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PEI, I.M.

Interviewed by Lucy Warner, NCAR

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INTERVIEW WITH I.M. PEI -- 14 MAY 1985

IMP: First of all I want to give you a little bit of my background before I came on to this commission, this challenge. At that time I had involved myself with large urban areas, large slum clearance projects and I was doing plans for old cities and things of that kind. That was back in the 50s, Eisenhower days in fact stay with me until almost the mid-60s, so my involvement during that period as an architect has been primarily focused on urban problems, so that to come out to the wide open spaces was just a total contrast.

LW: You had been in Denver, of course.

IMP: Oh, yes, but to do something there, to make architecture there, that's what I mean. I never thought of it. I'd been there before, but to do architecture not in Denver, in this case, but to do architecture on the mesa in the foothills of the Rockies is--you just can't think of a total change from my professional experience to date. So was a--wasn't something that I can jump into and say I know exactly what to do and let's get on and do something about it and make a design for it. No. It took me a long time. Quite some time. Very intensive period. Therefore doesn't seem long. Maybe a question of only one or two months, but those were very intensive few months that I have to really rinse my brain, so to speak, to start to make it as uncluttered as possible with past experiences and start from scratch. That's what I did. And I went and I slept on the mesa, I don't know how many times I walked the mesa, and I drank a lot of wine on that mesa, and it was a very sort of a almost a religious experience, the early part of it, to try to really get a feel of nature. The only way to do that is to be there and not only at a certain time of day but really day and night. Sunset, sunrise. Not winter. I don't think I camped there in the winter, but I've been there in enough occasions to have a very good feel of that problem before I started to do something. And I very quickly came to the conclusion that the scale of the building--you see we have always be dealing with scale in architecture, particularly urban architecture does not stand alone as a single building. It always relates to other buildings. All relates to the streets and parks, to the squares. So scale is a very important orienting design starting point. We have to begin with that. And when you come to this particular situation you all of sudden find that you no longer have a scale that you know how to deal with. The scale is of such infinite size it's almost impossible for a building to--at least I thought--to relate well with it.

The first thought that came to me, of course, was that this had been done before. Air Force Academy was already half built. Obviously, I went to see that, and I came away feeling that that's not the solution. It is a very viable approach to the problem simply because by taking a position and being different from nature you are less likely to be compared with nature. You are already saying we're different. You see what I mean? We're man made.

LW: Absolutely, but that's not what you wanted to do.

IMP: I didn't think so. I didn't think I could reach that spiritual dimension by taking that approach, so the other one is very difficult, and it was amorphous in my mind for a long, long time. But I knew that I would want to approach it that way, and that's what brought to mind some of the

other experiences that I've seen in my time. I remember seeing in 1960 a group of stones on the top of the Andes. Most fantastic piece of art-- a group of stones, enormous, pile of stones. That's nature, using natural elements, natural materials. And the group couldn't have been maybe 15 by 30 feet. Not very big.

LW: This is an archeological site?

IMP: Yes, archeological site. Yes. And yet it's completely at home with nature and in scale with nature, so scale is no longer one of dimension, it's something else. This is what I was searching for, you see, I couldn't find that. That gave me heart that there is a solution, a natural solution that relates to scale without being, without having this infinite dimension of nature to deal with.

LW: Do you have any idea what the site was? Do you remember? What was the name of it?

IMP: Oh sure. It was called *Olienti Temple*. I saw it in 1960, in Peru. You have to fly into it. In fact, very recently, Isamu Noguchi, the sculptor, at my suggestion, went to see it, and came back with the same kind of excitement, report about it. So that came to my mind and I said, "Well, it is possible to relate with nature without having to be to somehow worry about that incredibly large scale which we have to deal with, like the Rocky Mountains, like the sky. Somehow that was possible. But that's a long way from finding a solution. A long way. It's only that it gives you--the reason that that pile of stone was able to handle itself in the middle of that enormous expanse of nature is because it has that spiritual quality about it that comes through. To find that spirit. Ah. It's very difficult. But early man had done it. All done it, and they've all succeeded. So therefore it really has to... I've seen Stonehenge also before. That's another example, Stonehenge. Those rocks are big, but they're not that big.

