

ORAL HISTORY OF
NICHOLAS L. GIANOPULOS

Interviewed by Hyman Myers and Bruce Laverty

April 18, 2008

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Keystones Oral History Collection
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface and Summary	4
Biographical Profile	5
Outline of Topics	6
Oral History	7
Selected Bibliography & Related Athenaeum Holdings	50
Index of Names	51
Index of Building	54

PREFACE & SUMMARY

On April 18, 2008, Hyman Myers and Bruce Lavery interviewed Nicholas Gianopulos at The Athenaeum of Philadelphia. Myers was a preservation architect at VITETTA who retired in 2009. Lavery was the Gladys Brooks Curator of Architecture at The Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

Kevin Block transcribed this interview in 2025. The transcription process was funded by a Historical and Archival Records Care (HARC) Grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC). Dean Doukakis, a former owner of Keast & Hood Co. Structural Engineers, reviewed the transcript for accuracy in 2025.

The following is an AI-generated summary. A member of the project team or a research intern at The Athenaeum will review the summary and expand upon it for accuracy prior to online publication.

The transcription provides an overview of the Nicholas Gianopulos's (1925-2018) career as a structural engineer in Philadelphia, including his work on historic preservation projects like the Merchants Exchange and Independence Hall, as well as contemporary buildings with architects like Louis Kahn, Robert Venturi, and Mitchell/Guirgola. Gianopulos discusses the collaborative nature of the architectural community in Philadelphia, the challenges of working on historic buildings, and his views on the changing trends in building materials and design. He also shares anecdotes about renovations and preservation efforts for historic buildings in Philadelphia, such as the Academy of Music and Christ Church, highlighting the challenges and solutions encountered, as well as the lifestyles and architectural preferences of wealthy patrons such as Doris Duke.

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE

Nicholas L. Gianopulos, 93, passed away on July 21, 2018, at his home in Gladwyne, PA. Nick was a founding principal of Keast & Hood Company, Structural Engineers. During his six decades with the firm, he developed creative historic preservation solutions to ensure that future generations would be able to enjoy American architectural treasures such as Independence Hall, Christ Church, the Academy of Music, Carpenter's Hall, the Merchant's Exchange, the Fairmount Waterworks, the Edgar Allan Poe House, the Free Quaker Meeting House and Glenmont (Thomas Edison's home). Nick was also the engineer for the architects of the Philadelphia School, including Louis I. Kahn, Robert Venturi and Romaldo Giurgola. His international projects include Kahn's capital building complex in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Nick served as an adjunct faculty member of the Graduate School of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania from 1964 to 1991. He mentored generations of architects and engineers, many of whom continued to seek his advice into his nineties. Nick received numerous honors including the Wyck-Strickland Award, the Master Builder's Award from the Carpenter's Company of the City and County of Philadelphia and the Harley J. McKee Award from the Association for Preservation Technology. He was also honored by many organizations including the National Park Service and the Hellenic University Club of Philadelphia. He was a member of the Eleftheria VFW Post 6633 and a co-author of *Honor & Remembrance*, a history of this unique post. In addition to his professional accomplishments, he was a talented photographer, documenting engineering projects and decades of family events with his Rolleicord camera. Nick was a fantastic cook and famous for his apple pies. Son of Elia Gianopulos and Pagio (Liakoupoulos) Gianopulos, Nick grew up in the small town of Philipsburg, PA. He served in the Second Armored Division of the U.S. Army during WWII, fought in the Battle of Bulge and received a Purple Heart Medal. Following his discharge, he attended Pennsylvania State University and received a B.S. in architectural engineering.

Written by Dean Doukakis

OUTLINE OF TOPICS

Early life, education, military service	7
Working for William H. Gravell	11
Independence Hall work with Keast & Hood, National Park Service	14
Working with Lou Kahn in the 1960s	16
Favorite Building in Philadelphia: Merchants Exchange	19
Influence of faculty at the University of Pennsylvania	23
Culture of technical consulting in Philadelphia	26
Contemporary architecture in Philadelphia	27
Favorite Modern Building in Philadelphia: Vagelos Chemistry Building	30
Liberty Bell Pavilion	31
Anecdotes about Lou Kahn and his populism	32
Doris Duke House with Venturi & Lippincott	35
Issues with Furness's structural engineering	38
Emergency closure of the Academy of Music	38
Writing a chronology of Christ Church	46
Kahn anecdotes at Bryn Mawr College and Dhaka, Bangladesh	47

ORAL HISTORY OF NICHOLAS L. GIANOPULOS

- Myers
[00:07:29] What we want to do is kind of talk about you and your history and did you bring along something for us?
- Laverty
[00:07:36] Besides the New York Times.
- Myers
[00:07:46] And what we want to do is to really understand what you've been doing in your career because you're well known in Philadelphia. And maybe talk a little bit about your firm, how it was created, who were original partners. How did they come together, for example. And then lastly, any of your philosophies about engineering.
- Laverty
[00:08:16] But let's start even farther back in terms of your birth and childhood and education...So, you were born. I'd start where you were born.
- Gianopulos
[00:09:05] Okay, at the request of Hy Myers, I'm going to give you an overview of my history. My name is Nick Gianopulos. I was born in 1924 in Philipsburg, Pennsylvania. The second child of immigrant parents. Immigrants from Greece. Went through the public school system. During my senior year, December the 7th, Pearl Harbor occurred. Many of my classmates immediately enlisted and my father prevailed on me and said, "They'll get you, just buy your time." I was enrolled in a program conducted by Penn State to provide junior engineers or helpers in engineering aspects of the war effort. And went to school the following summer and eventually got a job in Buffalo with Bell Aircraft where I was a go-for in their research department, which was developing. They had just developed the first jet airplane for the United States. And its propulsion were not American engines, but by jet engines, by Whittle Engines from the UK. And I was fortunate enough to work on the second and third of those planes being assembled. They were all hand-built, being assembled in this old Ford assembly building. Of course, there was no signage. Nobody knew what was going on there. I'm sure everybody knew, but there was no signage. And so I worked there for a year. I was getting letters from my classmates who were down in the Pacific and everywhere else. I had been 4F at the time because I had rheumatic fever. But apparently I called my draft board and said, "Look, I feel like a slacker. I know I'm working in a war effort and I could stay out of the war totally, but I'm young, I'm stupid. Give me a call." So they called me and I went through the examinations. And incidentally I've been deaf in one ear all my life but they never picked that up in the examination.
- Myers
[00:12:16] That's interesting.
- Gianopulos
[00:12:19] They didn't pick it up but the doctors said to me, "You seem to have recovered from rheumatic fever well. You're in good shape, you have no murmurs or anything of the sort." So I said, "Sign me up!" So, they did. Well, eventually I went to Fort Knox where I took armored infantry, you know, armored basic training.

And when I was home after finishing my basic training, it so happened to have been at the time when D-Day occurred. And so fortunately I missed D-Day. Never regretted it. Never regretted it. Eventually I got sent overseas as a replacement and wound up as a replacement on the day after my 20th birthday in the Siegfried Line north of Aachen and the unit I was assigned to was the 2nd Armored Division and the company was the reconnaissance company of the 67th Armored Regiment of the 2nd Armored Division. So here I am. Never had any training as a scout. I became a scout! But the benefit of having gone with this unit was it had been through North Africa, Sicily, D-Plus-3, break out of the Normandy Bridgehead, and so on. These guys were capable soldiers. Most of them were southern boys who loved soldiering. They really loved it. And I was referred to as "Greek Boy." They couldn't pronounce my name.

Anyways, we were involved in breaching the Siegfried Line and eventually approaching the Rhine to the Ruhr River and the Battle of the Bulge came along on December 16th and our whole division picked up and went down to actually stop the spearhead. We stopped the spearhead. And the irony of it is, at that time--I did not know it--I had a brother [Patrick L. Gianopulos] who was a combat medic. And I didn't learn until about eight years ago that he had been in the Second Armored Division but in a 41st Armored Infantry regiment and he was wounded there. We could not have been more than three or four miles apart.

Myers
[00:15:04]

Did you say he did not know this until eight years ago?

Gianopulos
[00:15:07]

That's correct. He wouldn't talk about it. He was a country doctor, you know, and just was one of these guys that didn't toot his horn. I used to go up on his birthday every year and I'd take him and his grandchildren and whatnot who were up there out to a restaurant near Penn State. And I said to him, I said, "Look, Pat, I know that you were wounded during the Battle of the Bulge and so on. I brought a map here of the Bulge, you know, to show me where you were wounded." And he said, "Right there." And I said, "My God, that's where we were. Who were you with?" So he said, "I was with the Armored Infantry Regiment of the Second Armored." I said, "How do you like that?" You know? Here we were in the same division, didn't know it. Well, anyways.

Laverty
[00:15:57]

And didn't talk about it for 60 years.

Gianopulos
[00:15:59]

No, maybe 55. So anyways, you know, we finished up the Ardennes business, went back up and crossed, went up to the Rhine, crossed the Rhine, went across. We crossed into a British airborne bridgehead in Wesel. We were told that we were going to break out of this and go forward, and so the lieutenant comes up to me and says, "Hey, Greek, I want you to ride the back of the tank." So we were the first tank out, and two of us on the back, and I don't think we were more than 200

yards down the road, we got knocked out, two of the guys never came back. But, anyways...

Laverty
[00:16:53]

The tank got knocked out?

Gianopulos
[00:16:57]

Yeah, got knocked down by a Panzerfaust.

Laverty
[00:17:00]

And what happened to you? What happens when the tank gets knocked out from under you?

Gianopulos
[00:17:02]

Well, the other guy jumped off the back of the deck into the ditches, and I went into the right-hand ditch, and all the other guys and the couple guys who got out of the tank went into the left-hand-ditch, and then I called them to come over. I said, "Hey, come on, I'll cover you. Come on over here." You know, I was now a B.A.R. Man. You know, I was a Browning Automatic Rifle. Doesn't compare to the weaponry they have today, but it was considered big-time stuff. So I covered the guys and they came over and we scooted back down this ditch back to where the kickoff point was and they said, "Send another tank up and not with you on it. You're bad luck." So, but anyways, the war is over eventually and our division was selected to go to Berlin for the Potsdam Conference. We were the honor guard there to receive the Allied zones from the Russians. We're the first ones there and we arrived on the 4th of July, 1945 and it was the oddest, eeriest feeling to go down these roads and see all these streets with all these German civilians waving American flags at us. You know, saying, "Army, Army!" Well, we expected it from the Belgians, not from the Germans, but they were so glad to be in the American zones because the Russians were very hard on them. So we spent six weeks there.

Laverty
[00:18:54]

So did you see the Big Three? [Referring to US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin.]

Gianopulos
[00:18:56]

No, we were up and guarding some road up on top of the mountain, you know, a big hill, you know. We pulled security. I do have a story I'll share, but let's hope this doesn't get cut out, because we were broken up in groups, our company, to go and provide security for a lot of buildings that had been either bombed out or damaged. And there was a group of us that were providing security for bombed-out bank on the Wilhelmstrasse, which was a very famous banker street, and eventually Checkpoint Charlie was on Wilhelmstrasse. Just before Checkpoint Charlie, and we were guarding this bank and the Russians tried to blow the vault in the basement but couldn't. They screwed it up and as you can imagine the Germans made very good bank vaults. But we were told it was full of bullion, but we never saw it. One of the things we did when we were on duty for hours and we were off six [i.e. they only had six hours off]. We were sleep-deprived. It was just, you know, the worst thing in the world to be there night and day, night and day. But one day we took, one of the young fellows and I, we took a walk over to the

Tiergarten. We wanted to see where Hitler's bunker was. And while there was all this cigarette trading and black marketeering going on there, you know, and we were approached by this young woman, I imagine, in her mid-twenties, and she came up to us and she had a young girl with her, and she said, "Would you mail this letter for me to some relatives in Chicago." I told her we couldn't do this. Then it dawned on me, she was speaking English like an American. I said, "You speak English like an American." She said, "I am an American." I said, "Well, what are you doing over here?" And she said her father had been in the German Army during World War I. And he had relatives in Chicago, where they have a big German community, and he was able to get a visa out of Germany in 1919. That was immediately after the Armistice. And he went over to Chicago, immediately married a young German-American woman, had a child. This young woman here. And this young woman had been a good student. She got out of high school early. She went to the University of Chicago where she was studying economics and in 1938 her father said, "We're going back to Deutschland, you know, to the Great Reich." There were a lot of German Americans who went back because they believed that whatever was doing, was putting Germany in the sun again. So she goes back and because of her economics background, she hadn't graduated, they sent her to the University of Berlin to continue her studies. She married a young German officer. Had this young girl as a child. This officer she married was killed on the Russian front. And here she was. And I told her that I couldn't send this back. Well, what a story. But that's not the end of the story. It gets better. I said, "Well, have you been here all the time, in Berlin, through all the bombing and everything?" She said, "No, there was a period of two years when I was in Lisbon, Portugal, in a German trade office," where she said, "If you knew what some of the things we were doing, you wouldn't believe them." I said, "What were you doing?" She said, "We were receiving payments from American companies after Pearl Harbor for licensing fees that they owed." IT Farben and whatnot, and they were sending them to Brazilian banks. Then from Brazilian banks over to Portugal, and from Portugal to Switzerland, or Germany, as the case may be. She said, "Someday you're going to hear about this."

