

TRANSCRIPT

SCRC Series: Lewis Clarke Oral Histories Project – MC 00191

Field Notes: Charles Erwin Burkhead (compiled October 20, 2008)

Interviewee: CHARLES ERWIN (“CHARLIE”) BURKHEAD

Interviewer: Yona R. Owens

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Location: Raleigh, North Carolina

Length: Approximately 95 minutes

This interview for the Lewis Clarke Oral Histories Project was conducted at Clarke’s studio. Charles Burkhead, a native of Asheboro, N.C., earned his bachelor’s in landscape architecture from North Carolina State University School (now College) of Design in 1959 and his master’s from Harvard two years later. He has had a long career as a landscape architect and artist. One of the earliest employees of what became Lewis Clarke Associates (LCA), Burkhead mostly practiced solo after about 1970. A project of note among many is the “Wandering Garden,” an early therapeutic garden for Alzheimer’s patients living at the Forest at Duke Continuing Care Retirement Community in Durham, N.C.

YO: This is an oral history with Charlie Burkhead, September 2008, at Lewis Clarke’s studio in Raleigh, North Carolina. And I’d like to start off with our standard first question: tell me a little bit about where you’re from and how you got interested in landscape architecture.

CB: Oh, gosh, okay, I’m from Asheboro which is down below Greensboro in Randolph County. I graduated from high school in 1951 and the reason I got interested in landscape was that we had professional day and the high school—I guess they had them all over the state and people they would come in from all over the state with different professions and you would sort of list what you thought [and] go into the classes that you thought you might be interesting. And I had always been interested in architecture, but mainly because I used to work for my father and he ran a furniture store. He got tired of me because I would not work. I had two brothers, Jack and Archie, and they were better at it than me. I was just a high school student. And he would find me asleep up in the attic of his store, on some moving blankets and so forth, and he’d get mad. And so, he got so mad one day, he went out and found me a job with a local architect because I was always interested in art and drawing, and doing pencil drawings and sketching this and that and whatever. And in high school, I got out of a lot of homework and class work because I would do all the posters, murals for the walls, you know while the class was going on. So that’s why I’m a dumb ass really. I don’t know anything. I just barely got through high school. But anyway, daddy got mad so he talked to this architect—John Kroft was his name—and there were a bunch of architects working there that are NC State graduates and Hyatt Hammond and oh, gosh, what were their names? A guy named Ted Peterson and some other guy, but I really admired them and talked to them a lot so they tried to steer me toward architecture. Of course the only thing I was doing was sweeping floors and filing. Then they let me do some drawing by tracing details or putting the title blocks on all the drawings or whatever, sort of grunt work. But anyway it was good training. I really enjoyed it and it was these guys that were architects, graduated from NC State, really tried to push me toward architecture and John Kroft wanted to

push me that way as well. And then going back to the high school thing—Gil Thurlow came down from NC State and he talked about landscape architecture. Well, that always stuck in the back of my mind and when it came time to get into school, I registered in architecture at NC State and just had grades I guess good enough to get in. But everything was, if you didn't have college preparation classes, you were retarded. Had to take retarded math, retarded English, retarded history, everything. That means I went to summer school a lot and couldn't take any studio courses because I had to take [this] retarded stuff to get me up. But anyway when I got into NC State the first year, I started thinking more and more about well, if I'm going to be an architect I'll be inside about a hundred percent of my time—maybe ninety percent—and I like to be outdoors. I like to do camping and, and hiking and doing all those things. So I said, well, I'm going to switch over to landscape. So I switched over and Gil pushed me and Henry Kamphoefner was there and he encouraged me to do it, too. But this guy John Kroft that I worked for got really ripped out. He got mad with me because I went into landscape and he chewed me out and said, you're going to waste your time. You're never going to get anywhere. You know you're not going to make any money and why are you fooling around with landscape? It's not worth—you can get anybody to do the landscape. You don't have to have a college degree to do that. So, that made me mad so, I said, I'm going to do it to spite you. So after I was working for Lewis for a while after graduation, John Kroft called Lewis' office and asked for me. And he was so put out, that he didn't speak to me for a long, long time, but he was doing a bank down in Asheboro and the bank people, the board, said they wanted me to do the landscape because they knew I was a landscape architect and they wanted a hometown boy to do it. So, John Kroft called me and said, would you be willing to work with me on it and I said, sure. So I went down there and he started back peddling a lot. He said, I know you can probably design a better building than I've got here, but you know this is just what they want and, and blah, blah, blah went on and on, sort of back peddling you know and saying now I want you. And so I helped him design the front of it for a fountain and little places downtown for planting and little outdoor sitting areas and so forth around the bank. And he was really happy with it and we got to be friends again. I never did anymore work for him though, but I did work for Hyatt Hammond after he moved out and Hyatt married a girl that was from Asheboro and she and I, her name was Burge, so she and I were always sitting together the same graduating class, you know B, and I really had a crush on her. Then Hyatt married her and it really ripped me up. But anyway—

YO: Well, let's go back to school. Let's go back to when you were [an] undergraduate. What were some of the courses that you were taught?

CB: Oh, well, you know normally when you start out you have to take regular course, college courses and then you add some design classes, all very elementary type of stuff. And most of it was lectures and just sort of talking about landscape and then you'd have the semester—it was on the term system. Three terms I think it is and so the second term that's when I switched over to landscape and they started giving you little problems and Lewis wasn't there at the time but Thurlow was and somebody else I can't think of his name—Don Hinson or Inman [Lawrence Albert Enerson] or something like that. Anyway, a lot of it was just design mixed in with sculpture and painting and history and that sort of thing. Then the second year it got more into landscaping and I joined a fraternity and started doing my old stuff of not studying and ended up I didn't get back in to my second year really, was it second year? Yeah, or maybe it was, I got through two years and I couldn't get back in third year. Henry Kamphoefner called me in and

said, Charlie you're going to enjoy the Army. And I said, what do you mean? He said, well, I'm not going to let you back in. He says, your grades aren't good enough and you aren't applying yourself. He said, you can do it. I know you can because I've seen some of the stuff you've done and said, you're just not settled down. So he said, you go in the Army grow up and come back and I'll let you in, back into your third year. So, it was a five year curriculum then so I had two of them behind me so that meant I had three years to go. Lewis had just come and I came back and I met him and that really sparked the whole thing for me because as a young man, Englishman, and with a lot of charm and a lot of skill and a lot of knowledge that I wanted to drain from him, I buckled down and everything started to turn up then. And that two years in the Army made me grow up and appreciate what I was doing. So I went on and made the best I could except I'd have relapses and I had a big problem that was due and I was not working on it and just sort of goofing off. Lewis took away my Christmas vacation and made me stay up there for maybe one or two days of Christmas. I had to stay there to finish it because he wasn't going to pass me. He pulled me out and made me work. I got a great deal out of the sculptors and painters that were there and I have a great bent that way. So doing a lot of sculpture and painting now and enjoyed those classes as much as I did you know the landscape. And when Roy Gussow was there, he was a landscape architect—

YO: Was he?