LW: Well, they don't have the mountain backdrop either.

IMP: Only the plains. That's right. Pyramids, of course, is the opposite. The scale of the pyramids is its scale. That doesn't help me much. I mustn't build pyramids. So, but the Stonehenge and this pile of rocks in the Orientai Temple did give me a great deal of encouragement to search. And the most practical example, of course, is within reach, is all these big Indian projects, buildings in--they're not cave dwellings, they're under overhanging rock

LW: Cliff dwellings.

IMP: Cliff dwellings, yes. So I make a trip. Soon after that, within a matter of months. And I drove with my wife from Albuquerque north until I reach Denver again, and we saw nearly every important work of architecture.

LW: So did you see Taos and the contemporary pueblos and Mesa Verde as well?

IMP: Yes, but none of them gave me the kind of direct link to what our challenge was until I reached Mesa Verde. And I saw something there that not only gave me heart but actually gave me the sense of direction.

LW: And this is before you'd done any drawings or anything?

IMP: Oh, at that time I had no idea. I was floundering. I was groping, groping for straws.

LW: Now, other people have talked about walled towns, medieval fortresses, monasteries. Were any of those images in your mind?

IMP: Less so. It's the relationship between this building and the setting. And a medieval castle can be in the town itself, it can be out in the open country. Each is different. Maybe one, yes, may have--some of the ruins in Scotland--may have some more direct bearing on what we were trying to do here, but not really, no.

LW: That's just the popular imagination associating hilltop structures.

IMP: I think the decision to use masonry also comes from that search to the materials that are part of that landscape, indigenous materials. Whereas the Air Force Academy uses completely industrial material. The approach is definitely to contrast with nature, and not have to come to grips with probably an impossible problem.

LW: Now, then you went on and you did an early drawing or an early design, and I think I have some examples of that, that was too compact and NCAR people asked you to break it up. Do you remember that stage?

IMP: No.

LW: It looks to me as though the basic geometries that you wound up with in the final drawing were in your head very early on. Did you have any other Indian influences for the shapes that you used?

IMP: These are models. There is a very good photograph that you don't have here. *Search for photographic materials.*

IMP: You said that I had a more compact scheme. I don't remember that. Do you remember what it looks like?

LW: That's why I was looking for the early models that I had here. Walt Roberts and Phil Thompson both remember something much more dense.

IMP: I'll tell you what came later was a theater that was to be built down below but that never got built. And in fact I had always wanted to build a building hanging on the edge of the mesa down to the mesa, because down below is wonderful.

LW: Down on the back or on the front?

IMP: On the back.

LW: On what we call the hog's back.

IMP: Hanging. So that when you come you go down and you go up, you see. I

always wanted to build that. But there was no money. To bad.

LW: I know. There still is no money.

IMP: And that would have been wonderful. Because the siting of this building. Very important to have that, because with siting on the edge, on the southerly edge. And the reason--you probably know the reason--is both architectural and functional and legal. It's architectural because I wanted this group of buildings to hug like Mesa Verde, to hug the edge of the...

LW: So in not building that third tower, which was supposed to go off the southern edge, we lost that feeling...

IMP: To me, yeah. That very important feeling of tapping the soil. The roots go down. That's to me a great disappointment, because you see you hold on to that...when you're on a table you want to feel secure. This is what you do. *(Grabs edge of desk.)* Now we're just perched there. As supposing there is a rock slide or what have you. Of course there won't be a rock slide, but the feeling is uncomfortable unless you do that.

Then, I think also, the legal problem was simply that the town of Boulder didn't want us to build, because it's a very big building. Because they can see it. And by moving it very far to the south and hugging the rock, you can hardly see it. So that's a semi-political problem, because we asked the town to approve the scheme, and Mrs. Roberts then was working for the town.