I've been waiting, and it hasn't come out yet, but let me continue this. We have had, in the past 10-12 years, the restitution made by the Swiss banks for the gold that had been put there by the German Jews and the French Jews and whatnot. There has been restitution by a major Italian insurance company who had insured all the French Jews before the war. Never paid death benefits to anybody. And then we have these things like, oh, about three or four years ago, you know, Tom Watson of IBM was identified as having sent the index card system to Germany in 1936 and '37, where apparently they used it. So, you know, I hope I live long enough to have the final disclosure, because I think it's going to come out. And I think it's going to involve a lot of major American industries. Well, the final chapter to this is when I was on the National Park Service advisory board down in Nacogdoches a few years ago from '94-'95 up until 2001 or something like that, my wife would come along to these meetings, which lasted two or three days, but we'd spend the rest of

the week touring the South, just to acquaint ourselves with the South. One day we decided to go down to the Bayou country. And we were given reference to a good B&B in Franklin, Louisiana, which is the heart of the sugar cane country. So we went to this B&B. It was operated by a retired American colonel, Army intelligence. And we stayed there three days and each day late in the afternoon, five o'clock he would have us down and we would have wine and some cheese and chit chat and then we'd go to one of the restaurants that they recommended. So the story I just related to you, I related to him. I said to him, "Colonel, do you think there's anything to this?" His answer was, "I'm not allowed to talk about that." To me that was a very telling answer. To me, that was a very telling answer. So I'm patiently waiting and if somebody hears a story five years from now or ten years from now you know you can say, "Well, I heard about that a while ago." But I do believe something will come out of it.

Well anyways the war is over, I go to Penn State, and I come down to Philadelphia at the encouragement of a friend of mine and I went to work for this engineer Gravell, William H. Gravell, who was like the leading structural engineer in the city at the time. And Gravell had had a friend in the House of Representatives, Jack Thompson, who was a friend of his and also from our town. He knew my father. So I connected. He separated with Duncan, and formed a firm called Gravell Associates. And the associates were Ray Hood, Dan DiBona, myself, and Tom Leidig. And in '53, Gravell passed away. And we were confronted with continuing the firm. But the clients said, "None of you fellows are over 34 years old." That was Ray Hood. And he was the only one in the group registered at the time. So Sheldon Keast, who had been the Chief Engineer for the City of Philadelphia, L & I [Licenses and Inspections], had just retired. And so he was contacted by some of our older clients and he said "Yeah, I know these boys because they bring projects in for review." He said, "I would welcome joining forces with them." And so this is how it happened.

Myers
[00:29:03]

So Keast retired?

Gianopulos
[00:29:05]

He retired from the city. He was retiring just at that moment. So then he came in and became our chairman.

Myers
[00:29:14]

And so the people who knew him at your firm, knew him from going and submitting.

Gianopulos
[00:29:19]

He was not an unknown quantity to us. And he was a pretty level-headed guy, and pretty innovative. I think Gravell was probably one of the best fellows I had ever known, and he was a natural engineer, and he was in correspondence with the best engineering minds of the time, like Hardy Cross, who had developed a Moment Distribution system. He was a major from World War I, and in his engineering battalion was a friend of mine, Spencer of Spencer, White and Prentis. Also the engineer who designed much of the New York subway system. So he was a good

company and used to share all this stuff with us and it was to my great fortune to have known this guy and worked with him.

He was kind of an eccentric in a very nice way that he would have me go to his house on Saturday mornings in Mount Airy at 9:00am and from 9:00am until 1:00pm I would push a slide ruler for him and we would copy things down he was telling me and then I would take him to the office on Monday, you know, and do whatever was to be done with him. Well, but at 1:00pm we stopped and he would bring out all these cold cuts and stuff and he'd turn up this great big radio he had and tune into the opera. And we listened to the opera until 5:00pm, 4:00pm or 5:00pm, eating snacks and sandwiches and so on. And it was a very nice introduction to somebody who was more than just a numbers cruncher. And he was very highly regarded in the city.

Myers
[00:31:33]

And what did Gravell's client base look like? Who did he work for?

Gianopulos
[00:31:37]

We had H2L2, Howell Shay, Davis, Dunlap & Carver, Willing, Sims, & Talbot. These were all the firms who were making their mark in the early '40s into the '50s.

Myers
[00:31:57]

So, do you remember any of the buildings that they designed that he did the structural engineering for?

Gianopulos
[00:32:02]

Yes, he did the Packard Building in town. He did the annex across the street. I think he did this Chateau Creole which is called something else now on Rittenhouse Square.

Laverty
[00:32:15]

That's a Trumbauer building.

Gianopulos
[00:32:16]

Yeah, he did, he only did the Bok Tower down in Florida. He had done a lot of things. The thing he had done during World War II when building construction was down, he was approached by Matthew McCloskey, who was the biggest builder here in the city at the time, to get together an engineering division and go to Florida where they were going to design and construct concrete freighters. And so they went to Jacksonville and they designed these things and they would launch them. But after they ran for several hours where the drive propeller shafts exited the hull at the rear end, at the stern end, the concrete would fail because of vibration. And so they towed them across the Atlantic with ocean tugs and used them for the Mulberry [temporary harbours] at Normandy. So, anyways, Gravell had with him, all of the leading structural engineers in the city, except a few who were doing work at the Navy Yard or over a New York Ship on the other side of the river. He tells the story of how he came back after the war and was setting up practice again. McCloskey was back and his business was growing up. And McCloskey had invited this whole gang to a dinner over at the Warwick. The Warwick was then considered the best hotel. And so they had this dinner, and so at

the end of the dinner, Gravell and McCloskey, you know, they were on a first-name basis. "Billy, how did you do?" And McCloskey looks at the Major and he says, "Major, I dropped a couple," which meant he dropped a couple of million dollars. And Gravell said, "I can't believe it, Billy. How did you drop a couple million?" McCloskey said, "I figured on clearing six, but only cleared four." So it's relative, they dropped a couple. But anyways, it was a great experience with the guy.

Laverty
[00:35:15]

Well, do you remember buildings that you worked on when you first went to work for Gravell?

Gianopulos
[00:35:21]

Oh yeah, yeah. The first building I worked on was the Mercy Douglas Hospital way out in Southwest Philadelphia. Then I did work with a couple of YMCAs. In fact, the YMCA on 2029 Chestnut Street, which has been closed down now for a long time. It was a formal hotel. Robert Morris Hotel? I forget what that hotel was.

Myers
[00:35:49]

No, it wasn't Robert Morris.

Gianopulos
[00:35:49]

No, but it was something named after one of the historic things.

Laverty
[00:35:52]

Stephen Girard. I think it was the Stephen Girard Hotel.

Gianopulos
[00:35:55]

Alright, it may have been the Girard Hotel. But our office was next door. Shay was the architect. Howell Shay was the architect. Wark & Company were the builders and they were very good. And that was really my first total project. Because I was part of a team on the Mercy Douglas project. And then just before Gravell died, he was asked to do the assessment of the site in front of Independence Hall, where the RDA [Redevelopment Authority] had torn down all the buildings there from Chestnut to Market. And he was designing the retaining walls, the perimeter walls, which were there until about the late '90s before they were replaced. And so, before they backfilled all of those sites, I went down through the basements of all the things, plotting them. So that we knew what the ground elevations were, and the Redevelopment Authority also surveyed them so that we would know where the foundations for these perimeter walls would go because they were in grade beams, you know, up and down, up and down. Major dives. And so we continued doing this work, and I then go over to the next block from Market up to Arch and did the same thing there. And then I designed the fountain that was out in the front there for several years. You know, on Market Street?

Laverty
[00:37:51]

On the Jack Lewis Quadrangle?

Gianopulos
[00:37:53]

Yeah, right.

Laverty
[00:37:56]

So you designed that fountain?

Gianopulos
[00:37:57]

I did the structure on it. Yeah. H2L2 did the architecture on it, Spencer Roach was the architect. Then at the same time, just as this stuff was going, in the late '50s, 1959, there was a major snowstorm in March. Major. Two-feet or more of wet snow. Roofs were collapsing all over the place. At the rear end of Congress Hall, the roof collapsed. Well, just as they were trying to take out the rear cove, the ceiling, which had the first image of the American eagle. It's still there. But they had shored that up. The upper roof collapsed, but it didn't damage the cove. So the first thing they did was take the cove out the back window, then took that into the basement of the Second Bank. This restorationist, Ann Clapp, she was a paint restorationist. She eventually ended up at Winterthur. She and we became good friends and because eventually I had to design a suspension system for it. Keast was asked in by the architectural advisory board for the Park Service to review the proposals that had been made a few years ago, before that by George M. Ewing and Company, who had come in and looked at Independence Hall and Congress Hall, City Hall, and so on, and proposed gutting the buildings totally and installing new steel and reinforced concrete systems, which we call the White House treatment in Washington. Because that's what they did in Washington. And they may have been justified in Washington. But Keast looked at this and he said, "I think a lot of this stuff is retrievable, and I don't think you need to do that." So they gave him the commission to develop the contract documents on Congress Hall. And he came into the office one day and we're having lunch and Ray, Dan, Tom and I were sitting there and he said, "Boys, I'm going to need one of you for a couple of weeks to do this for me. You can use my report," that he had submitted, which he had accepted. And Ray, Dan, and Tom got up and walked out. So he turns around and he says, "Well, Nick, I guess you're the guy."

So he took me down there, we looked at Congress Hall, which had been shored-up, emergency-wise, and so on. And he said to me, "You ought to be able to do this in a couple of weeks." All the documents to survey, which meant going up into the attic and measuring this building, which was out of square, out of plumb, everything, to install some new steelwork. They set me up on a board, up on the second floor. The building was empty, and I was right below the hatch that went up into the attic. And this was right in back of the Senate chamber, the famous Senate chamber. I used to sit there and the squirrels would line up on the rim of the hatch, you know, chatting away at me. And so at night when I would cover my board, I'd have to cover my board not only with a piece of oil cloth but a piece of plywood to keep the squirrels away. And I went up in that attic and I set nails and I've set strings and in fact some of the nails are still there. That I was able to measure, you know, the area that we were going to put the new work in. New work had been put in there in 1912. In 1912, there was some plank girders up there. This was...

Laverty

Now this is Congress Hall?

[00:42:28]

Gianopulos
[00:42:36]

Congress Hall. 1912. And the work that we did was to the south of that because what we wanted to do was pick up that whole hipped roof, that whole south hipped roof, support the ceiling below and the roof and so on. But documents went out, prices came in good, Park Service was very pleased. And so then they said to Keast, "You know, we like the way this is going, how about doing a study on the tower? And then doing a study on the building itself?" So I got pulled along. And in that time, when the construction was going on the tower, one day when I was up there, they were just erecting some of the steel, a young lady came up and started to ask some very intelligent questions and it turned out to be Penny [Hartshorne] Batcheler. She had not married George [Batcheler] yet but you know she was just new into the park.

Laverty
[00:43:38]

Penny Hartshorne?

Gianopulos
[00:43:41]

And so we became friends at that time and we also became friends with Ann Clapp because she knew Ann because Ann was doing the work for the [Parks] Department. So, this was the beginning of several friendships and acquaintanceships. Lee Nelson was there, and we all became friends. So one of the things that Keast had me do, and I prepared the drawings and for the contracting and so on, he said, "Would you take these down to Mr. Peterson," who's in such and such a building where his office is. So, he said, "I can't make it down, but I told him [that] you're coming down." So I took the drawings, went down, I was ushered into his room, and there he is sitting back at this big desk with piles of stuff on either side. You know, he's scrolling up letters, and I must have stood in front of him for five minutes before he acknowledged me, and his acknowledgement was, "Who are you and what do you want?!"

Myers
[00:44:53]

The environment, and the words, sound very familiar.

Gianopulos
[00:44:55]

And before I could say any more, he says, "Talk to Hank [Henry Jung] over there, he'll take care of you." Well, Hank Jung was his right-hand man, and a very capable, hands-on kind of guy [Jung later worked with Harold E. Wagoner & Associates, eventually owning the firm].