CB: —but he, yeah, his training was landscape architecture, but he was there at the university as a sculptor. So, he taught sculpture classes and he and Thurlow were great friends and he would come in to crit our problems and he looked at it from a sculptural point of view. I picked up a lot from Roy. And it's like there were so many people there to draw from and you'd stay up all night long just with bullshit type of bull sessions. And everybody, and some of the professors, would stay there like Cecil Elliott and other people and you talk about design and it got to be really so captivating that you just fell in like a big pit and that's where I stayed. And it was really, really interesting and I got so much out of Lewis because he would come out with the what was called a model box and you do things on three dimensional scale. You'd look into the box and place things as if you were walking in that area whereas before we were just doing two-dimensional. This way was three-dimensional and it really opened your eyes a lot as to the distance and a curve. How sharp it [is] or how lazy it can be, but when it's down on the ground it looks real sharp, very curvy. So if you try to curve it too much with [a] pencil, it didn't work out the way it looked on the ground and you have to redo your design.

YO: You had a visiting crit during that time, Bob Royston?

CB: Oh, yeah, yeah, Robert Royston yeah, he was there. Sasaki came down and what was that guys name? He left. He came from Texas and he left a scholarship that I took advantage of and it's—what is his name? Arthur Berger, Arthur Berger. And there were just a great overturn of people coming into the school and Lewis was responsible for all that. And it was interesting because you got all these different points of view, and it sort of shaped where I wanted to go later because I thought so much of Sasaki that I wanted to go to Harvard, but thought maybe I wouldn't be able to get in, wouldn't be able to do it. But somehow I think through and I'm not really sure but I think Lewis wrote a letter for me and I think Thurlow did and anyway they, one of those or both of them were instrumental in me getting into Harvard. And then Sasaki had met

me down here and we got along fine and he probably—maybe he saw something. I don't know. Maybe he didn't, but anyway for some unknown reason I got into Harvard. I worked, I got out of NC State and worked for Lewis before I went into Harvard and I got married and had a child and then went on up to Harvard in 1960 and '62. I went through '62.

YO: What class were you at NC State?

CB: Let me, it was 1952 to '53. Then I went to the Army for two years. Then I came back to State in 1957 to '60.

YO: Okay, during your time, let's see between, the second time you were at State is that when Lewis started doing his office?

CB: No, Lewis—well, he might have been because he was doing it over at Mordecai [Drive] and I started working for him. We worked in the basement and that was an adventure in itself you know because everything was moldy and damp. You had to draw fast and store it somewhere else so the mold wouldn't eat it up.

YO: What kind of jobs were you working on?

CB: Oh, they were banks and subdivisions and I think a few trailer parks, industrial buildings, hardly any residential work. It was all commercial. And then Loddie Bryan was working there at that time and I'm sure there was somebody else but I can't think of who it was. But then Lewis sold that house and moved over to Rothgeb and he had a two story house. It was a one, one-story living area, but it was two-story in that the land dropped off in the back and the basement was all open to the outside. And you could walk out the door and you didn't have to feel like you were coming in and out a basement. So then Warren Edwards started working there and Lewis was, had an architect working for him, and then Henry Hammond was working there and we just started carrying on the same type of work all in commercial. Then Lewis started getting big projects like communities that he could design and we'd all pitch in on the design of it and we stayed there what, a couple of years? Maybe it was three—I don't know—but anyway Kit, Lewis' wife wanted to move out. Then we moved to a place up over the old Varsity Theatre across from the university so Lewis could come back and forth to work. And Warren Edwards went to work for Dick Bell, and I was Lewis' only employee. And—no wait, let me back up a minute because after I graduated from Harvard, I went to Canada and stayed up there for about a year and a half and somewhere around there working for a big architectural engineering landscape company. And the major people in it were a landscape architect, an architect and I think the landscape architect started the whole thing. And Mac Hancock—then he came to Harvard as a visiting professor and that's how I got to know him. Then, when he left or it was the last day he was there I asked him if he would consider me, give me a job in Canada—in Toronto—and he said, well, when you graduate get in touch with me and we'll see where I am, what's going on and I'll remember you and we'll just go from there. So I wrote him a letter and he wrote me back and said, well, come on up. So I told him I was going back to North Carolina and when I was in Harvard—I was of course married and with a child and we moved back to Asheboro and stayed there for a while. And then I got the job in Canada. So we loaded up a little trailer and hitched up this old car and hauled ass to Toronto. And it was just too cold. I couldn't

stand it, but we had a wide range of work doing a lot of parks. I got into designing parks in Nova Scotia and in Toronto and other places, small areas around and I can't remember the names of the towns now.

YO: But you're getting a lot of experience real fast by being at the job in Canada?

CB: Yeah, yeah, because there were a lot of people in that office that you could again draw from. There was a sociologist working there and they were from all different types of backgrounds and different universities. And so it was like a real melting pot. There were two guys that worked for Toronto—it was called Project Planning Associates—and they had two guys that were filing and sweeping floors and cleaning up and one was a sculptor and one was a painter. And so, since I had all that kind of outlet from NC State, I took advantage of those guys being there and I called each one of them in and as I was doing a project, I would get a sculptor's point of view and then a painter's point of view of what my design was like and I just used them. And because I liked these guys and they were good, I went into Mack Hancock's office one day and said, now before I get ready to leave, you better take advantage and keep those guys there because they have a lot of good knowledge that you can glean.

YO: So you got back to North Carolina and your degree from State is done, your Harvard is done, you've got work experience out in the field, and you go back and you start working for Lewis again?