LW: She's been on city council for many years. She's very active.

IMP: She might have opposed us. But we didn't give her a chance because we solved the problem. Because we had to get water up there over the blue line.

LW: That's right, and they had to pass an amendment, I know.

IMP: And then, also, another thing that's terribly important is the approach. How to wind your way up.

LW: Yes, which is very successfully done.

IMP: I think so. And how do you jump onto the mesa? How to make that leap. Those are my problems. These are very, very...they are all a matter of spirit, but they are important.

LW: They certainly are. And putting a parking lot on the top of the mesa...

IMP: We fought that. Dr. Roberts didn't want it. I didn't want it. But once we knew we had to have it, then the road had to be there, and when the road is there.... then the mesa is a natural phenomenon which has a very pronounced ridge, where it slides off, eons of years ago. The question is, even if you were to wind up to that point, how do you jump to it? How do you vault over that lip? You follow me?

LW: Of course.

IMP: You would, because you know the place. So finally we having chose well,

we said that the best place to make that intervention is in an area where you have a cluster of rocks and you have trees, because then the gash will be less noticeable. You have to make a gash. You have to dig into it, to ease the grade, you see. So, you can see now when make the--it's almost like warfare--when we attack the mesa, we come behind the rocks and the trees. There's still a group of pine trees. Enter there. So that from the road below, all that excavation is not seen at all. It heals well. It's well hidden.

LW: And you have a sense of entering another place. When you come through that gate at the bottom, with the sign, you've got that wonderful panorama all the way up and it's like leaving one world and entering another.

IMP: All that was very carefully planned. It's no accident. The road is particularly a triumph, and I have to give credit to Dan Kiley, the landscape architect, because once we decided the road cannot be following the contours, zigging and zagging, all the way up, there has to be the big gesture, and yet we cannot destroy the landscape. Because nothing will grow back. Very hard to heal, that mesa. How you make a big, big gesture? Because that's the only way you can enjoy that kind of meadow without cutting and filling. Became a very carefug piece of site engineering.

LW: It's funny, because its something that I've always taken for granted. I've always thought, "Of course the road is there, that's where it has to be." Which is proof of the success.

IMP: Wonderful, wonderful. So the siting of the building, the entrance onto the mesa, and the sweep of the road. Those are all incredibly important to this. Only very few people understood that. Dr. Roberts remembers. We talked and talked, walked and walked, and he is a horticulturalist of sorts. Amateur. He was the one...

LW: And so are you, I understand.

IMP: Not of that kind of fauna and flora. I like to grow plants here in this country, in the city. Yes. But there I was warned by him that it's very hard to grow things back onto the mesa once you damage it. In fact, I can still see the gashes where the utilities were run. And it was then that I became more and more convinced that that road was a great work of art. And all the effort that we put into it was worth it.

LW: You have the reputation of being someone who works very easily with your clients, and I know at NCAR much is made of the collaboration between you and Dr. Roberts and the other scientists, and I wonder if looking back on it that feels like an unusual relationship, or was it...

IMP: I would have to say it was an unusual relationship. I'm not blessed with that kind of gift that you just mentioned. I react to people just like others. And when you have a client like Walter Orr Roberts and you have a group of scientists who live up there, work up there, with very, very unconventional lifestyles, it all adds to the excitement, and their views about their lives, their views about their work has to influence you. In fact, there are certain elements designed into it to encourage the mixing of the people and all that which are less important and I'll come to that later on. But it's true. Some very unusual people to work with, which bring maybe

the best out of us.

LW: Because it stretched your...

IMP: Imagination. That's right. And all along, remember, we had very little money. We had to make a lot out of very little.

LW: You had less than you thought you were going to have. You never got your whole building, in fact.

IMP: In fact the amount of money we spent on this project today would have...

LW: Was tiny. Even then.

IMP: Yeah. So in many ways it is a labor of love. Not for the architects alone but for anyone who came into contact with that site and that group of men.

LW: So you continue to see it that way twenty years later.