Myers
[00:45:06]

And less rough.

Gianopulos
[00:45:09]

Not at all rough. Yeah, not at all.

Laverty
[00:45:12]

Almost anyone by comparison would be less rough.

Gianopulos
[00:45:16]

So, Hank and I, you know, formed a friendship and a relationship, and we continued working together and eventually Charlie took early retirement from the Park Service to go out on his own in the early '60s. And the stuff that was finished up at Independence was finished under Lee Nelson's direction and Penny was supporting him. And there was Hugh Miller and there were these other people, you know, there was a good team here. It was a good team here. Of course, Charlie always said that if it hadn't been for him, they would have never hired these people. Some truth in that. It's probably true. I was fortunate enough to get in to work with these people and I got to work on all these buildings.

And in 1962, we had a kind of a tragedy in our office where two of our partners were killed in a plane accident. Ray and Dan were killed in a plane accident flying back from St. Lawrence University. So it was up to Tom Leidig and I to get this going and keep it going because Sheldon Keast was down with pneumonia. So Tom and I were putting in 80-hour weeks. I want to tell you, it was dreadful. And we did this from Thanksgiving right up until about the second week of January when Tom said, "Let's get Carl Bower in here." Because Carl had worked with us before, he had been our site inspector for the Bulletin Building for Robert Montgomery Brown-George Howe.

Myers
[00:47:12]

But he was independent?

Gianopulos
[00:47:14]

Yeah, yeah. So, Carl came back and joined us and we made him a partner and so on and so he was a welcome addition to the firm. So then, you know, surprising things happened at that time, 1962. I had known Lou Kahn through this friend of mine, David Zuckerkon, who had worked there. He had introduced me to Lou. I had met Bob Venturi at Lou's when he came back from the American Academy in Rome. This was about '56 or '57. And so here were contacts other than the old clients that came in through their mill. And Lou offered us the job to do Dhaka, because Komandant at that time was up to his ears with Salk. So we undertook the job in Dhaka. The new capital building in East Pakistan. And we worked like the dickens on that, and that was working with bill payment because Lou was not being paid by the Pakistani government, you know. He was compromised. It wasn't really Lou's fault. And we spent two hot and heavy years with Lou, and Tom Leidig and I went over to Dhaka.

Eventually we turned over our work. When we went to Lou's [i.e. started working with Kahn] we'd been [on] the Hershey Medical Center by H2L2 and they know that we're in the bind financially and the banks were not giving us any encouragement. They said, "Get rid of Kahn, leave him, etc. and so on." So we went and talked to Kahn and Lou said, "Well, I was wondering when you were going to come over and talk to me about this." Because he then owed us about \$90,000 back in 1964. That was a lot of money. A lot of money. He asked what we could do to help give transition to the project and so I said, "Well you know, for two of those years we had a dandy engineer by the name of Harry Palmbaum."

Harry had left us to go to work with Bernie Schwartz. And so Lou had known Harry, liked him, and he said, "Well, do you think he would be willing to take it on?" I said, "Well, it depends on what your conditions are going to be between the two of you." And he said, "Would you call him?" So I called Harry right at the moment and got him. And he said, yeah, he'd be interested in taking it on. So Harry took it on and finished up the engineering that we hadn't done. And as far as I'm concerned, he did a dandy job. He was a good engineer, [I] had no doubts about it. You knew what his competency was.

Later on, Lou had us come back. We did a lot of work for Lou. And as he got money, he paid us off. So we never really gave up any money working for Lou, it was just delayed for a long time. And we did the Exeter Library, we did all of the Olivetti Factory up in Harrisburg.

Laverty
[00:50:59]

[Did you] do the Richards Center? The Richards labs?

Gianopulos
[00:51:02]

That was done before. The Richards Labs was done in the late '50s. We had done those for Lou, and that was before Dhaka.

Myers
[00:51:11]

And wasn't [August] Komendant involved as well?

Gianopulos
[00:51:10]

Yes, yes. Komendant designed the precast systems, and we did all the poured in place [concrete] and the foundation systems on that. And we had a decent working relationship with Komendant. He was a very good engineer, but he was tough! Particularly if you were going the other way from his way of thinking. So of course we used to have some wonderful discussions back and forth because Gus [Komendant] was working for the German government during World War II when he was in Germany and the fact that he was not a German citizen he was an Estonian citizen allowed him to get entry into this country. At the very end of World War II, he was contacted by SHAEF [Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force] and Allied Headquarters [Allied Force Headquarters] to help do some bomb damage of the bridges on the Autobahn. And so he got a team together of people he knew over there, and they did this. And he became quite familiar in advance with pre-stressed concrete as a consequence of that. And he eventually comes over to the Estonian community in Lakehurst, which had built up from a lot of refugees and displaced people. And they had started a pre-cast concrete company called Lakewood Pre-Stressing. And he came in and became a principal of the firm, and their primary spokesman for selling.

And I met Gus at Lou's when he came in to promote pre-cast for the Trenton Jewish Community Center. This was other than the bath houses. This was for a very large center which never got beyond design development. And, you know, he'd come down and Lou was just fascinated by his discussions on pre-casts, Komendant's. And he said to me one day, "Do you think it would be well for me

to retain him on these pre-cast things?" I said, "By all means." I said, "We've done some pre-casts, but not to the degree of what he was doing," because we were working closely with Formigli Bros. [Formigli Bros. Concrete Products]. You know, down in Vineland. So, Komendant becomes, we become co-consultants and we worked on several projects together. And, as a matter of fact, Komendant went to Dhaka with Lou and Carles Vallhonrat to kind of apprise themselves on the situation, the materials and the skills and so on that were over there. And here's Gus, you know, forever being the forward-looking guy, he said to Kafila Dean, who was the director of the Pakistani Public Works Department over there, he said, "I can come over here and I can set up a factory to produce everything required for this capital project. There's only 10 or 15 men running it." And Kafila Dean looks at him and he says, "Dr. Komendant, we want to employ a thousand people. If each one is carrying only one brick, that's what we want." So Komendant was taken by this, taken back by this.

So, he was really getting very much involved in Salk [Institute], and so Lou said, "Nick, will you do the job?" You know, so I said, "Yeah, we'll do it." It was an interesting period of time there until we had to withdraw because of no monies. And, of course, the interesting side observer on this was Roy Larson. Roy had known Lou during the Sesquicentennial in South Philly when Lou was a young designer at Paul Cret's office. So he'd known Lou and he admired Lou's capabilities. Roy Larson was the gentleman's gentleman. Never made it really out of the Beaux-Arts's approach towards design. And he was, his project was the Hershey Medical Center and the whole thing really ought to have been a cast-in-place concrete job because that's what it looks like. It's all sheathed in limestone and who knows, eventually the support angles and the flashing. So there's going to have to be some major surface remediations, but it's a good project. It's well built.

And we were fortunate, too, at the same time, to develop wonderful contacts with Hershey Foods. And the project representative for the Hershey School for Boys, whose money was doing this thing was a Dr. J.O. Hershey and we became very good friends with him and he was fascinated by the work we had been doing in Dhaka and whatnot and we met a wonderful geologist, Richard Fuchs who had been the chairman at F&M (Franklin & Marshall). He had been Hershey's consultant because Hershey was always looking for water for industrial processing and so he found and located the wells for that industrial processing. And then he once defeated Bethlehem Steel in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court because Bethlehem Steel had had quarries at Anvil, PA, east of Hershey, where they were extending their quarries and deepening them, and they were starting to pump. And they were lowering the groundwater table from a great area around, causing bridge abutments to settle, foundations of houses to settle. It was affecting Hershey. So Hershey, and they had all these funds in the states, you know, those are properties, so Hershey just went out after, after Dr. Fuchs had done his analysis, geological analysis of the issues. Hershey took it to court and eventually reached the Supreme

Court in Pennsylvania, and Bethlehem Steel was told to cease and desist. They could not lower their quarries, they could extend them, but not lower them. Because that stuff was going and that limestone was going to the furnaces in Bethlehem, PA, where they were producing steel. We did work in the park [Hershey Park], when the park was turned around in 1972 from a ruin of the pre-war park to the theme park it is now. We were asked to design the foundations for this huge monorail that was in there. It was a copy of the one used at the Montreal World Fair just a couple of years ago.

Laverty
[01:00:08]

Which park is this?

Gianopulos
[01:00:09]

Hershey Park.

Laverty
[01:00:10]

Oh, Hershey Park.

Gianopulos
[01:00:10]

And at the same time they started having us do work in Hershey Foods. And, of course, the wonderful added benefit of working in Hershey Foods in the engineering department there was [that] they had this huge two-door refrigerator full of reject products. The chocolate bars had little corners chipped off of them, you know, but they were fresh. And we'd get up there at 10 o'clock and we'd start eating and we'd leave at six. We were so wired. I couldn't sleep until the following night, but hey, when you're young, that's a great thing to do.

Well, just going back and tying some things together. My career had the benefit of doing two things. That was, I was able to work in preservation and really good projects and with good architects and with good clients, the Park Service. At the same time, I had the opportunity to work on contemporary work where I was doing a lot of, I think, significant work with Mitchell/Guigola, Robert Venturi, and I had a lot of satisfaction from that. Most of the work with these folks was institutional, it wasn't with developers, but when we did a job with a developer, we learned that the developer really didn't care about his building except for reselling it. There was greater satisfaction working for a client who valued their building. These are the people who owned buildings, being preserved, restored, and so on. And so eventually I was doing less and less contemporary work and not regretting it a bit. And so I think my greatest satisfactions have come from doing preservation. And I've worked on some good buildings. The favorite building, and my favorite building is the Merchants Exchange. Sure, I enjoyed Independence and all that stuff, you know, but...

Laverty
[01:02:53]

Why is that your favorite?

Gianopulos
[01:02:55]

Well, the building was built in the 1830s, and one of the last buildings Strickland did here before he went down to Tennessee. And in 1902, they realized that it was unsuitable as a building for, we call it a stock exchange or whatever. And so they came in and gutted the building. Put in what they considered to be a modern steel building at that time, within the confines of it. They underpinned the building as best they could. We were then confronted by having to deal with that old structural system, which was columns made up of angles and plates and a limited number of deep beams, a deep beam, plate girders.

Park Service duped themselves into thinking that it was a walk-away job. Well, the reason they duped themselves is because they had copies of the original structural drawings from 1902 by whoever that engineer was. But they didn't have the copies of the building as it was constructed. Somebody then value-engineered it, and we had the original drawings, but not the value-engineered drawings. So it was presumed by them from the drawings that they had, that there would be no problem in converting this building into contemporary offices.

Well, we started to look at things and we find just by pulling a few pieces of ceiling tile down that the beam spacing was different [from what] was on the original drawing. The beam depths were different. The original beams had 15-inch [I-beams]; there were 12-inch [I-beams]. And so we quickly realized the building was different, constructed differently. And the one who did a great deal of that work was Suzanne Pentz, you know, she was a bird dog on that. And we made her case down at the [Park] Service Center that, hey, it's a different building. They couldn't believe it. So I said, "Look, come on, open some of this up for us and we'll prove it to you." So they came out. We had to core some bolts through the floor and we found that the floor had numerous layers of concrete put on for conduits and whatnot. And this structure was so overloaded, just by the dead load, you really couldn't do more than that. So we wrote our reports and assessments and convinced them that they had to strip all the tile floors, all the concrete out of there, but leaving the structure there. And we would come in and put on a lightweight contemporary structure capable of carrying code-conforming loads. So that consisted of using metal deck lightweight concrete on it. Some composite beams where we used shear studs.

And a part of this whole thing was also qualifying the capability of the foundations. So we were fortunate enough to have Woodard Clyde on the job, and this fellow, Nasser Massoudi, as the geotech on that. And we excavated several of the foundations and found them to be different than shown on the 1902 original drawings. And so we did that. We excavated sides so we could measure them. They were stepped-parabola, concrete footings, not reinforced. So we would have a section excavated so we would get its steps, offsets, and depth. And then on the basis of the geotechnical we took soil borings and this and that and so on and concluded that these footings could carry the new loads. So that was really a great development for us and for the Park Service because groundwater was high. It was

perched. It's not the original groundwater but it was perched on clay layers. And there was just a lot of it there. So every time you dug a hole, water would just come in. I don't know how far we'd have to drain half the stuff.

Myers
[01:08:19] Well, you were right on Dock Street.

Gianopulos
[01:08:20] Well, we're high. We're high, though. But it was perched water on the place. So we were able to carry that project through conclusion, and I was very, very pleased with it and eventually we will give The Athenaeum a copy of my report. And just as another sideline we will get you a report on Christ Church.

Myers
[01:09:03] Did you work on the INA [Insurance Company of North America Building] construction with Mitchell/Guirgola?