CB: Well, yeah, I'd wanted to leave Canada and I went down to an ASLA conference in Washington. So I went down, came down from Canada and ran into Lewis there and Moore—

YO: Richard Moore?

CB: Richard Moore yeah, was there. And I didn't know him and he had just come in to State and he was also teaching in the landscape department and he and Lewis were good friends. So I got to know him at that little conference in Washington and Lewis told me he was opening up an office and going back into work and he wanted to open up again and said, would you be interested in coming back and working for me? And I said, sure. I said, I'll be back in touch with you. Went back to Canada and I got this phone call from a guy that was in a class before me at State, Taft Bradshaw. And he was working for Stresau down in Florida. So, he called me up and said that he was leaving but he wanted someone to take his place in Stresau's office and he wanted to know if I was interested. And I said, well, I'm going from one climate to another you know. I don't know. I'm going to have to think about that. And it turned out that Lewis offered me a hundred dollars more.

YO: Oh.

CB: And so that's why I ended up back here. And my wife was from North Carolina. She, of course, is my ex-wife, but anyway she wanted to come home and she wanted to come back to Raleigh because her part of her family lived in Raleigh.

YO: Sure.

CB: And I lived close in Asheboro so I said, sure. And Lewis wanted to start this office up so we came back down here and rented a little garage apartment about two blocks from Lewis' office on Hillsborough Street and then we moved into there. There was an architect, Raymond Sawyer, working across the hallway so we did some work for him and he'd get us to do little things here and there. But it got to be cramped. It was two rooms. One big room where all the drafting things were. Then Lewis had an office conference type room I think it was. I might be wrong on that. But anyway—

YO: You said it was getting crowded. Were there more employees then?

CB: Well, it was just not enough room to have two desks or three desks in there you know, but we did the best we could. And Henry Hammond was working there and myself and Lewis was teaching over at the University. Then he would come back and crit drawings and we just got to the point where we were working late at night and then Kit wanted to move out and Dean Cloyd's old house was about two blocks from the office over the theatre and so we walked up there and that house was for sale. Kit was into real estate then so she worked some kind of deal or whatever and she got that. [Actually, it was the house next door to Cloyd's.] And then we spent a lot of time renovating that house to make it useable. It was a two story old Raleigh type wooden, wood frame house. And we turned it into an office and worked there and Lewis could walk to the school. It was closer actually for him than over the theatre because the School of Design was you know right in the middle of the campus really and he just had to walk across campus in both places. And it turned out pretty well. Then we started getting a lot more things like Palmetto Dunes and big projects like big hospitals that were more of a complex type thing with different placement of buildings. And then golf courses and subdivisions and there [was] just a great deal of turnover.

YO: Were there shopping centers going on then?

CB: Yes, they were. Yeah, we were [doing] a couple of things for the Rouse family up in Baltimore and we did one in Texas, one in a place called Cross Keys up in Baltimore and—

YO: Charlottetown?

CB: Charlottetown, yeah. That's of course in Charlotte but the Rouse family—there were two brothers, James Rouse and I can't think of his brother—

YO: Bill?

CB: Bill and then his sister Dia, Dia Pascault. She was always mesmerized by Lewis and of course she got all the work for us we could [do] and we'd fly up there and, and take our drawings and our models and everything and then stay up there and work. Then we started working for another group out of Norfolk. Two brothers, anyway, we did a lot of things for them as well and, and I can't remember their names now. But anyway they were big developers and so we started spreading out. And then we started using people like Orin what's that guys name on the coast? Pilkey. Orrin Pilkey and he's still active down at the beach now and has a lot to say about ocean development. So, we were doing Palmetto Dunes and we picked his brain a lot and we would

call over people like Duncan Stuart from NC State to do the mathematics and help us with all of the drawings. You know he'd do some perspectives for us. There was another guy that came to work for there and he was an architect and he did a lot of drawings. I don't know whether he was a landscape architect or not. Wayne something, I'll think of his last name but anyway, he worked there. I'm going to write it down too. Anyway he—Lewis will remember him. [Wayne Taylor].

YO: So you're working on Palmetto Dunes. This is no small project.

CB: No, it wasn't a small project. It was a huge thing and we'd fly down there. Jerry Rooney would fly us down and we'd do on-ground studies. And that's about the time I left Lewis, too. We were—I should have stayed, but I got itchy feet and wanted to branch out on my own. But anyway that was a big project and LaMarr [Bunn] was working there and Henry [Hammond] and [Don] Basile and Roy Pender and—

YO: Sally was there, too. Sally Schauman.

CB: Sally was there too. Yeah, she was there. And Warren Edwards, then he went to work for Bell. Anyway it was quite a crowd. Seems like everybody would come through and I sort of ran Lewis' office like an office manager. And they'd always ask Lewis for a job over in the school and he'd say I can't hire you. Go ask Charlie. So they'd come over. If I didn't like them I wouldn't hire them. And some of the—unless they couldn't, couldn't draw and you know and they just weren't—I think—bent toward landscape that much although I guess later they did become that way. But Lewis just kept everybody going. He would take his fees and pump them back into salaries and into the school and things like that you know. He could have stuck it in his pocket, but he didn't. He just kept pushing landscape architecture and getting bigger and bigger projects and hiring more of the students to give them some experience and to maybe insure that they would go on and be landscape architects.

YO: Well, what was different about what he was teaching?

CB: What was different? Well, he brought a whole different aspect than anyone else at State had toward more of a modern movement. Thomas Church was here from California as one of the visiting professors and he was like the father of modern landscape architecture. And all these—and Doug Baylis was here and—God, I can't, it'll come back in a minute but all these guys that would write about landscape architecture. And most of them had been as visiting professors at State and Lewis was instrumental in getting them there and he remained friends with them throughout his life. I think he still calls up several of them now.

YO: So he was teaching what was the modernist movement?

CB: Yeah, because the people that had been to State and what's that guys name who did Tryon Palace? [Morley Williams] He was there as a professor and I can't think of but everything was symmetrical. You know it was like French landscaping. Lewis brought in English landscaping which was relaxed and more human, more useable, more of a bend on design and that you could pick up. So I think mostly my forte is design. I mean I can do the planting and the everything else, but I think design was what I picked up from Lewis and it was always sketching, always

sketching and always drawing and doing overlays, overlays, overlays all the time to see if you couldn't do it a better way. And Thurlow and this other guy what, I can't think of—

YO: Willie Baumgarten?