IMP: I do. I've been back.

LW: I know you've been back. I hope you'll come back again. We'd like you to come back sometime this year for the 25th anniversary, and I'll have to talk to Ms. Black about whether you can fit that it.

IMP: I promised Dr. Roberts I would. But he'll have to let me know as soon as he knows because my schedule is very, very difficult.

LW: It's not a matter of waiting for him to know. We'll fit in with your schedule.

IMP: I'm out of the country half the time.

LW: I know. You are welcome any time, I'm sure you know. So...in hindsight, do you still feel this is one of your favorite buildings?

IMP: Yes, it has to be because it represents a very important change in my professional career. Working 15 years with incredibly difficult urban problems that I have to deal with which is sociology more than anything else. Very difficult to apply the art of architecture. And then come out to NCAR...

Interruption by Nancy Horne to look for photographs Pei wanted to see to illustrate points about the building.

LW: Twenty years later, you still feel that this was a great departure, a favorite project?

IMP: I would say I had to spend so much time in urban centers, with urban problems, as an architect, to all of a sudden to make almost a 180° turn posed for me both excitement and challenge. And that was important. I was ready for it, I was ready to go beyond what I had been doing for the last 10 or 15 years. This provided me with just that opportunity. So therefore that's why

all the things I talked about earlier on--how to capture the spirit of a place--became a very wonderful kind of search.

LW: And has it changed your designs in urban settings? It's not very often in a lifetime that you're given a virgin hilltop like that.

IMP: I'm sure. I'm sure there're certain...I learned a lot from that particular project which is fundamental to architecture itself. So there are certain things, of course, that I couldn't apply. It's not often that you have to deal with not only virgin landscape but on that scale. So, on the other hand I think forms, scale problems, formal problems, materials--we started a new method of pouring concrete...

LW: Is that right? I didn't know that.

IMP: Surely. Oh, yes. The concrete was...*Pei turns to photographs.* I think this is an interesting one. *Photo is Stoller shot of the back of the building (west facing facade) before computer addition.* All these were hoods. Scientific institution that it is. You see this is the ramp that leads...the scientist wants to go up to the top of the mesa to--well, to meditate or just to plain get exercise, and that ramp leads them up to it.

LW: I know. This is slightly different now because we've added an underground computer addition.

IMP: Right there?

LW: Right in here.

IMP: I didn't know that.

LW: But the facade looks the same apart from one little corner here.

IMP: All these trees, by the way, were native here. We preserved every tree. The building wiggles and twists and turns to avoid damaging anything. Because those trees took a long time to grow. A tree like that may be a hundred years old, so you don't just take it down. So that's why I was a little surprised when Dr. Roberts recalled that we had a very dense scheme.

LW: Well, an early drawing, and they may...I'm trying to find...*Finds early model.*

IMP: Oh, yes. This is only a portion of it. This didn't stay long. If that were once a scheme, my gosh...I don't even remember this.

LW: You don't. Well, it came and went very fast.

IMP: I didn't remember. Where'd you get that from?

LW: I got that from your files.

IMP: Really?

LW: Yes.

IMP: Gee whiz. You're right.

LW: But it's interesting to me because it's so near and yet so far.

IMP: Oh, yeah.

LW: The shapes are there. The complexity's not there.

IMP: No. I don't think we stayed with it very long. Dr. Roberts' memory's better than mine. I don't even remember that. In fact, that is there. This portion is still there. You see this portion--the gateway in here. *Pei is referring to what is now the section in B tower that divides the fountain and tree plazas.* But the formal changes are great...very, very different. We still have some of that.

LW: That's what I find intriguing is that those shapes were clearly in your head very, very early, and they were played with and moved around and I don't think anybody remembers the sequence of that process, but it's fascinating to me to see your imagination capturing those.