Gianopulos
[01:09:10] No, that was Les Robertson from New York. He did a dandy job. And that's where they discovered, see that was, there's a moral story that we engineers try to always adhere to that when we do a job in another area from Philadelphia, we try to retain geotechnical engineers from those areas. Well, they brought--I forgot who they brought down, but they brought down a very good firm from New York. And they didn't really pick up the fact that the water down in the layer of gravel that they wanted to take their caissons to was live with water from Dock Creek and they ended up having to leave all the cans in place. The cans are the cylinders that they advanced the auger through to get down to the predetermined bottom of the caisson. And it was a substantial extra. But they conquered it. They conquered it. And it's been required of a couple other buildings in the city to do that. The interesting thing was that it really led astray the people who did the Courts building at 6th and Market¹...The issue that came up there is they had the General Services Administration had an engineer, clerk of the works. And he had insisted on stopping the caissons higher than they should have gone because he had the woolies about what had happened to the INA building. Well, he stopped them too high and they had to go back in and underpin the caissons, you know.

Laverty
[01:11:42] Well, just for the record, the Court building was sinking in its first few years?

Gianopulos
[01:11:47] Yes, yes.

Laverty
[01:11:49] By how much?

¹ The architects of the Federal Courthouse complex at 6th and Market streets in Philadelphia were a collaborative team: Carroll, Grisdale & Van Allen, Steward, Noble, Class & Partners, and Bellante & Clauss. The complex, which includes the James A. Byrne Courthouse and the Robert N. C. Nix, Sr. Federal Building, was completed in phases, with the Byrne Courthouse opening in 1975.

Gianopulos
[01:11:49]

Oh, I don't know. They kept it all very quiet. They kept the out-of-court settlement quiet and so on. That's the one thing I might say that I dislike about the judiciary that we have in this country, where when there are settlements made out of court or when there are grand jury investigations, the public is not informed of them. Not informed of that. So how can we learn from these instances?

I had told the story, I was working with Bob Venturi on the concert hall when Bob was doing it. And...

Myers
[01:12:33]

The Kimmel Center?

Gianopulos
[01:12:35]

It's now the Kimmel Center, but it wasn't called that yet. It was called the Philadelphia Orchestra Hall. And we were working with the acoustician, Russell Johnson, who was the acoustician on the present one. And we thought they were pretty confident people. But they were very insistent on something, which didn't register with us. We couldn't believe it. And that had to do with the adjusting of a huge acoustical shell over the orchestra where they could tune the hall for a huge orchestra, for a single concert, a single instrument like a piano or voice or whatever. And the whole issue is that this thing is supported by a series of counterweights. And I said to Bob and John Rauch at the time, I said, "Look, this doesn't ring true." And he, "Well, look, why don't you call Les Robertson, who is doing the concert hall for I.M. Pei down in, I think, Houston." So I called Les, and he said to me, "Ignore the acousticians, do it the way you want." That's what we did. And they've gone along with it. But they had this notion that it should be used in a particular way. So then I took his advice, eventually, and did that. And we're taking it up to DD, design development. I said, "Les, can I ask you a question?" And he said, "Sure, go ahead." This was by telephone. And I said, "Look, I recall after the World Trade Towers were built, there was a pre-existing building across the way, which apparently was being buffeted significantly by winds when before it wasn't. And as a consequence of the Venturi effect, with the wind blowing down from the north between the two towers, affecting the other tower, which required the other towers to eventually be reinforced. I said, "I read about this in ENR [Engineering News-Record] going to court, but you know, time has gone by, I've not heard the details that were involved." And he said, "Well, Nick," he said, "this is something that's known as the American judicial system. When you settle out of court, you don't have to disclose what the settlement was." He said, "I'm afraid I can't tell you. You can draw your own conclusions." So this is one of the things that hangs in my craw. But anyways, we have done all this work...

And, oh, I want to make a comment about Bob Venturi. He's one of my favorite architects and [we're] personal friends, both he and Denise. That when they did the restoration of the Furness Library, that when I tell people about that, I had the advisory board up here for a meeting from Natchitoches (the National Center for Preservation Training and Technology, located in Natchitoches, Louisiana) and we

went out and Julia Converse had a little reception for us there. And you know, I said to these guys and several more academics, either architectural historians or in architecture, I said standing there in the great room, "What could you say here identifies it to have been done by Robert Venturi?" I looked around, looked around and they said, "We don't see anything that's a Venturi mark." I said, "Well, it's a very subtle one. It's four stuffed, over-stuffed chairs in front of the fireplace." That's what Bob left here as his mark. Nobody's aware. But I think that Bob is a pretty sensitive guy, aware, and for that reason I have always enjoyed working with him.

As a matter of fact, I would say now, when we finish the filming, you ought to go down and film the new handicap ramp at Carpenter's Hall. Have you seen it, Hy?

Myers
[01:17:12]

No, I haven't.

Gianopulos
[01:17:14]

You're in for a surprise.

Myers
[01:17:14]

Good, bad?

Gianopulos
[01:17:18]

I think it's extraordinary.

Laverty
[01:17:19]

Extraordinarily good?

Gianopulos
[01:17:24]

Yes! And the folks that I talked to from the Park Service are very pleased with it.

Laverty
[01:17:28]

It's in the rear?

Gianopulos
[01:17:29]

It's the rear, each side of the rear. It's all of wood. Totally of wood. After all, it's Carpenter's Hall. It shouldn't be of wrought iron and granite and all these other materials. And these handicap ramps were supposed to be not permanent. They're supposed to be reversible. So we had once considered a passenger lift, but we found that in this weather, they just weren't dependable. And so we eventually came around to a ramp. There was a competition within the members of the Company, and Venturi Scott Brown's ramp was selected. And I think it's done very sensibly. And the building itself, the little jewel box, I think that it complements the jewel box. That's my theory. You've got to see it.

Myers
[01:18:37]

You mentioned the following names: Kahn, Carles Vallhonrat, Komendant, Venturi, and they were all at school as teachers when I was at the University of Pennsylvania. Can you tell us if that's how they got together?

Gianopulos
[01:19:04]

Carles was originally from Barcelona. His family went down to Argentina. We studied down there and he was very much taken by Kahn's work and his writings early. And the same might be said for Scott Brown. Denise had been reading, she had studied school at the A.A. [Architectural Association] in London, and she was very much taken by Kahn's work. So she decided to come over here and study at Penn, get a master's, and eventually, you know, got into Kahn's courses and so on. So you know, Kahn was a magnet. He was a magnet. And Kahn brought Komendant in after he had done the towers and so on, and so for a few years he taught a master's course there in civil engineering, but then he found it too confining and gave it up that he did participate with Lou in his studio, and that's probably where you first met him. Carles, as I said, came up from Argentina, and I don't know whether he did any more graduate work up here, but he went to work for Lou, I think in the early '60s, probably the beginning of the Salk project or the beginning the Dhaka project, and was with him for several years, until he got married and then he found out he couldn't conduct a varied life. On Kahn's salary and schedule of payment.

There's an interesting story that comes from my perspective about the Graduate School of Architecture at Penn when you were there. I'll tell you this as an aside. I was asked to be a critic there in '64 and '65 because Perkins, who was the dean, was looking for somebody else to come in with some experience into contemporary stuff. Both Lou and Bob Venturi brought my name up and said okay, so he eventually contacted me and I went out and it was really amusing because in 1958, I had been recommended by Venturi because I wanted to do a master's in city planning. But I couldn't do it full-time; I had to do it as a part-time [student]. Well, I went out there for three semesters and took these courses and was just having a very difficult time because I would go out to the library at five o'clock and the few books that they had available out there, you know, people lined up at noon time for them, you know, so I wouldn't get these books until they handed them in at 9 o'clock. So I couldn't do these 60-page reading assignments, you know, in that hour before the library closed. Then at the same time, my partners, Ray and Dan DiBona, said, "Look, you're going to be a partner. [Are you going to] contribute to this firm? Or are you going to go to school? Make up your mind." I felt that I enjoyed my working as a consulting engineer more than just being a student, so I withdrew. But I did get to know some very good people out there, you know, the teachers there. And I'm trying to think of this fellow...Bill Wheaton. Do you remember Bill Wheaton?

Myers
[01:23:28]

Yes.

Gianopulos
[01:23:30]

I thought Bill Wheaton was one of the best teachers that I've ever known in housing. He was teaching housing and I'll relate how he influenced my wife, my life, my place of living. He used to give a three-credit course, three-hour lecture. Really jammed every Friday afternoon, and he would have a coffee break in the middle of the thing. Then he came back and kibbitzed with us, those of us who

were sitting there, and he said, "You know, I'm talking about housing as a social instrument, a political instrument, this and that, it's an economic instrument." He says, "But what about housing for us?" And he said, "I had to learn a few things." And he said when he and his wife were married, his wife was a teacher, and of course the first house they looked for was down that single lane road at the end where they were the last house and he says we love this idyllic insulation or you know isolation. And then he said, "As time went along and we were changing positions, the teaching positions of various teaching institutions, and as our family kept growing," he says, "we ended up having a house right across the street from a food market, a supermarket, where we could tell the kids to go get some bread, you know, bring back some milk, or pick up the newspaper, or do something." And he said, we quickly realized a house is a very important place to raise your family and live in. But he said the community is also important and it's community services. It's community services.

Well here I'm listening to all this. We're living in this idyllic setting down in Rosemont in a stable apartment and you know a few years later we have our first child and our second child and we can't live in that place anymore. It was dangerous and so we used to drive through Gladwyn and it kind of looked nice to us but this house came on the market. We turned it down. Two years later it came back up. A couple had bought it. They painted it. They wanted to get out of it and my wife says, "We need another house," and so I said, "All right, we'll take it." So we bought this house. And we said, "Well, we'll live there for three years." We've only been there for 46. Because we've been putting additions on it over the years and improving it. And the reason we stayed was because of the community, the community services.

And it's interesting to see the transformation. We were the young kids on the block with two kids and our third came soon thereafter. A year and a half after we were there, they instituted a bus that rounds the corner down the street from me half a block away. I get on that bus every day. I've been doing it for 44 years. And I come home and they let me off right there. And if I'm asleep, the driver's waiting for me. And we're now the old guys on the block. And there's a whole new generation in there. And they're different. The first generation, the houses, most of the houses were pre-cut Sears-Roebuck houses, starting 1920-22. And some of the last ones, the last one next door to me, was the best one. Because the previous houses' columns were on brick pedestals. This house had full Tuscan columns down to the porch floor. It's the best on the block, you know, and I would have bought it if I could have put it, it wasn't for sale. But we have enjoyed being there. It was a blue-collar street. The men on the street worked at the Autocar plant in Ardmore that burnt down. They worked for the yarn mills in Conshohocken and Manayunk. And, you know, that whole industry left. They died out. Eventually, there are new owners for the houses. Many of the houses are now under third owners, some going under their fourth. But we've enjoyed it. We enjoy the people. Now that we're the oldies on the block, when the young people have house warmings and so

on, we get invited. And we don't have to take anything. We just go. But anyways, that was, that all came out of Penn and Bill Wheaton.

Another story I have about Penn is when they were trying to find developers for the Naval Home. Remember so many years ago? I had a call one day from somebody from Breuer's office in New York [Marcel Breuer & Associates], and he said we want you to be exclusive with us, not to be with any of the other teams. I said, "I'm sorry, we're already on two teams. We have enjoyed the confidence of the architectural community in the city because we simply, we don't disclose. We just assign a different partner to each of those teams. We don't even talk about it at lunch." We didn't, it's true, we didn't. So the guy said, "Well, I'm sorry, we can't do it. We must insist on exclusivity." You know, we've always fought this, we still get the coursework, we always do. And so he said, "Okay, goodbye."

The next day he calls, he says, "You know, I called some people I knew in Philadelphia. What you said was so. [Firm name unclear] was one of the firms. And both of them, we were on two or three teams out there. So the guy said, "OK, I want to come down and have the first big public walk over there. And meet you, and we can go to lunch and what not after." We went to lunch after. And he said, "Why is it in Philadelphia that you can have this relationship between the consultants and the architects when you know they're in competition with each other." I said, "Well, we're perfectly aware of it." But I attribute it to the way the school works at Penn. Where, and I attribute this to both Perkins, and to some degree, Kahn, but Perkins was the fellow who was then the chairman and the dean, where he would bring in to conduct his studios the lead designers from competing firms. And these people learned to work together and I think they developed a mutual respect for one another. And the chap from Breuer's office said, "I've never heard of such a thing." He said there was such dog-eat-dog competition. He said, "When we go to Boston," he says, "we always work with either Harvard engineers or MIT engineers. We never cross the line." I said, "Well, it's not that way in Philadelphia." And I said I enjoy it that way. I enjoy it that way. And yet, you know, if you're teamed up with somebody, they win, and you were teamed up with somebody else, and they didn't. Next time around, the loser will come around and say, "Well, we want you to be on our team again." Sometimes they get it. So it's been kind of equalized over time. I think Penn has had an important influence on the, how do you say, the gentility of the architectural community in the city. I really do.