CB: Yeah, he was there, but he was more in architecture I think wasn't he?

YO: Okay.

CB: But anyway it was some other guy that it was when the landscape department was over close to Patterson Hall on NC State. It wasn't in its present location. The present location is the old cafeteria and when they moved out of there we moved out of that whole design moved from that building. They had Quonset things from the war and the design classes were mostly in that, in that building. But oh, I lost my train of thought now. Anyway I was—

YO: We were talking about Lewis' teaching elements of the modernist movement.

CB: Oh, yeah, teaching yeah, yeah, the modern movement really and the library had a Mrs. Lyons and she was really instrumental in sort of mothering everybody in the School of Design no matter what it was. Then, they also instituted a products design at the time so there were three departments architecture, landscape and products design and she, Mrs. Lyons, started bringing in all the books that these people would write that being the librarian she would. But that Royston and oh, for crying out loud—

YO: Church?

CB: Yeah, but there was just, there was another guy's name that is very, very—

YO: Halprin?

CB: Halprin, yeah, Halprin. But then there's another guy too that came. Halprin came and Lewis used to bring in the—an Englishman, very proper Englishman—

YO: Brian Hackett.

CB: Yeah. He was always straight laced and wore the English three-piece suit all the time and had the little mustache and played the part. And every time an Englishman would come in Lewis' English would come back to him and it'd take months to get it back to where he was speaking English, American English. But anyway, he got the whole school started to turn around because all the architects were people like Matsumoto and again I can't think of the name—

YO: Catalano?

CB: Catalano and, and well, that whole group. You'll remember them more than I will, but anyway they influenced Lewis and Lewis influenced them and it was give and take. And so that was the good thing about the school at that time because you had so many people who were

coming at design from an different point of view and it helped you open your mind up and explore different avenues. We'd always get—Lewis would always get—those architects to come in and crit our plans. He would give you a design sketch or a problem and then we'd work on it and then we'd put them all on the wall and then the jury would come in and look at everything. And it was a real eye opener you know because they would say, well, why didn't you do this or why didn't you do that? Damn, I didn't think of that you know. So I began to think, well okay. Just don't stop with the first one although over in Lewis' office we had to run the office as an office because you had to make money and to keep it going and he'd want overlay after overlay after overlay. He wanted every one of—every scrap of paper had to be saved. We had to show those to the client and say, well, we could have done this, we could have done this, we could have done this and it got to be to the point that the client was confused. They came to you and wanted a solution. So I said, Lewis we've got to stop this. We've got to—I don't mind going through all the paper and so forth and you can go through all the sketches and things like that, but the client doesn't have to go through it. You know we need to settle on one design that we think is best and then get it through. Pour our heart and soul into it and get it done and forget all these other things that could have been. But that worked out pretty well. So we started hiring more people to come in from the school and they brought over what Lewis established from Harvard. So, when I went to Harvard, it was like going back to Lewis' class because they already had all that stuff. And it didn't dawn on me that I should have gone somewhere else probably because you know Lewis is going to bring it down from there and then Sasaki's approach to it and so all I got in up there was you know the same thing. So, it got to be dull and boring after a while. I couldn't wait to get out, but that was only two years because it was just I already had it from Lewis.

YO: So the School of Design at State was on par with Harvard Graduate School?

CB: Oh, yeah, way, probably far ahead of them, but now they have a lot of different people there. I got really upset one time because Sasaki wouldn't come to class or he'd be there for the crit but not there during the design phase. You want him there and he had monitors. He walked around and I'd already been working for Lewis and working other places, been to State. So, it was, it was kind of, I didn't want to ask some of these guys who had just graduated a year before me you know for their ideas because I didn't respect them to start with. You know I wanted Sasaki's ideas. But then I told Sasaki, I came up here to study under you not under Marvin Aldmen who was a class monitor. I said, if I wanted him I would have gone to Penn State with McHarg if I knew that's what it was going to be like. And so we had a knock down drag out battle about that. But anyway, I guess it's just part of my mind wandering and thinking I should be somewhere else besides there.

YO: Well, back to the office again. Did you stay with the office when it moved to the Koger Center?

CB: Koger Center? No, I didn't because when I left they were still in the old house across from the school and I'm trying to recall did I ever go out to that Koger Center office? I don't think so.

YO: Well, you broke out on your own.

CB: Yeah.

YO: What happened then?

CB: What happened? Oh, I got tied up with a real loser and he and I had knocked heads all the time and I just tired of it. And I said, you know even though I was partner in this firm, he was no designer. He was a politician. He was just a horse's ass and a landscape architect out of Georgia and didn't teach him a thing. You know I was head and shoulders above everything and I said, what the heck am I doing partnering with him? I'll go out on my own. So I left that and opened my own office. If I can be partners with somebody who is a know nothing, why it just, it wasn't stimulating, it wasn't. He was, this guy, was always interested in zoning and writing zoning ordinances or getting in front [of] the city council and that was a waste of time sitting there. It's politics. So, that's all he wanted to be and he did finally end up trying to run for office and got whipped handily but because everybody saw that he just was not going anywhere. But anyway, I got out of that situation because we were having to—weren't getting anywhere anyway. It was hard times for landscape architects and we had to have—we had one client when I was a partner in this, this CPA thing and he would pay us in vegetables. You know he would bring in—we were subdividing this land for him and helping him with the construction drawings—all kinds of stuff and so he couldn't pay us. So he'd bring in bushel baskets of beans and tomatoes and hog meat and whatever. We'd divide it up. It was just—

YO: Why was it hard for landscape architects at that time?

CB: Well, it was—I don't know. People just weren't using landscape architects. Dick Bell and Jim Godwin had about the only other office in town and Lewis was over at the school and Dick Bell and Godwin didn't particularly cotton up to Lewis' working in landscape and taking sort of work from them I suppose. But Lewis was giving all the money back to the students and putting it in scholarships and things like that and not really interested in building a big office. But he was doing some really mind boggling things around the state that opened everybody eyes. And so I think that really made Dick Bell and Godwin mad. I hope you don't print any of this. I don't have much respect for Dick Bell. He's a—he's just a loser.

