons to move to NCSU, impressions of Raleigh, campus, and School in 1962
00:16:40 Anecdote about running Ozalid machine for Kamphoefner and School,
00:19:58 Anecdote about Kamphoefner deciding what name would go on his diploma
00:22:26 Names of various architecture professors, none taught landscape architecture students
00:25:53 Washout rate for class of 1960, three out of forty made it through, Vincelli, Jimmy Klutz, Max Evans
00:27:20 Drawing as built plans for Old Saint Paul’s Church in Newton, N.C. for the Historic Architecture Research Project
00:29:59 Possible project head, father’s reaction to move to N.C. and project participation
00:33:02 Moving into classes with only landscape architects, all grade levels in same studio, names of some classmates, no women except for one
00:38:01 Landscape architecture instructors, Thurlow from Nova Scotia, style of instruction versus Clarke and his way of teaching
00:40:38 Class project assignment to work with architects and product designers on a plan for a university campus in a simulation of real life situation
00:42:18 Designing the Expo grounds for 1967 Montreal Expo using what was learned in the university campus project, working with architect Roger Taillibert
00:47:35 Students and SOD faculty interaction, association with Kit Clarke when working in basement on projects
Visiting lecturers at SOD, anecdote about attempting translating for Luigi Nervi for lecture and demonstration with artichoke to get ideas for design, Nervi recognized what part of Italy Vincelli family from because of his accent

Father owned large nursery in Montreal area, story about grandfather’s start in landscape maintenance, unfortunate demise

After graduation from SOD went back to Montreal to work with father, opened Environplan, LTD, asked to do design for one of larger exhibits at Expo, used hay bales in rather creative application

Summing up SOD experience, one important thing to know about Lewis Clarke, one important thing to know about Jack Vincelli

Revisiting an old project design, giving consideration to project longevity, changes in what can and cannot be done because of rules and regulations

Politics always part of the practice, good and bad, conclusion of story about Taillibert as architect in Montreal, concept cause for why stadium roof was bad design idea

Ways to move people’s thinking beyond attitude that landscape architect is only about flowers, drawing on Clarke’s teaching, how strongly others feel the influence, some considerations like asking how much is it going to cost?

Way to deal with client type who wants to beat down fees or not pay at all, part of the job and challenge of profession

Example of project that used cut to build “mice under the carpet” berms, advice is to design something that costs less that architect’s solution and works better

Concluding comments about Clarke’s influence

End of interview