Myers
[01:32:45]

That's an interesting observation because we have done that with you before, even on projects that we have gone after. And I never attributed it to anything particularly. In fact, I thought it was always that way in other cities, but it's absolutely not.

Gianopulos
[01:33:01]

It's not. You go to Baltimore, it's not.

We have, I think you know that we have an office in Washington, and it's a dandy office. And I guess I know six, eight people down there and they're all top flight people. And they've built up a pretty good practice in Baltimore, as well as Washington. And the fellow who runs it, Matt Daw, worked up here with us for seven years. He's noticed, down there, again, it's not with the freedom that we work with up here. So I guess Philadelphia's unique, you know, Philadelphia cream cheese, Scrapple, what else? What's that soup?

Laverty
[01:33:50]

Pretzels.

Gianopulos
[01:33:50]

Pretzles, you name it, or something else, a soup where they...Pepper pot! Where they throw everything, you don't ask what's in it.

Myers
[01:34:01]

Philadelphia also is quite exceptional in that way, in that it rarely used outside architects outside of the city until recently.

Gianopulos
[01:34:13]

Until recently. But it was outside money that dictated it.

Myers
[01:34:16]

Yeah. But for 300 years, essentially, they used only Philadelphia architects, and it was very rare, if ever, a major architect came from outside Philadelphia to Philadelphia. And the ones that are rare are memorable. For example, we have no Richardson buildings in Philadelphia. There are Richardson buildings everywhere.

Gianopulos
[01:34:39]

Everywhere except here. It's very true. I have felt that there is an injustice done to Philadelphia architects because a lot of the banks now are not Philadelphia banks. And their funding and their support for developers is not really--how do I say?--a Philadelphia issue. They will go to and support whoever they believe that they've had satisfactory experience with. And, you know, when you stop to think about how we had the two Liberty Place buildings that are literally cookie-cutter buildings that Helmut Jahn had done in Chicago. And they broke the height limit, and I don't know that anything was gained by it. The last building breaking the height limit, or the present one, is the, what do you call it?

Laverty
[01:36:05]

Comcast Tower.

Gianopulos
[01:36:07]

Comcast Tower. And it's a pretty nice building. But the one thing, we are living through a transition of cladding materials where glass is cheaper than anything else. And where glass can be made to do things that other materials can't. You know, it can provide isolation from infrared, from ultraviolet, from this and that, one thing or the other. Its maintenance is caulking sometimes and, at the worst, replacing some gaskets. Which are much simpler in the long run to do than having to come in and do a massive repointing job on masonry and so on. But we have masonry where, and you fellas did it, where the masonry is precast. Makes a lot of sense, makes a lot of sense. And I think you still then have the opportunity of coming up

with a building that has architectural qualities other than squinting eyes. But I can understand why the trend has gone towards the glass enclosure. But I think that if we're going to carry this just a little bit further, I am pleased thus far that we don't have any of these exhibitionistic buildings that are going up all over the country. Okay, maybe I'm out of my milieu. I'm speaking like somebody from the past, but that's okay. I'm not ashamed of the past.

Laverty
[01:38:10]

Have you seen the design for the new, I think it's called the American Commerce Center, the Kohn Pederson Fox megaskyscraper to be built right next to the Comcast Tower. 1,500 feet. It was in the Inquirer about two weeks ago.

Gianopulos
[01:38:27]

I don't read Philadelphia papers, I'm sorry.

Myers
[01:38:31]

So we see.

Gianopulos
[01:38:37]

But, God forbid, that's all I can say. God forbid, you know, it's...I don't know. Whether they built these things with real money or play money.

RECORDING BREAK

Gianopulos
[00:00:01] Oh, I'm sure it would be an interesting building, but I'm not sure. Are they doing gymnastics on it? Kohn Pedersen? Because they've not done gymnastics before.

Myers
[00:00:12] Not the type that you're thinking of, no.

Gianopulos
[00:00:14] No, I'm thinking of the Calatrava.

Laverty
[00:00:19] Well, what do you mean by gymnastics? That's not gymnastics.

Myers
[00:00:21] Like Bilbao. That kind of thing?

Gianopulos
[00:00:27] Yeah, and actually Bilbao becomes more tenable in view of what the other guys are doing.

Myers
[00:00:39] It certainly started the trend.

Gianopulos
[00:00:41] Koolhaas and all these people, they do a museum or they do a library that's not a library. I don't know what our library is going to be like.

Myers
[00:00:52] Moshe Safdie's?

Gianopulos
[00:00:52] Yeah, Moshe Safdie. Have you seen it?

Myers
[00:00:52] Yes, I've seen some pictures. It's quite nice. It looks still like a library.

Gianopulos
[00:01:03] It does. All right, well good. Well, good.

Myers
[00:01:06] What is your favorite modern building in Philadelphia? Or at least a very good one.

Gianopulos
[00:01:15] Oh, all right. I'll tell you. My favorite building is the Vagelos Chemistry Building at Penn on 34th Street, which is across the street from the Furness Building. And one reason it's the favorite, I like its proportions and the detailing, and I like what Bob did where he inflected the building to emphasize the presence of the Furness. To me, it's one just... the Vagelos building. It's a combination of Vagelos and the Furness building. That is, I like that. I think that that's a sensitivity that you don't

see. You know, one of the things about the concert hall down here, when we were going to school...I don't know, was Mario there when you were going to school?

Myers
[00:02:11]

Yes.

Gianopulos
[00:02:12]

I can remember, this is Mario Romanach, who eventually became the chair of the department. Mario used to emphasize the importance of the street as an architectural element in the solution of any building. The relationship of that building to the street, either in scale or material or in detail or whatever. And when I see the Kimmel Center came up, [it] just doesn't relate to the street. It should have been down with The Spectrum in a big parking lot. And when Tom Hines wrote his, he came up from wherever he was teaching in the South, he came and he did a column and I liked his closing statement where he says, "The architect was asked for a concert hall, but he gave him a mall instead." I thought that was very appropriate. He said, they didn't need a mall, they just needed a concert ball, that's what they needed.

So, well anyways, I like that building [Vagelos Chemistry Building]. And, of course, I'm prejudiced for a few others. I did Venturi's Mother's House. Of course, I liked the Trenton bathhouses because we did those. We did those over a weekend! For Lou. And he was at the point where they were going to fire him. He had a poor relationship with that client. They really did not appreciate Lou. The community up there did not appreciate Lou, and Lou really carried that. He felt--and he did the same thing for the community down here with Mikveh Israel--when they gave it to H2L2 to do that building over there. He had done this wonderful study, you've probably seen the study right there. And eventually that same concept ended up in Tel Aviv, I don't know whether they built it or not. But he felt that he was not given fair consideration. And I agree, I agree.

You know, I'll tell you one thing about Lou that he did, he came up with a scheme, when they were talking about the Bicentennial, back in '75 and '74. He, I don't know who he did it for, but he did a scheme for the block north of Independence Hall. That scheme consisted of a whole dump of row houses, row buildings, where there were pedestrian walkways under cover. Going around that whole perimeter. It was scaled to Independence Hall, the buildings there. He did, I only saw one freehand rendering of it, you know, one of his renderings on the thing. And the Bicentennial here was a bust in terms of anything because Nixon was fighting a war in Vietnam.

Laverty
[00:06:13]

And Rizzo was fighting a war in Philadelphia.

Gianopulos
[00:06:16]

But it was a bust, you know, in terms of new construction and what not. They did get the Bell Pavilion done, which wasn't a bad little building. It's been highly criticized, but hey, Aldo [Giurgola] gave them the program they wanted. You know,

if they had given them a program that wanted triple the square feet, they'd have given them that, too. But, oh, I'll tell you a Bell Pavillion story. We did the structure. Tom Leidig did the structural in that. But the Bell Pavilion was constructed and they moved the Bell on New Year's Eve, '76.

Laverty
[00:06:52]

In a pouring rain.

Gianopulos
[00:06:54]

Pouring rain, yeah. And the TV cameras were shortened out and everything. It was a mess. And the following day, January the 1st, happens to be a Greek Orthodox holiday, Saint Basil's Day. We had an uncle over in Cherry Hill who observed that day every New Year and we all, the family, congregated over there. So, we're driving in on the Expressway in one of these VW boxes. And I had two of them and we loved them. But anyways, here's my father-in-law, mother-in law, three kids and my wife. And so we're coming up Vine Street and I said, "Hey, I want to show you something. So I turned down 6th Street and we finally got to Market, made a left turn. Before I could say anything about the Bell Pavilion, my wife pops up and says, "Look, Mom and Dad. There's the new subway station for the Bicentennial. The Bell Pavilion. So, anyways, I informed them otherwise. The following week I was at Richard Berle's office, and Aldo was there, and I said, "Aldo, let me tell you a story about your Bell Pavilion."

Myers
[00:08:27]

Brave man.

Gianopulos
[00:08:33]

Well, no, he was a very tempered guy. I never saw Aldo ever get angry. Never saw him angry. But anyways, I related the story to him, and he smiled, and says, "You know, isn't it wonder? Isn't it a wonder how many people can interpret architecture so many different ways?" Big smile and he walks away. But that was my wife's introduction to the subway stuff.

Laverty
[00:09:02]

Now, were you called upon when they dismantled the Pavilion?

Myers
[00:09:06]

Or put it back together.

Laverty
[00:09:11]

Has it been put back together yet?

Myers
[00:09:13]

Yes.

Laverty
[00:09:14]

Okay.

Gianopulos
[00:09:15]

Well, no, let me tell you. We weren't. And we were disappointed at that. And we never really saw it being dismantled, so I don't know how they did it and what was involved. But Tom Bladink had given them a pretty good structure. He stopped to think of that thing, cantilevering out there, with all the wind on that glass. That structure stayed there because the winds used to build, really some pretty good momentum coming across the Mall. No, we liked the little building. We liked it. I'm trying to think hard of some building that I really enjoy more than others. Certainly, the Richards building and whatnot. You know, there's a lot of buildings that I've liked, but I really think that the combination of Vagelos and Furness, the new and the old, to me, is what architecture is about. That goes back to Mario, who was saying the street is a very important thing in the whole development. Now, I don't know whether Bob had his own philosophy for doing what he did. But I ended up with that satisfying my needs.

So anyways, so what else do you want to know?

Myers
[00:10:49]

Who was maybe a very favorite client of yours who really understood what was going on and you really worked with well.

Gianopulos
[00:10:57]

Well, I like Lou, I think Lou Kahn was, and Bob Venturi. It was always a pleasure to work with him. I met Bob at Lou's, I don't know why I mention that to you. My wife and sister were invited to a little tea cocktail reception at David Zuckerkandl's place back in the middle '50s, I think it was '56. West Oak Lane where they had a house, and so about four in the afternoon, Lou said to David, says, "David, can I get a cab here?" David said, "Lou, on a Sunday afternoon, if we call now for the cab, you may get one in two hours." So Lou's looking around and he said, "Did you drive?" And I said, "Yes, I did." He said, "Can you take me to my office?" Now I had already known Lou. And I'll tell you a Yale Art story, a Yale Art Gallery story. But anyways. So we drove Lou down, and then he said, "Do you mind coming up and meeting this fellow?" And I said, "Would you mind driving home," to my sister. And she said, "No, we'll go home." I said, "I'll take the train, and you pick me up." Bob had just gotten there, and so I met Bob. He had just come back from the Academy in Rome. And Bob knew what Lou was doing, and Lou was also a good friend with Saarinen, who had just done the Technical Center, GM Technical Center out in Bloomfield, Michigan. And he was out there working with Charlie Moore and Dinkeloo Roach. I forget who the other people were, but it was really quite a studio. But Bob went to Rome, he comes back, and he had wanted to set up his practice, but he was confronted with his father being very, very ill, bedridden. So we, the children of immigrants, were drawn together.

But with Lou...When Lou wasn't pressured to do something, he was just so delightful and what most people don't know he was a sports enthusiast to the word go. When I tell people this...

Laverty
[00:13:48]

Lou Kahn?

Gianopulos
[00:13:49]

Lou Kahn. He was a wrestler when he was in college. He was a wrestler. 135 pounds. He used to tell me all this stuff. I learned later on that if Lou asked us to go in--actually, he would call me up at home and say, "Can you come in?" Like on a Saturday. And if it happened to be in the fall, I got in there right away because I knew at one o'clock he was at Franklin Field watching Penn. And if there was a Sunday, he was out there watching the Eagles. So I learned if I was going to have my talk with him, I had to do it before he got to the game. But, of course he was an Eagles fan.