YO: Well, it was a hard time for landscape architects and you were taking payment in vegetables?

CB: Yeah, yeah, and then we started getting other projects. Actually it was a spin off from one of the projects that I told you I couldn't remember the brother's names up in Norfolk? Well, I'd go up there and Lewis would go up once in a while, not often, but then these brothers got to the point they'd call me and through them I got a couple of jobs after I left Lewis and they tracked me down. And then there was another guy in Norfolk that was a friend of theirs that they introduced me to—Stan Freidman—and he started doing some buying land in Garner and Cary and places around Raleigh and I would do work for him. Then he got killed in a plane crash so that sort of did away with that end of the business. But there were hard times because it was just too much over built and I think we were going into an economic decline and people weren't using landscape architects.

YO: Was that in the seventies then?

CB: Yeah, it was and they weren't using architects. They were using engineers and the engineers had resentment from us because we were doing things that they should be doing, but they didn't have design ability. They just did the engineering thing and that was it. No imagination to it whatsoever. And we just gradually began to turn around and I think Lewis turned it around by working for the Rouse Company and then working for Palmetto Dunes. And that led to other things because people were getting back, money was getting more available, and then Lewis' office was growing. I think he was getting out of the school during that time somewhere, but I wasn't working there. I should have stayed on with him, but I didn't. But I don't always do what I'm supposed to do or what I should do.

YO: Well, let's talk about some of your projects. What's an outstanding project of yours?

CB: Well, I did a renovation for Blenheim Place, which is a housing project over on Ridge Road. And a lot of the projects that I did some of them were in Lewis' office, but he said go ahead and take credit for them you know like Sandhills Community College, working with Tommy Hayes and his office. And then there were, I started doing a lot of residential work and I'd always told Lewis that I thought was a good edge to an office to go out and do sketch plans for people and help income wise. So we did a lot of that and like consultation and it was just their, the big projects would be mainly big, big houses and I started doing a little work over at Governor's Club. I was doing some work—not any of them are tremendously big work. It's just almost like bits and pieces.

YO: Well, some of those bits and pieces are important.

CB: Well, they are, but you know like you'd have a golf course that you want to redesign or you have a trailer park. It seemed like work would come in cycles. Like at one time there was all apartment work then that would change to subdivisions. Then that would change to trailer parks. Then that would change to residential work and then it'd start back with the office buildings and then apartment buildings like it'd go around and around in a big circle. And why that happened I don't know, but just when it was like a flood. When the door would open they would come in and I got a lot of continuation of work that I started with that company I was a partner in and that would branch off into other things working with different architects. Doing it turned out just a lot of planting plans for a guy named Tom Shumate who is dead now. And then Bass Nixon Kennedy, some engineers did some work with them and—

YO: Well, you designed a garden for blind people, right?

CB: Well, I, yeah. Well, it was a—well, let's see it was more a garden for people with dementia. It was over at the Forest at Duke. It's a—what do they call them? Continuing living, that's not the name either, but anyway they would have individual houses, then they'd have suites in a building, and then they would have the hospital, and then you're dead. So I did these gardens, several of them for people with Alzheimer's and that was really interesting. I did a lot of work for old—like Penick Homes in Southern Pines. Go down and just redesign existing things like almost doing like sketch problems. You go down and they say, well, we've got this area what do

you think we ought to do with it? And everybody is always working on a budget and didn't want to pay your fees you know. They said, but we want you to work on it. Help us do this. So you're sketching something out and then say, well, we can take that and have our builder build it and you can come back down and check it out and see if it's what you want. So it turned out to be a lot of that stuff and there were two or three of those Alzheimer's gardens.

YO: What's different about [an] Alzheimer's garden? What element in there makes it different from just a regular garden?

CB: Well, that was funny because I didn't know anything about it. It really put me on the spot because a friend of mine was the director of some department over at the Forest of Duke and she called me. She was an artist friend here in Raleigh, Leslie Gerrama, and she called me and said, we've got this new building and we've got this big space and we need a garden for or some place to get people outside. And so I said, okay babe, I'll try it. So, I went over there and they showed me the space and it was like architects do. They have all these left over spaces they don't know what to do with. So, it was like you open the door and you walk out and just a little piece of grass and a big hill and then the rest of the building was up, stair stepped, way up the hill. And I said, how can you turn this into a garden especially for people that won't be able to climb that mountain? And so we had to do a lot of excavating, and a lot of retaining walls, and a lot of things to get it down to a level where we could use it. But before I could do that I had to find out what the heck goes on in the minds of people with dementia. And so I went over to Duke and I found this woman that was—and I can't remember her name either, but she was helpful telling me what—told her what I wanted to do and she helped me by telling me what these people do and what makes them do that. You know, its part of their brain that's non-functioning and they said they are skittish. They're always looking down and a shadow pattern will throw them or a change in pattern and they're always walking circles and they'll stand and open and close doors and repetitive things.

But they like to put their hands in water, they like to feel grass, and she just gave me a little lecture, a couple, two or three of them really because I'd go back over with my drawings and, and she'd go through it with me and say this is good, but I don't think that is. They might get trapped in there so everything in the design has to lead you around to a place you were before. There are no corners. No place you can get stymied. I picked up on the opening and closing of doors and I put an arbor in and put a door handle on both sides so that they can stand there and open and close the gate and then go through and then turn around and open it again. But they're still in the garden and really it was an arbor with vines over the top. And then the paving pattern had to be simple because any change of pattern, if it were angular like when I was working with Lewis, we'd do these shopping malls and the paving pattern was a big deal because [when] you changed pattern, you're in a different section of the shopping center or you take a big color of brick or whatever paving pattern, it'd lead off to say Sears or some place like that. And then we put in little circular things with gardens in them and so forth. So in these gardens for demented people you can't have that because the pattern changes and if it's angular they stop and they don't know [what] to do and they get all nervous. They're older people and they're hard to get in and out of benches and swings and things, but they love to swing. And so I put a lot of swings in, and I put benches in that were not like we designed at Lewis' but they were more form fitting and they could use their legs and their hands to get up—push themselves out. And a lot of them were form fitting and it was just interesting because you had to take in the fact that you

were dealing with people who were really vital people when they were young and smart and they were—they're highly intelligent people. I've got to back up a minute. Over in the Forest of Duke, the garden opened off of a big dining room and a day room. And the rooms, the patients' rooms, were right off these areas and the staff would take a picture of these people when they were young and then write up their history. And it was amazing what these people went through and their backgrounds were just astonishing. But then here they are not even recognizing anyone. Not remembering what they had done before just like a vegetable and it just brought tears to your eyes. You just sat there and I get choked up thinking about it, but well—how can you help these people? So that became part of the garden. I put a big fountain in so that they could sit on the edges of it but not too deep and put their hands in it and then if they fell in, they could get up and get out or then the swings the same way, and different plants like Lewis taught—sensual things, like feeling the plants, smelling the plants, seeing the plant, tasting it because you don't know whether they're going to—no thorns, no poisonous plants—

YO: Quite a bit more than you would think.