IMP: You see, Mesa Verde taught me several things. I really should explain that. That the use the materials is like the land. They built out of stone. Stone that they quarried or picked up from around. That's lesson number one. You can't dominate it, you join it. How can you dominate nature? Number two. When you do architecture, it's a question of manipulation of forms, and Mesa Verde is exactly that, it's a work of architecture. But those forms are very very powerful forms, they're elemental forms, they're forms like cylinders, like squares. Things of that kind. Then that enormous overhang, that big rock that overhangs.

LW: So did the idea for the overhangs on the top of the building suggest themselves

IMP: Yes, because the sun beats so strong, you know, you're not comfortable. You're protected.

LW: So did the cliff overhangs suggest the...

IMP: Has a lot to do with that. But the major thing I learned from Mesa Verde are the use of materials nearby, local materials, which made up the landscape, and at the same time to use elemental forms, which are big forms. Elemental in the sense that to emphasize the totality of the form rather than to articulate them level by level, floor by floor. For instance, a conventional building like here, you can tell how many floors the building has by just counting. Here you can't.

LW: I'll tell you a story that you would probably appreciate. When I started writing a draft of this brochure, we have two staff architects, and I said, "OK, off the top of your head, how many stories does this building have." They couldn't tell me. They said, "Go look at the elevators."

IMP: Succeeded! Succeeded! We succeeded. You see these are the...you go to Mesa Verde, and some of those cylinders have many floors in them. You

don't know how many floors until you go inside. You don't have a window here, a window here and a window here. But it's essentially one big form. Wide scale. It's a question of scale. Air Force Academy is very articulated by floor, by grid, structural grid. We don't have it. So there you are. That's it's

LW: It's a combination of elemental forms and incredible complexity at the same time.

IMP: It's complexity, yes. Complexity, and that always fits better with nature. And then also, the use of the natural material. In our case, we couldn't build stone on top of stone like they did in Mesa Verde. That's a primitive way of building. We have to use industrial methods. And the way to do it in this case is concrete.

LW: But with local stone.

IMP: But by using the aggregate which is quarried from the stone and then pour into the concrete, pigment the concrete with the color of the stone. The stone colored the concrete, you know. And then bush hammer it to reveal the stone, gives us a stony surface that as I jokingly said, ten million years from now will look the same color as the mountain.

LW: You were going to tell me that you pioneered a method of pouring concrete. Now what is that.

IMP: Getting the aggregate from the mountain that has a pigment that colored the cement naturally. It's a mineral pigment. That's why it doesn't fade, you see. And then come in with bush hammer. Then we use a ganging technique of bush hammering. Three or four men sitting on a platform that goes up and down "bzzz, bzzz" bush hammering. And eventually I used the same technique in one of the photographs you took of a museum I designed, Syracuse.

LW: But you had not used that before?

IMP: No, it was the second one. Yours is the first.

LW: Because I know you had done a lot of work in concrete before. But you hadn't used the bush hammering. Did you invent it? You invented the bush hammering?

IMP: Yes, of concrete, pretty much. Well, bush hammering is very common. They do bush hammering for many things. You know how they use bush hammering? They usually try to roughen up the concrete in order to adhere to it a certain surface. In this case our bush hammering is completely mechanically ganged, as they say, so that it's practically almost perfect. In that sense, yes. We didn't, the technique is not new, but we invented it to our purpose, to serve our purpose.

LW: I didn't realize that. And I think it's very successful. Walt Roberts, I have to confess, still begrudges the money it cost. But

IMP: How much it cost?

LW: He said it was very expensive. But it's beautiful, because the light refracts on the surfaces, as you say. It gives it a stony surface, instead of that sidewalk you get

IMP: Yeah. If you don't have it, imagine what it would be like. It would be dreary. And now also, it does another thing, you see, by fragmenting the aggregate, all the mica comes out of there. You can see the shimmering things inside the stone. The stones is full of metalic particles. Among them is the mica. The mica is important, because it does give life to the surface inspite of the fact that most of it is cement.

LW: I wonder whether you had seen the Salk Institute when you designed NCAR and whether there was any...I read somewhere that that's a building you admire,

IMP: Yes. That's a good question. I have been trying to locate the time when Salk Center was built. I think we're about the same time.