You recall at one time that Penn had this great guy, Charlie Bednarik. Country Charlie. He was a 60-minute player, none of the tutu stuff. 60 minutes. He was a special team all by himself. So, Charlie was picked up as a sales rep by Warner Concrete Company.

Laverty
[00:15:07]

Makes sense.

Gianopulos
[00:15:08]

His nickname was Concrete Charlie, and so he would call up the architects. And of course, Warner knew that Lou loved concrete, exposed concrete, so they'd send him down to see Lou. Of course, Charlie would come in and be 6'3", 275, you know, and he'd wear an overcoat that went down to his ankles. He looked like something out of Lower Chicago. And so Lou would take a hold of his arm and take him into the front room, close the door. They would recap yesterday's game and Charlie's there with a bandage on his face. But this was colorful to see him coming in. Lou loved having him coming in. And so Charlie could always tell his bosses at Warner that had made a call on Kahn. And Kahn was going to use concrete for his next job.

Myers
[00:16:08]

Do you think that had any real influence?

Gianopulos
[00:16:10]

No, no, no. It's just a nice Philadelphia [story]. The other thing that Lou did is, if we went in to work on Sunday, there was a restaurant on Broad Street, kind of across from the Academy. Lou Tandler's. Lou Tender was a middle-weight boxer during the 1930s. And of course, Lou and these guys all loved each other. Lou Kahn, these guys loved each other. So he'd take us over there for lunch [at] like 3 o'clock in the afternoon. And Tom Stendler was there. And they'd start talking about this fighter, that fighter, because Lou used to follow them. Never missing them. He knew the outcome of the fights and everything. There was a guy who had a little restaurant around the corner on Sansom Street from 15th. Benny somebody. And it was almost like a bar, restaurant, and we used to go there with Lou, you know, at times. And so, you know Lou and Benny would square off. It was really amusing as a dickens, you know, because this is the side of Lou a lot of people never knew.

Myers
[00:17:26]

He used to go to The Colonnade a lot.

Gianopulos
[00:17:29]

Oh yeah! Oh yeah. Lou was a populist. They didn't think so, you know. He always spoke to, you know, these platitudes out at Penn and whatnot, and everybody thought that he was walking on his cloud. He loved these people, the shoeshine people, the taxi cab.

I met a cab driver. We were doing William Penn High School. We were at the Suburban Station building. I called a cab downstairs to go up to the William Penn High School project at Broad and Master. So the cabbie goes up to Cherry Street and he's driving east in back of the Pennwalt building where they have the open playing field above. And so, there was a traffic stop. And I'm kind of leaning up looking and I knew [name unclear, likely Allabach and Rennis] had done the job and George Batcheler had been involved. George Batcheler happened to have come from my hometown. We knew each other in high school. Our fathers knew each other.

So the cabbie says to me, "What do you think of that?" I said, "Well, I think it's a good idea to be able to get an athletic field up on another level there." And he said, "Professor Kahn likes it too--the idea." And I said, "You know him?" And he said, "Yes, I do." This is the cabbie. And then he says to me, "You going up to see that new building? *Jergoola's* [Giurgola's] up on Broad and Master? [William Penn High School]" And I say, "Yeah!" I said, "Do you know him?" He said, "Nah, I don't know him. But Professor Kahn knows him."

I said, "Alright, so how do you know Professor Kahn?" He said, "I was driving cabs one night, and we got this phone call into the cab center to dispatch a cab to 15th and Chestnut Street, and the client listed about three in the morning, four in the morning, and he wanted to drive up to Kennedy Airport." Because Lou had trouble when he used to go up to the train station [Penn Station in New York]. A lot of times [he had] trouble getting cabbies to drive him out, and he found that the cabbies from Philadelphia would do it. So Kahn opened the back of the cab door and he started to put his stuff back there. And then he closed the door and said, "I'll come up, I want to sit up front and talk with you." So he goes up and sits with the driver, and as they go up to Kennedy, Lou's regaling him with stories on architecture. It so happens that this guy was an Italian from South Philly, and of course, you know, he thought the Renaissance was the greatest thing that ever hit the streets since sliced bread. He drove Lou up there, I think, twice. He gave Lou his card, and if Lou was planning a trip in the next two or three days, he would call this guy's number at the cab office and be on alert. And so he took him up there and [Lou] actually gave him some little books on architecture. This guy was so enthused that Lou would do something like that. I just thought it was wonderful. I thought it was wonderful. We had a good relationship.

And the same with Bob. I've done a lot with Bob. I'll tell you a Venturi story. One of the first jobs he got was doing the improvements to the Doris Duke house up in 72nd and 5th or something like that, Trumbauer House. And it had so happened that the, I think the dean of the graduate school at NYU was Craig Smythe who was the director at the Academy at Rome at the time Bob was there. I think George Patton was there at the same time. And if not there, a year apart, or something like that. So anyways, Smythe liked Bob's ideas and asked him if he'd come in and do the adaptive reuse of the building. Well, Bob had never negotiated fees. He gave a fee which barely covered my fee. But I wanted to do the job. I didn't even go up and look at the building. I worked entirely from Trumbauer's drawings or whatever, Bob's drawings as well. So Bob said, "You know, you better come up and see the house." And he said, "I'm going to have a difficult time getting approvals and travel expenditures from Mather." Mather Lippincott, because Mather was handling the purse strings. And he said, "Would you mind coming up on a Sunday. I'll drive you up there and we'll have brunch and do that?" And I said, "Sure." Well, we were living in our little stable apartment in Rosemont at the time, and he comes and he picks us up, and it's a little [VW] Beetle, little black Beetle with windshield blades this wide. We drove up, he had his mother. My wife [and I], we followed. And we're going up the Jersey Turnpike. It rained the whole way, dogs and cats. And so here's Bob leaning over the steering wheel, you know, an inch from the windshield. We finally get up to Lou Childs on 14th Street, and he was exhausted, and I don't blame him. So we went in and had a great brunch, great brunch. And then we drove up to the house later. [The] house was interesting, but as interesting was the butler that Doris Duke had just given. When she gave the house to NYU, she gave them the butler, too. That was one of the conditions, that they take him. But he knew where everything was, all the services, all the service personnel, you know, for electricity, this and that and so on, so it was a godsend to NYU to have the guy. His name was Hanson. And he epitomized the butlers. When he stood and he talked to you, he never stood upright. He leaned over slightly. He always carried his hands by his pockets, you know. When he walked away, he always walked deferentially, slightly bowed, you know, then bent over. But he tells us the stories of how the Dukes were not initially accepted into New York society after they had built this house. And there are these social arbiters in New York who know what The Four Hundred are doing [i.e. the elite], where and when and how, and when they'll attend and when they won't. So a couple years later, the stars were all brought into alignment and they agreed to attend the opening of the house, although it had been completed two years before. Hanson, who had been brought over as the assistant silver butler from Norway.

Laverty
[00:25:56]

The *assistant* silver butler?

Gianopulos
[00:25:57]

[He] became the silver butler, eventually the house butler, but he was the assistant to the silver butler then. And he said that Duke, who had a private rail car--he had numerous friends across the country who had private rail cars. And he called them all up and he said, "Would you do me a favor and bring so-and-so to New York for

the grand opening of our house.” So apparently there were half a dozen rail cars with all these, you know, upscale passengers being brought into New York City and they were dispensing these limousines down to the station to pick these people up and bring them out. And he said the party lasted a week. He said it lasted a week. Then the deed was done and the Dukes never came back, but they maintained a staff of like 10 or 12 who lived up in the small servants’ rooms, up in a little dorm room, up on the third floor. And they kept the freezer and the iceboxes filled with food with which they fed the staff. So there was always a lot of provisions. And one of the consequences of that was that if Duke was traveling up from Durham and he wanted to bring somebody to the house in New York for an overnight dinner like that, when they got to Washington, they’d call and say, “We’re bringing two people or half a dozen people in,” you know, “have dinner ready” and so on. And Hanson said the house would just be like boot camp. Suddenly everybody was out there making the beds, they were dusting, vacuuming. The silver’s getting polished and everything like that. The cooks have gotten a menu together. And the limousine would be down to pick him up with his friends or a couple of limos and so on. And the next day, he’d ship out. And so he says, “I’ve been here most of these years and of course,” he said, “I probably spent more time with Miss Duke being here,” because she spent a lot of time in New York than James did, her father. So he said, “Come on, I’ll show you something.” Have you been in the house?

Myers
[00:28:52]

No.

Gianopulos
[00:28:54]

Well, in the second floor, next to Doris Duke’s bedroom was this room, almost this wide and almost this long, or this width, where there were all of these glass-fronted doors for the display of shoes. And every one had its own light. Here was this big panel board on the end with all these toggle switches, you know. And in the center was, again, the same thing where Dorris Duke’s hats were kept. And she would say to her maid, who helped her dress for some occasion, what her name was, “I want to use such-and-such a dress for the event. Will you select the shoes that are appropriate for it?” And the hat. And so apparently this gal was very skilled at doing this, and so Doris Duke would come home and there’s the dress she wanted hanging up. And here were the hats that would be appropriate with it, and there were the shoes illuminated that would be appropriate with it. And that’s how she put her ensembles together. I just thought it was so wonderful, you know, to see how they, “The other half” live.

Myers
[00:30:16]

We were doing her house, working on her house in Newport, and she had died, left the house to a foundation, and we were renovating it for the new use as a museum. And she walked out and nothing was changed. So the butler, the head butler, was still there, and she left him with an endowment for him to remain working, and he told me the exact same stories, that he could get the house ready within two hours of her coming at any time, any day. And it was just like

clockwork, everybody went to work, and as if she never left and she was there, everything was ready for her.

Gianopulos
[00:31:08]

It's just fascinating insights into "the other side."

Laverty
[00:31:14]

Well, I think these palaces were inhabited, on an everyday basis, by your everyday working folks, you know, and only resided in on special occasions.

Gianopulos
[00:31:28]

Well, let me say this. I have never had any ill will towards the robber barons because they've given us all these wonderful houses that we worked on. They used the finest crafts and materials of the period and the buildings or museums on that time frame, and I've always enjoyed doing that. I remember once I got a call by the Park Service to go and look at Hyde Park, Roosevelt's house, and apparently there was some of the attic framing, bored some, cracks, plaster was loose and so on. They wanted me to look at it, and I said I insisted on looking at it before making a proposal and just couldn't make a proposal without it. So I went up and looked at it and came back and before I could write my proposal, the roof burned off. So they didn't need me, so I didn't go any further than that, but I enjoyed working on [it], visiting the house, and I visited a Vanderbilt house up the street as well. But I've had a very rewarding experience, enjoying these buildings and I think that's why I focused in on preservation. And I disliked being asked to work on some third-rate building because of the fact that Robert Morris walked by the front door one day or something of the sort like that, but I think the preservation movement has done a lot of good, really.

Myers
[00:33:30]

You were kind of a special advisor to the Historical Commission for years. They called on you and your firm.

Gianopulos
[00:33:39]

Oh yeah. When Dick [Tyler] was there, he called us his Kitchen Cabinet. And look, when you were doing the State Capitol in Harrisburg, I was on the advisory board up there with Brenda Barrett and Larry Tyson first and then Brent Class. As a matter of fact, I remember when they were reviewing the proposals for the Pennsylvania train station in Harrisburg for the regional transportation center, you know, they said, "Well, we'd like you, if you do us a favor, to just walk down and take a look at the building as it is and take look at submissions by the firm." I think it was Buhart Horn that did it out of York. And so I became acquainted with the ability of the building structure, and the irony of it is, the engineer, for Buhart Horn, their structural engineer, came from the next town from mine, up in Center County. And my brother had delivered his children. But anyways, and so, you know, he gave me copies of drawings, reports, and everything, and so I enjoyed seeing that whole transition.

Myers
[00:35:12]

The Furness building, too.