CB: Yeah, I built this big model of the whole thing because I wanted to sell it to all these doctors and the board. So I made this big model and got that from Lewis. You know put it up on the table and let them look through and see where they were going you know or look down on or take part of it out and tell them how I was going to build into that big space and then take some of it away and replace that and show them how it would be built so that they would do it, not just say okay this is pie in the sky. We don't have the money to do it. Get them as enthusiastic as I thought I was.

YO: Right.

CB: But all of it came from Lewis. I mean the model. The three-dimensional thing, the using different things in landscape and the sensual things because he had us do a sensual garden as a sketch plan one time, which was interesting and I mean it takes you off. Makes you think, makes you do something.

YO: Well, the question I was going to ask next was how did Lewis affect your own practice, but I think you've explained that pretty well.

CB: Well, it was just in different ways. You know what you pick up, you store in your mind or you make a sketch or you do something or like you mentioned earlier, when you first came in about the diaries—Lewis keeping all his diaries. I kept diaries, too. And I'd write down some of the things that I'd hear from Lewis and go back periodically and read them, which I found out later was a non-productive thing because I didn't feel like I was getting anywhere. I was doing the same thing four years ago—still writing about it. But one thing leads to another and it just touches off little avenues that you want to go to and the old sketching thing Lewis and all of the artist over at NC State—the sculptors and the painters Manuel Bromberg and Duncan Stuart and Ray Musselwhite and—

YO: Joe Cox.

CB: —Joe Cox. I mean just tons of them and you know you get around people like that and unless you're a dumb ass you're going to pick up something. And you start sort of wanting to mimic their life. I never felt like I wanted to be a teacher though, but I would take Lewis' classes for him sometimes, but I never wanted to really do that. I wanted to just do the design.

YO: What do you think made the associates, 'Lewis Clarke Associates,' designs different from other landscape architects?

CB: I don't know because I didn't pay much attention to what they were doing—other people. I had too much in front of me to really worry about other things. But then once in a while you run across something. Like I've run across something that one of them had done and I said, my God, you know a landscape architect did that? I mean why? I mean it was like that old parterre garden—you flip one side and it's the same as the other side. Anyways, it's just non-imaginative landscape architecture and I think Lewis introduced a modern way of doing things and you never—I had one architect tell me he got tired of working with Dick Bell because he said the only thing he had to have was the same curve, what do you call them? Drawing curve and so I just have to call up Dick Bell and say what number curve do you use? And I'd pull it out and I'd draw it. But Lewis you know didn't seem to do that. We did a lot of curvy things and lot of things, but some of it would have right angles and whatever the design called for. You know not all of them were the same and it was kind of hard to say that this was [a] Clarke garden because it was kind of like the West Coast movement came to North Carolina, came to the East Coast. And they used to say that at that time the—when Halprin would come over and all the other West Coast people, and Tommy Church—we'd say well, if we had a Sunrise Magazine instead of a Sunset Magazine because they had everything in Sunset Magazine. All their work was published there so we'd all rip them out of magazines and go down and get them and rip them out and, and keep them in our files. But we didn't have anything over here like that until Lewis started it. And then it spread out to Florida and Fred Stresau and other people. Oh, that's another guy that used to work for Lewis—young Fred Stresau. And then LaMarr [Bunn] and Stresau became real good friends and I don't whether LaMarr went down to work for him or not, but Taft Bradshaw did. He worked for Fred, senior. So, you're going to have to direct me on things I've talked because I go off too many avenues.

YO: No, you've done fine. You've actually answered all my questions just about. What's the one important thing to know about Lewis Clarke?

CB: Sense of humor. He's got a sense of humor that's for sure and his openness, his open heart. He has—like I said, he was not interested in making money for himself. He was just interested in paying us so we would work with him or we'd stay there or whatever. So that's—a lot of times we always—we'd go without pay just because it was working for Lewis. And his magnetism, his approach to things, his way of explaining things and that English charm—it just mesmerized people. They'd come in and a lot of us were Southerners and we come in and they'd say, we don't want to talk to you. We want to talk to Lewis.

YO: Well, it is well to remember that there weren't that many foreign people in North Carolina at that time.

CB: Yeah, well, there were people in Greensboro and High Point and other places around, but their designs weren't—I mean they were functioning offices. They were making money and they were doing a lot of things, but they seem to be a pattern. Dick Bell for instance may, maybe I shouldn't say all this about him, but you know I just got to the point well, what is he doing? Everything is the same. He started writing, doing these state parks and it was all the first half of it was all the same. You'd take the two different parks and you open page to page and they were always the same. Same criteria, the same diagrams, the same this, the same that. The plan might be a little different, but it was similar to the other one, and it was always this large scale stuff so you were just like drawing things out on a map. And I've done a lot of parks but not any state parks and at that scale. That group I worked for in Canada did a lot of state parks, but they would get involved in the intricate design and that's what helped because it's a thing where thousands of people use it like the mall downtown at Fayetteville Street. When Lewis was doing that it just had to accommodate a lot of people and then they were abusing things and of course you know the way it goes. As the public gets a hold of it they tear it up. But I just think that what you remember from Lewis is it's not the same thing all the time. It's not that he goes out of his way to be different, he just is. And he has—well, a good point of view and I guess that was one of the reasons I wanted to go Harvard because he had been there, not that I was going to pattern my life after him, but it all seemed to fall into place.

YO: What do you think about landscape architecture today?

CB: It's really pretty exciting. You see a lot of people who like to call themselves landscape architects and they even have TV programs about people that what is it? The—oh God, what is the channel? You know where they have people who come in and do garden design. Since I do a lot of garden design, I'm interested in that, but there's a distinction when you see a garden that's done by a landscape designer and then a landscape architect. The landscape designer just doesn't seem to know how to put it together and like[s] a big mix match of everything. Like interior decorators, some of them they put at one time everything into a room that they could possibly think of. No continuity, no simplicity, no flow. It's just things in a room and they call themselves interior designers. Well, some of these garden designers are exactly the same way. But you see landscape architects using the outside as an extension of the house or an outside room and these people think okay, I sit there and look at these programs and you just almost get physically sick thinking people spend that money to do that stuff and then call themselves landscapers. And it gives us I think a bad name. But that's being elitist probably, but I can't help but be that way because it just—you have to choke up a lot of times. Take back the fact that I went to Harvard because people think that's supposed to be—make me better than everybody else and it doesn't. It's just that it's something I can put behind my name I guess, but sometimes I wish I hadn't gone.

YO: Do you wish that you had done something besides landscape architecture?

CB: No, no, it's just I wish I'd gotten out after I got my degree from NC State. I didn't have to compound the error by going, not the error, compounding it by going to Harvard and going over—I should have maybe gone to what? Penn State where McHarg was and get a different point of view, but I didn't. So, no point in going back in it. But I think you know when you ask me what the state of it is, I mean, the state of it is pretty healthy. They're using more garden

designers than landscape architects and although we're putting out—imagine when I graduated from NC State there was three of us in the class. Three graduating and when we were over in Reynolds Coliseum at graduation day they called out the landscape architects and then three of us stood up and everybody started laughing and said, what, what is this? I said, uh, oh. We're in trouble. Jerry Turner was one and Lindsay Cox was the other. I looked at them and you know we're in for it. You know because we don't have enough people out here. None of the people are going to school to learn to be that, but I think it's picking up. But there are a lot of people that think it's an easy profession. I find it somewhat easy because I like to do it and I'm trained in it, but some of these people are garden designers get into it and they just think okay, here's a way to make money. And they see the pamphlets, the magazines and things that they copy and things they can and they don't come from really a design background. They come in as a carpenter so they can build a screen wall and that's fine, but they might put it in the wrong place and not be a part of the thing. You'd say you see one design and, and you say, well, you just—why didn't you just put a door there and put four walls on it and walk out into this square? You know it doesn't do a thing for the rest of the ground. It's all blocked off. You don't have [sight?] you know? Lewis would teach you—said oh, in the model box—that if you have a house or a building that everything about this landscape doesn't have to be the same. You don't get the same view. You do something you like—if you're in the living room you sit down and you get a lawn view. You get a dining room, there might be all in a row and you get a dining room and you want plants and fountains and things where you're sitting inside or you could move outside and eat close to the kitchen and so forth. Or if its bedroom on the end, you get sort of a view away from the house, with a little bit of plants in front it draws you out into the landscape. So you're getting different views. You don't get that if you have parterre gardens or the French thing. It's that long vista all the time. The longest but with the English landscape architecture you get different views and I think that's what Lewis kept put[ting out], he didn't pound it into you. He'd just say why don't you try this or try that and so you just pick and you just start doing it second nature.

YO: What's the one thing to know about Charlie Burkhead?

CB: Don't believe anything he says.

YO: Oh, I don't believe that.

CB: No, there's an old saying, "Don't do as I do, do as I say," but it doesn't always work out. So you have to not worry about not making any money because that was true. Like I said, when you first came into the School of Design, they had these big things and they'd say look to the guy next to you and he won't be here next year. And the only way you can make money at architecture or design is marry it or inherit it because you're not going to make it on your own. But of course a lot of people have made money at it. But you just don't, you can't go look at that. You just have to look at your integrity and what you're going to do for the client because that's what you're in business for, to help somebody or else they wouldn't call you. And I picked up a lot of work just by consultation because you go out to people who can't afford or don't want to think that they can afford a landscape architect and in maybe some cases they can't, but it's according to who they pick. But if you go out and you do consultation, you can't move the street, you can't move the house, you can't move the big oak trees, and you can't make the backyard any bigger or much smaller so you have to do something quickly. And you give them direction

and they say we can work on this for year to year to year. And then you go by the hour and you make a few hundred bucks and it pays the bills. You go on and if you get enough of that you can pay the rent too, you know?

YO: Yeah.

CB: But it's—I think landscape architecture has a lot more avenues that are open to it because you're working with different clients. You're working with different buildings. The problem with architecture unless you are just a complete modernist and there are few, some that aren't you see buildings popping up all over town. Well, why? Why did they do that? There's one you've seen—the one over in Cameron Village next to the Harris Teeter? It looks like a fruit cake or a wedding cake or something or other. It must have been a fruit cake who designed it. I mean it's just you know—why? What, what are they doing? But you see a good landscape—I mean you've got [to] accommodate cars and people moving around. You've got weather, you've got all kinds of things you have to deal with, but a building you just put up four walls and air condition it or heat it and you put a little office here and a little work room there and a toilet here and a whatever and fit it all together in a square or a rectangle or whatever. But that's not what you do with landscape. Because no two pieces of property are exactly the same and you only have your brain and your hands to do what your brain tells you to do and you see different things that you want to do. Some of them don't turn out and some of them do and it's always a happy thing when it does. Like those Alzheimer's gardens, it was always interesting to go over there later on and just sit off in a corner somewhere and watch the people as they went around. And I tell you it can make you cry and oh, I just love it. It's more of a challenge than engineering, architecture because everything you have in the outside is hard to relate to as far as scale. Inside you know you get stairs that are always the risers are six inches the tread is twelve. Rooms are such and such a room size and it becomes the same thing and you're not dealing with it. You get outside though and a tread, a riser would become anything from three inches to seven inches and it becomes a foot to a foot and a half or whatever. It's just how you want to do it. And you can curve it easily, you're just working with the land and you're molding land and it's like sculpture. You use the plants like you're painting something because you want a red something over here so you've got a red plant. It might not be all year round, but in a particular time it does. And you could have something blooming in a garden all the time, but you can't go into a room and have it, have the furniture changing all the time. From season to season, it's always the same thing, but you go outside and it's completely different.

YO: What's the one important thing then to know about landscape architecture today?