- Gianopulos
[00:35:14] Yeah, yeah. But, well, you know, I'll say this about Furness.
- Laverty
[00:35:22] Be careful.
- Gianopulos
[00:35:23] No, no, no. I don't think that Furness was really a good structural engineer. And I think that he would hire people like Frank Lloyd Wright did and intimidate the daylights out of them to get what he wanted.
- Myers
[00:35:40] A little thin! [i.e. the structural system was nearly inadequate.]
- Gianopulos
[00:35:40] But when he did something like Broad Street Station or some other major building where the clients insisted, frequently the steel fabrication companies provided the engineering. And that was a custom in Philadelphia up until the 1950s, because I can remember Gravell complaining about architects not using structural engineers and writing into the specification that the engineering would be provided by the steel fabricator, and they would pocket that difference of an extra increment of profit.
- Myers
[00:36:21] They designed it thinly.
- Gianopulos
[00:36:26] Oh, yeah. I found numerous mistakes.
- Myers
[00:36:32] Under-designed.
- Gianopulos
[00:36:36] Yeah, and I've changed some of them very quietly.
- Laverty
[00:36:41] Speaking of mistakes, and perhaps not so quiet, could you talk about your examination of the Academy of Music and the drama involved in that?
- Gianopulos
[00:36:54] Well, Hy was there at the same time, and it just so happened, just before that, Annenberg dedicated some money towards the new elevators.
- Myers
[00:37:09] That's right.
- Gianopulos
[00:37:10] Because that place was pathetic without elevators, and it was pathetic, short-thrifted on toilets. And you know, the poor women used to line up, you know right out to the corridors, and they're still doing it at Kimmel. At Kimmel they don't have enough toilets! Like, won't Philadelphia ever learn?

Myers
[00:37:38]

But the Academy did get an elevator and more toilets!

Gianopulos
[00:37:41]

Oh yeah, two elevators and more toilets. Eventually, that's right. No, the Academy has been upgraded immensely. It's, I must say, one of my favorite old buildings. One of my favorite old buildings. But Suzanne Pentz from the office was over one day. I sent her to go and see if the overrun on the elevators was going to be in conflict with the extensions and the trusses on the sides of the building. And this was like on a Wednesday. And I was out of town on Wednesday and I got back late Thursday. There was a job meeting on Friday morning. On the way over--well, actually on Thursday evening, late afternoon, she told me about this, and I said, "Well, we'll look at it tomorrow." So we went over tomorrow, which was Friday and...[to Hy] Were you at the meeting at that point?

Myers
[00:38:45]

Uh huh.

Gianopulos
[00:38:45]

And so, you know, she started to describe it, and I sent it to George Schaefer, "I think I better go look at it." And so we went upstairs. Nobody had ever been in that part of the attic. The dirt must have been a quarter or more inches thick. And Suzanne looked like a coal miner. I looked like a coal miner that day. And so we're up there. We're looking at this. She's showing me the fresh fractures. And I say they're fresh because they were clean. There was no dust on them. And incidentally, just to carry this along a little bit more, we have almost concluded that the fractures took place the previous Saturday, when the ballet was being given, because David Cornelius was at the ballet performance just as that thunderstorm came over. And this thunderstorm was violent and it had what we refer to as microbursts with down drafts. It caused planes to crash and so on.

Laverty
[00:40:07]

Would you think that the location of the new tower, the Academy House apartment building, immediately behind the Academy, heightened that effect?

Gianopulos
[00:40:22]

That was my hypothesis when I wrote the report and I ate my words later. But anyways let's go back through the drill. So we're up there looking at these things and we're looking at one truss and the bottom chord consisted of two pieces of wood and one was fracturing the other one. So we'll say 50% was there, there was no snow on the roof. And, you know, the question was, is it safe, or how long is it going to be safe? And we didn't know then what that might have broken it. So we went downstairs, the concert had started. The concert had started and we went back to the green room. George was there. And I remember his one question that he said...Who was the director of L&I?

Laverty
[00:41:28]

Muti? What is Muti [Riccardo Muti of the Philadelphia Orchestra]?

Gianopulos
[00:41:33]

No, no, L&I. The name will come to me. He was a very good engineer. Actually the conductor at that time was William Smith that day. He was the conductor.

Myers
[00:41:46]

Correct. But it was Muti's period.

Gianopulos
[00:41:48]

It was a Friday afternoon concert. Dave Wismer.

Myers
[00:41:53]

Yes, Dave.

Gianopulos
[00:41:55]

Remember Dave?

Myers
[00:41:55]

Yes, I do.

Gianopulos
[00:41:56]

And I had known Dave from years gone by. And he said to me, "If Dave Wismer was aware of this condition, what would he do?" I said, "He'd close it down." "Would you agree with him?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Alright, we're going to close it down." So, it's now approaching the intermission. And so, who was the Director at that time? Fellow who died a few years later from cancer. He was a lawyer and a very, very neat guy [Stephen Sell, who died of lung cancer in 1989]. So, he goes out onto the stage at the intermission. And we're listening to all this in the green room on a wall speaker, they said, "Ladies and gentlemen, we have been informed by our engineers that one of our systems is not working properly." That guy, how he chose his words--it was beautiful! Everybody else thought it was electrical, plumbing, mechanical. And he said, "We will reimburse your tickets, et cetera, and so on. I excuse you now." I thought that was a gem.

Laverty
[00:43:14]

Of understatement.

Myers
[00:43:17]

But no panic.

Gianopulos
[00:43:20]

No, no. They had called before they did that. They called in the head usher--a guy we would become familiar with all these years and you did too--and he brought him back and we said, "We're going to excuse the audience and try to keep them calm and you'll be told later what the issue is." So he went out and he talked to the other ushers and that's what they did. Everybody left and after this guy made the announcement everybody gave a big applause. And so then, after they're all gone, oh, this is really neat. They were going to do La Boheme that night with Pavarotti, the Philadelphia Opera Company. So when the Philadelphia Opera Company heard this, they had fits. And Jane Demeth, who was the President of it then, came and she said, "Let me get my husband Lou on the phone." Lou was an engineer. He was Frank Rennis's chief engineer. So, Lou gets on the phone and he tried to convince me, "Well, it's probably good for one more performance." I said, "Lou, I can't do that. I'm sorry." Well in the meantime, what we didn't notice at the

moment, they called Pavarotti who was staying at the Four Seasons. Pavarotti is there and he's kind of looking out the window and he is looking at the Catholic Cathedral across the street. And he says, "I think I know some people over there, let me call you back." So he called the Cathedral--he wanted the Archbishop but he was out of town, so he asked for somebody else. They finally passed him down the line. He got the priest who was in charge of property over there. And so Pavarotti says, "Can we do the concert over there? A concert, you know?" And the priest apparently talked to some of those other people there. He said, "If you do it in concert, not in costume. No dramatization or anything, just stand up front and do it." So Pavarotti calls back and says, "I have the Cathedral on the Parkway for you." I think that was neat as all get-out, you know. It was great.

Laverty
[00:45:58]

It's still a LeBrun building, so there.

Myers
[00:46:00]

That's right.

Gianopulos
[00:46:01]

I don't know if they ever announced that. Did you go to the concert that night?

Myers
[00:46:08]

No, no. If you recall, we worked around the clock immediately. Immediately.

Gianopulos
[00:46:16]

Suzanne and I went back to the office and we worked until about midnight that night. We were in at 8 o'clock the next morning and then they finally got a call saying, "Meet us on Sunday afternoon at 4 o'clock." And wouldn't you know, about 11 o'clock in morning, Saturday morning, we get this banging on the door. It was a TV crew from KYW next door. I debated, "How much should I tell this guy?" I really didn't tell him any more than had been announced in the news. The one thing I showed him was I'd been making this sketch showing the shoring towers going up because I wanted to propose a system. I said, "Well this is how we're approaching it. We don't know if it's going to be this way." He grabs this and he puts it in front of the camera. He says, "Zero in on that." They never showed it. It might have been out of focus. I don't know. But just as well that they didn't. But we came over that Sunday afternoon and presented a proposal of how we felt they needed to shore the tower up so that they could go to work on it without having it fail. And then eventually as the work was going on, they moved a lot of seats out, they shored it up. I asked Hy to cut some of the ceiling out for me. One foot squares, because I didn't know how heavy the ceiling was, and the ceiling load was an important part of it.

Myers
[00:48:12]

Dead-load weight.

Gianopulos
[00:48:14]

Yeah, an important part of the load on those trusses. And so, one Sunday morning, you know, I came in, I guess I don't know, nine or ten o'clock, Hy's there, and he

says, "Here, I have a piece of ceiling for you." And so we took it over to the deli on 15th Street and Lattimer.

Laverty
[00:48:33]

McGlinchey's?

Myers
[00:48:41]

No, no. Lattimer Deli!

Gianopulos
[00:48:41]

Good deli! And so the owner was there and he had seen us before coming in and getting snacks.

Myers
[00:48:51]

Because we used it for our place to eat.

Gianopulos
[00:48:55]

Prior to the emergency, we'd been going there. And Hy had this piece of plaster wrapped in a trash bag, plastic trash bag. And there's this guy over there, he's slicing corned beef or something, you know? And we said, "Could we borrow your scale? So we can weigh this thing?" So I take it out of the trash bag. He takes the corned beef off, he wipes the thing off, you know, he put it on. So I don't know whether you put it on or I put it on. And we got the weight of it, you know, that's what we wanted to know.

Myers
[00:49:33]

We wanted to know how many pounds per square foot it was.

Gianopulos
[00:49:37]

And it was a one-foot square cut out. So we knew, we knew right on.

Laverty
[00:49:44]

Well, you better have hoped he didn't doctor his scales.

Myers
[00:49:44]

Right! Put his thumb on it.

Gianopulos
[00:49:45]

But anyway, it confirmed the 10 pounds...

Laverty
[00:49:49]

10 pounds per square foot. So how much was the ceiling altogether?

Gianopulos
[00:49:54]

Well, that was the ceiling plus the...well, it wasn't the ribbing, but it was the wire lathe. The laffing.

Gianopulos
[00:50:06]

So, you know, we started to collect all the data we needed to do this with. I always say that that experience is something that an architect or an engineer should experience at least three times in his lifetime: his first, last, and only.

Myers
[00:50:34] Yeah, you don't want that to happen more than once.

Gianopulos
[00:50:35] You want to retire after that, right? But it was memorable. I look back at that as probably one of my most memorable engineering experiences. I really do.

Laverty
[00:50:49] And how long was the Academy closed?

Gianopulos
[00:50:51] 14 days.²

Myers
[00:51:02] [Worked] around the clock.

Gianopulos
[00:51:03] The contractor went and took out a suite of rooms, the Hershey Hotel across the street, so the crews could go over and shower and lay down for a few hours because they were coming in, they were actually sleeping in the ambulatories, you know, catching cat naps there. It was such a team effort. And you know, the wonderful thing about it is they did not have a boombox there, nor were they asked not to have one.

Laverty
[00:51:33] Out of respect for the building?

Gianopulos
[00:51:34] Out of respect for building. It was almost like working in a church. You can't take a boom box in the church. Well, they were responding to the Academy the same way. It was really funny, every once in a while, some of the workmen would go and stand in front of the stage and say, "Take my picture." They were just thrilled at it.

Myers
[00:51:53] And of course, after the 14 days, we even had a party.

Gianopulos
[00:51:58] Oh, they had the party. Well, I didn't go to the concert. They had a Sunday afternoon concert with, who was the guy? The beard guy? The Philadelphia Pops guy?

Laverty
[00:52:10] Oh, Peter Nero.

Gianopulos
[00:52:11] Nero. When we were in the last few days of...For instance, they didn't take the scaffolding down until the day before the concert. They worked that night to take the scaffolding down and to put the seats in. And they didn't vacuum it until about an hour before the public came. Well, Nero was prancing around. "When are you going to get this ready?" I said to myself, "What's with this guy? He thinks he's ordering a bunch of coolies around."

² Dean Doukakis believes it was 17 days total.

Laverty
[00:52:45] Show people.

Gianopulos
[00:52:47] Hey if he had to postpone, let them postpone. If you had to delay it an hour, so let's delay it an hour. Late that Saturday, I don't know who came up to me and said we were all invited to sit in Mr. Nero's box the following day. The following day, a friend of mine's daughter was giving a harp concert. I went there. Cliveden.

Myers
[00:53:26] Anthony Carvers!

Gianopulos
[00:53:29] And so the, whatever it is, the Guild Association, Philadelphia Guild or Harpists or whatever were giving them a recital at Cliveden and so we went there instead. And I think I enjoyed that more, just to snub Nero. You know, and I've never gone to a Nero concert. I vowed never to go. I don't care what they're gonna play.

Myers
[00:53:57] Interesting, because I did go, and they gave us a box, and they took our picture in the box. It was very nice. Because they knew everybody went out of their way.

Gianopulos
[00:54:07] But I was so incensed at him, you know, saying when are you going to finish, as though we somehow [caused the] delay.

Laverty
[00:54:16] Well, did anybody take notice that you weren't there and think that maybe the place wasn't safe? If the structural engineer decides not to show...

Gianopulos
[00:54:25] Now, hey, I'll tell you something funny, though. You're Catholic, are you not?

Laverty
[00:54:32] Nope. I'm sorry.

Gianopulos
[00:54:32] You're not? Well, with a name like yours, you should be.

Laverty
[00:54:37] I've been told that.