CB: Today? Trying to live without the car, the gasoline the way it is, and everything is just turned up on its neck for because of the car. I mean we're so addicted to it and we have to instead of taking a plane or a train. Now do you ride the train very much? It's fun. And you can watch the landscape go by you. I hate to fly. I just hate it. Not that I'm afraid of it but it's just you're in that little compartment and little closed space and you can't get up and walk around until the pilot tells you you can. But on a train or a car you know you can get out and walk around. But everybody has to have three or four cars. They can't get by with just one. You can't do it. You don't walk anywhere anymore and I think it's going back to it. I think we're finding we have to—the landscape is becoming more important because these little shopping centers are made

now into town centers. You know different types of buildings and you walk around the corner and you might see a car and you might not. No, no more of the enclosed malls. They're all outside. Like Cameron Village was at one time.

YO: That's interesting. I hadn't thought about the change in the shopping center designs being reflective of the cars.

CB: Well, you see them all over. They're all around Raleigh. Streets of Five Points or whatever it's called and then there's Brier Cliff or Brier Park [Briar Creek] or whatever, but it's made—it's still the problem of the car. North Hills has changed so that almost all the cars are down are in a parking garage. There are few around in places and it makes it interesting in a way, but it's not like the interior mall where you're not going to look to see if you're going to be run over. If you're outside you have to watch when you walk the street. So I guess it does make it like a little town, but there's certain things that you miss out on and it's all around the holy dollar. They've got to make money out of it and so they always offer you little boutiques and unique restaurants and great shopping areas and it's the same spiel. And that's for every shopping center now instead of human place to go shop or some other kind of description. It's the cute little boutique, the little outdoor café and some of them don't even have enough space for three tables outside, you know to make it interesting. So, I don't know it's changing, but I'm not so sure it's all for the good.

YO: But as a landscape architect you think that should be considered?

CB: Oh, yeah, I think a landscape architect is who they should call to start with, but they end up calling the architect. Because—going back to the Forest of Duke—they had an add on to the building that I was working with and so they called me back to do two more little gardens there. The inside of the mall was made to look like a street and they had outdoor light fixtures, fountains, stop lights, but no cars and they had little doors you walk in somebody's room there. A few steps down, there's another door or a big window and that's a beauty parlor and then across the way is a little rest—a little café. You know they made it. The architects did a good job with that. I did my little gardens and, and I think did a terrific job. But anyway they—it all turned out okay, but they don't do anything with the rest of the land and they didn't plan as far as the Forest of Duke and Penick Homes down in Southern Pines they—

YO: What was the name of that one again?

CB: Pennick P-P-E-N-N-I-C-K or P-E-N-I-C-K. I guess one N but they designed it for sustained living I think they call it and you sell your home and you go there and you either buy a little cabin then you live in that. Then you move into the building, the main building which is like an apartment, big as this room maybe a little bit bigger and then from there into a hospital room, hospital bed and then there for the graveyard. They ought to—if you're going do that—they ought to think of taking it a little further. You know the outside people. They're really encouraging people to move around a lot. I did something by accident down there. They had this big courtyard that was off a dining room and a recreational room as they call it and like a little three sided area and then parking on one side. It was just overgrown and a tangled mess. So I said, we've got to get rid of everything. So we went in there and we tore out everything and boy

you would think that—I had a ponytail at the time—they said that little old man with the ponytail has come out here and he's tearing up this stuff and everybody got mad as hell and they were, they were going to get me. But it got their blood stirring and got their energy going and it really turned out to be a good thing for them. But we put back a good garden for them and they were happy after that. But they didn't want to see things changed.

YO: Well, that's really all the questions I have for today Charlie.

CB: Really?

YO: Was there anything else that you wanted to add?

CB: No, is that enough time?

YO: Yeah.

CB: Too much, huh?

YO: No, it's perfect. It was perfect.

CB: Well, I don't know there are a lot of things that for the School—and what they're doing now—I don't know that it's a natural progression. I think that a lot of the things that the old crew—that was there from architecture to landscape—has changed and it's not coming out the same as it used to. And I don't know whether they're going to, it'll ever change. I think it's really—it's just like putting people out that are engineers, but at one time it was a very invigorating place to be because NC State was one of the, if not the leader, one of the leaders of landscape architecture in the country. And a lot of people have moved out into bigger, better ways of life and big, big offices and doing well. So, I think that it's probably as healthy as it would have been considering everything that's going on. I mean getting into wars and everything else, but maybe we get to landscape some of those places. When I was working in Canada that firm was doing a Kuwait waterfront and a whole new town and I never got to work on it because I hadn't been there long and I didn't stay long enough, but there's a way that it should go and the firm I think it was founded with landscape architecture and then the other things were brought in. Architecture, engineering, sociology, psychology, all of it brought into it, but it started around landscape. So that's why I wanted to go up there and see how it worked out and what it was like and it was I think rewarding. If it hadn't been so damn cold, I'd probably stayed up there for a long time.

YO: Can you think of anybody to date, any landscape architect firm today, that's the controlling factor like it used to be?

CB: No, no, I don't see them anymore. They're not like the Eckbos and the Halprins and the Clarkes and of course I'm leaving a whole bunch of them out, but they're just not around. They're just, they've gotten older, they're passing it on to their sons and like Stresau, no longer, I think he might be dead, Senior. And young Stresau is running it and he used to work for Lewis and I don't know what his office is like. I've never seen it. But I don't know that it's going to—I

don't if it's going to have a happy ending. You know there was a great—maybe it's just because I'm getting older. I don't know and I don't see it. With Nigel, I went over to crit one of his classes. And I just—like some of the architects would come down there like Matsumoto would come in to Lewis' crit and he'd walk around and look inside, [say] I don't see anything worth critting and walk right out. You know you haven't done your job. You haven't done, you haven't explored everything. You're not ready for a crit.

YO: Is that what you do?

CB: That's what I did over there and I could destroy them.

YO: Well, Charlie, I have certainly—

CB: They hadn't asked me back.

YO: Certainly enjoyed talking to you today and I'm glad that you spent the time with me today.

CB: Well, thank you for inviting me.

YO: And now we'll close it with that.

CB: Well, this is going to be dedicated to Lewis, right?

YO: Of course.

CB: Right, okay.

Transcriber: Jennifer Curasi

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