Gianopulos
[00:54:38] They probably were.

Laverty
[00:54:39] I went to Christian brothers school, I went to LaSalle.

Gianopulos
[00:54:45] So the following morning, Sunday morning, there was no need for us to come back because it was cleanup. So I went to church, our local church, and Frank Rennis was there of Allabach & Rennis. Frank said to me, he said, "I've been following you in the Inquirer and also the talk on the street and so on." He said, "I want to congratulate you for this." And he said, "There's got to be a patron saint

for factors of safety, because I said what had saved some of the other trusses was the redundancy of them.” And so I just let it go at that. Next day, I'm at the office and David Cornelius is there. I repeat it and I said there's got to be a patron saint for redundancy. He said, “Didn't you know? There are two and a half of them!” Traditionally, it used to be the factor of safety for materials. But anyways, Hy, it was a great experience. Believe it or not, I found that little thing that you had done where you got everybody to sign their name.

Myers
[00:56:13] He's very good at that.

Gianopulos
[00:56:15] I haven't put it in my scrapbook yet, but I found it when we moved the last time.

Myers
[00:56:22] You find lots of interesting things when you move. But that was an interesting occasion and it would never have been found as even a problem if Annenberg hadn't given the money to put an elevator up through an area that no one could get to, impossible.

Gianopulos
[00:56:41] Well, the thing with that was that they needed to know that they had to overrun clearance with the elevators, and that's when Suzanne discovered it. But it had never been discovered before. They had never made walking inspections in the attic before.

Myers
[00:56:59] Well, you couldn't even get there because it was right at the bottom where you couldn't even get into and see. So nobody would have gone there ever.

Gianopulos
[00:57:10] Well, the other thing we discovered, other than the trusses, we discovered that the proscenium ceiling as it framed into the big firewall, brick firewall, had been pulling out of the joist pockets and they only had a little over an inch of bearing.

Myers
[00:57:43] An inch is nothing.

Gianopulos
[00:57:44] And there was a big heavy ceiling on this thing, and you know, if there had ever been just even a minor seismic occurrence, they would have moved right out. They'd move right out. So you know, we did improve the building immensely by raising the stage house and the acoustical treatment and what not.

Myers
[00:58:10] And cleaning out all that dust. Tons of dust.

Gianopulos
[00:58:14] But the question is, has the dust been cleaned out since then? Probably not.

Myers
[00:58:24] It was 1989.

Laverty
[00:58:26]

Has it been that long, almost 20 years?

Gianopulos
[00:58:29]

I am writing this thing on a chronology of Christ Church, all the changes, physical changes made to the Church since 1964 when we started to do the work for them. I have something that's about three inches thick with some very fat appendices. I've been getting this in order, and it's really coming together pretty well. I'm very pleased. I keep finding things that somehow I overlooked. I found two letters that were written back in the 1960s. One to me by a fellow by the name of Theobald, who was the change ringing expert from White Chapel Foundries in London. And he had been over here training the change ringers down at the National Cathedral. So he came up here to spend a day looking at the tower there, and apparently somebody written, you know, to Whitechapel. Then he wrote me a letter and a couple of days later one of the principals in Whitechapel wrote a rather lengthy letter of proposal on changing the bell carriages and everything so that it could be, go back to change ringing. But the one thing they pointed out, and it was today before coming here, this is when I was writing, was the fact that they warned about the indenting of the bell ring by stationary ringing. And that balance has to be rotated because if you over indent, you can lead to a crack. Lead to a crack and then [everything has] to be recast. So I just finished writing this into my portion of this report advising the church that they really need a consultant on some periodic basis, whether it's once every 10 years or 20 years...who comes in and checks these. Because certainly I don't think any of us can do it.

Laverty
[01:01:21]

How old is the bell in the Christ Church steeple?

Gianopulos
[01:01:25]

The bells, the primary bells, were there from 1738.

Myers
[01:01:30]

That's a lot of indentation.

Gianopulos
[01:01:31]

1738.

Laverty
[01:01:31]

That's 20 years older than the Liberty Bell.

Gianopulos
[01:01:38]

Same place.

Laverty
[01:01:38]

Yeah, same place.

- Gianopulos
[01:01:39] Very same place, you know. And they did have one bell that did crack. And back in the late '60s or early '70s or before, I don't know when it was even before that, they sent it back to the foundry to recast it into a smaller bell. But then they bought some other bells. But, nevertheless, we're getting exposed to some interesting stuff. It's not the kind of stuff that you pick up on at the local coffee shop.
- Myers
[01:02:17] Well, thank you for coming.
- Gianopulos
[01:02:21] You're welcome.
- Myers
[01:02:22] I've learned quite a bit.
- Laverty
[01:02:22] Yeah, thank you very much.
- Gianopulos
[01:02:23] Oh, no, I have a Kahn story I've got to tell you.
- Laverty
[01:02:26] Okay. We're still running.
- Gianopulos
[01:02:30] This is my favorite Kahn story. I think I've told neither, but I don't know whether you've gotten it, Bruce. When they were building the Bryn Mawr dormitories, they had written into the concrete specifications that this particular wall, which was a site retaining wall, curved. Near the service entrance was to be the wall by which the finishes would be determined on all the walls. You know, this was a very difficult wall because of the curvature. The plywood had to be made up of numerous sheets of quarter-inch plywood, you know, nailed and glued together and so on in the curvature. The contractor, Nason and Cullen, Inc. had really done as good a job as you may have expected there. So they poured the wall, stripped it, and well, the wall was almost as long as this room. I'd say from this door, with a big curve in it. And Lou's project architect, the guy by the name of Harlan Thompson, was out there and he was one of these guys, like frequently you have people on the team and the staff who try to outdo the principal. Harlan Thompson said, "It's rejected." The contractor worked weeks, built the forms and everything. It was rejected. Why was it rejected? Because it had some honeycombs in it. And you know what honeycombs are, Bruce? That's where when you pour the concrete, it all doesn't come to the surface of the form. You know, you see the aggregate and so on. Little puffs of aggregate. And so this thing had honeycombs.
- Well, the contractor was under a time schedule. First of all, he didn't like being told that the work wasn't any good because the rest of the wall was extraordinary. It was extraordinary. And he was under time constraint to get the dorm ready for admissions the following year. So, Nason and Cullen goes to McBride, I think she

was the president then. Went to McBride and said, "Hey, we can't do this, you know, we're just too far off, and this is, it was so expensive for this to be, and if this is going to be the standard, we'll never be able to achieve it anywhere." So she said, "Get Mr. Kahn out here." So Lou was asked to go out. Lou had just had his cataract operation, slightly before that. He had these huge lenses, we used to refer to them as Coke bottle lenses, you know. And Lou came out there muddy. And he had this Burberry raincoat and beret. You can imagine. And he kind of shuffles up through the mud, he takes a look at this honeycomb, there's a group of people, 15-20 people standing, you know, and he's looking at it. He shuffles back, then shuffles back up again, and looks at it. Stands still, and everybody's waiting, and he says, "You know, concrete reminds me of an elephant. An elephant is a mighty beast. Now, if that elephant had an imperfection on its posterior, it would be no less an elephant, would it?" Then he walked away. And everybody said, "What did he say?" And so somebody said, "I think he said it's okay." I love this story.

Later, one more, I'll tell you. I think one more. I wasn't present on this one. This was after we gave up the job on Dhaka and Harry Palmbaum took over. Construction was building up on the garden apartments, which they called them hostels. And they were first floor up to the second-floor level. And so the walls, brick walls, consisted of two lines of masonry with a three-inch space between them which is filled with concrete and we invent a matrix of reinforcing rods there to give this thing strength against seismic influences. And so, Harry Palmbaum's over there on one of his first inspections, and he's walking up the street where here are all these buildings going up. He's with the fellow Farooqi, who was the--like, the engineer in charge. Well-educated guy. I think he went to school in Sweden and everything. Came from a well-to-do family, you know, near Delhi and so on. So, Harry's looking at these projections of the reinforcing rods. He said, "Farooqi, there's only half as many rods that are supposed to be there." So Farooqi, you know, says to him, "Mr. Palmbaum, Professor Kahn was here last week, and we walked through the site with him, and he looked up and he saw all the extensions of the reinforcing steel. We asked him, 'How did it look?' His response was, 'Well, it was designed by Keast & Hood, so there's got to be twice as much as what you need.'" So Farooqi just presumed, you know, cut half the steel out of it! So Harry had to get him turned around. But, you know, these are all the little flukes that take place. There's a story everywhere. There's a story everywhere.

Myers
[01:09:22]

And they're good.

Gianopulos
[01:09:23]

So there you are. You know everything I know.

Myers
[01:09:29]

Well, thanks. Do me one more favor. I need two copies of your office brochure.

Gianopulos
[01:09:36] Oh, man. Okay, I'll get you... We make up the brochures to suit. How fat do you want them? I'll give you one like that.

Myers
[01:09:48] We want one fat. Fatter the better.

Gianopulos
[01:09:52] Okay fine. You want two copies?

Myers
[01:09:54] Yes.

Gianopulos
[01:09:55] I'll get them pulled together when I go back next week.

Myers
[01:09:57] Very good.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY & RELATED ATHENAEUM HOLDINGS

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INDEX OF NAMES

<i>Name of Individual</i>	<i>Reference Page</i>
Batcheler, George	15, 34
Batcheler, Penny (Harshorne)	15
Bednarik, Charles “Chuck”	33
Bladink, Tom	32
Bower, Carl	16
Breuer, Marcel & Associates	26
Brown, Robert Montgomery	16
Buchart Horn	37
Calatrava, Santiago	29
Clapp, Ann	14, 15
Cornelius, David	39, 45
Converse, Julia	23
Cross, Hardy	11
Davis, Dunlap, & Carver	12
Daw, Matt	27
Dean, Kafila	18
Demeth, Jane	40
DiBona, Dan	11, 16
Ewing, George M. & Company	14
Fuchs, Richard	18
Furness, Frank	38
Giurgola, Romaldo	31
Gravell, William H.	11, 12, 38

H2L2	12, 30
Hershey, J.O.	18
Hines, Tom	30
Hood, Ray	11, 16
Howe, George	16
Jahn, Helmut	27
Johnson, Russell	22
Jung, Henry	15
Kahn, Louis I.	16, 23, 32, 34, 47
Keast, Sheldon	11
Kohn, Pederson, Fox	28
Komendant, August	17, 23
Koolhaas, Rem	29
Larson, Roy	18
Leidig, Tom	11, 16, 31
Massoudi, Nasser	20
McCloskey, Matthew	12
Miller, Hugh	16
Mitchell/Giurgola	19, 21, 30
Myers, Hyman	41
Nason & Cullen	47
Nelson, Lee	15
Palmbaum, Harry	16, 48
Patton, George	35
Pentz, Suzanne	20, 39, 45

Perkins, Holmes	26
Peterson, Charles E.	15
Rennis, Frank	40, 44
Richardson, Henry Hobson	27
Roach, Spencer	14
Robertson, Leslie	21
Romanach, Mario	30
Safdie, Moshe	29
Schaefer, George	39
Schwartz, Bernie	17
Scott Brown, Denise	22
Shay, Howell Lewis	12
Sims & Talbot	12
Spencer, Charles	11
Strickland, William	20
Tyler, Richard "Dick"	37
Vallhonrat, Carles	18, 23
Venturi, Robert	16, 19, 22, 23, 29, 32, 35
Wark & Company	13
Wheaton, Bill	24
Wismer, Dave	40
Wright, Frank Lloyd	38
Zuckerkon, David	16, 32

Index of Buildings

<i>Building (In Philadelphia, unless otherwise identified)</i>	<i>Reference Page</i>
Academy of Music	38
American Commerce Center (unbuilt)	28
Bok Tower (Florida)	12
Bulletin Building	16
Carpenter's Hall	23
Christ Church	46
Comcast Tower	27
Congress Hall	14
Doris Duke House	35
Erdman Hall at Bryn Mawr College	47
National Assembly Building (Dhaka, Bangladesh)	16, 48
Exeter Library (New Hampshire)	17
Furness Library	22
Hershey Medical Center (Hershey, PA)	16, 18
INA Building	21
Independence Hall	14
Kimmel Center	22
Liberty Bell Pavilion	30
Liberty Place	27
Merchants Exchange	19
Mercy Douglas Hospital	13
Mikveh Israel	30
Naval Home (Asylum)	26

Olivetti Factory	17
Packard Building	12
Philadelphia Orchestra Hall/Kimmel Center	22, 30
Richards Medical Research Laboratories	17
Salk Institute	18
Second Bank of the United States	14
Trenton Bath Houses (New Jersey)	17, 30
Vagelos Chemistry Building	29
Warwick Hotel	12
William Penn High School	34