LW: I think they were under construction when you were designing.

IMP: I tell you what influenced us a little bit is not Salk Center but Kahn also. Kahn's building in Philadelphia. The laboratory. Philips, I think. But not Salk Center. We were already talking about Salk Center then, but we haven't seen it built. We might have made drawings, they might have made drawings.

LW: So what about the Philadelphia center? Was it the use of the

IMP: I think the elemental forms. You see, Kahn was a few years ahead of us. Kahn went to Scotland and was enormously impressed by it. I had not been to Scotland at that time, and I was, my interest was more South America and the West. But he went to Scotland actually to look for those castles and things like that which came back to influence him in Philadelphia. So Philadelphia is very definitely influenced by his trip to Scotland, and less so in our case. But we couldn't, would not have been able to latch on, let's say to come up with the...when I saw Mesa Verde and I sensed then there's some kinship between that and the Philips. The use is the use of elemental forms. Because there he did the same thing, and therefore give it a super scale. But he fragmented it in other ways so that it. But that's a very dense group of buildings.

LW: Yes, that's right. Well, and that's an urban setting.

IMP: Urban setting, yeah. I would say, if you asked me if there's any one building that influenced this project more--no one is an island in this case, particularly in our field--I would say the Philips. Not Salk. Salk came about the same time.

IMP: We're still trying to dig up the chronology of Salk. Because I don't recall, I hadn't seen Salk until the 70s. I might have seen drawings, but I don't think Salk was finished until the late 60s.

LW: My impression is that it was under construction when you were designing, so you were almost...

IMP: Yeah, almost the same time. It took them a long time. But the Philips building in Philadelphia, which is made of brick. I think the predominant vertical emphasis you find in our project also was in Philips. Vertical instead of horizontal like the Air Force Academy or like most other buildings built up to then.

LW: Well that to me was a stroke of genius, to put a vertical building in a space like that instead of trying to hide down on the mesa, which wouldn't have worked.

IMP: Well actually, the group is horizontal. It's spread out, but then it's contrasted by a cluster of vertical elements. A cluster. And the clustering, by the way, came out of Dr. Roberts' program. Dr. Roberts made it very plain that the scientists don't like to have long corridors. A name on the door. They know that's the way the government buildings are. And they hated it. And they wouldn't have come out to Boulder if they wanted to stay in Washington. So therefore we grouped our scientists in very small groups. Hence those towers. They are connected by small circular stairs inside, you remember? We wanted to reduce the scale of the group because they're more comfortable in a smaller scale environment. And also I think he also said something about why they are locked up in their ivory tower, but they do come out, and when they do come out, they meet each other. And I want the connecting elements to be a place of meeting. Which means that they should be encouraged to stop, sit down even, and talk a bit before then move on. Hence you find we have a lot of connecting links for just that, for the incident.

LW: And I have to say that most of my conversations during the day take place in corridors and corners.

IMP: There you are. It succeeded. Dr. Roberts was absolutely right. So he had a lot of wisdom imparted to the architects and of which I don't recall any one of them that we have not taken to heart.

LW: I think you've succeeded in producing a building that captures everything you were asked to capture, and the thing that's amazing to me is that when I look at the program that he gave to you, it gives me no visual sense at all of a building. I would have been totally foundering. I'm not an architect, but...

IMP: That's the difference. Once you're an architect, the program very quickly you have to take on concrete form and space. But they were very early on very important. My regret about the project, and I have some, and that is that we didn't have any predominantly significant internal spaces. Because the program did not call for it.

LW: Such as...

IMP: A place to come and say, "Well, this is the heart of NCAR." And maybe it's not to be. Maybe the heart of NCAR is somewhere outside.

LW: Well, you never got your conference center, which would have been a place everyone could come together. And you've got your cafeteria, which is a very pedestrian sort of heart of NCAR, but that is where everyone congregates.

IMP: We fought for that one. We pushed it to the...

LW: So what sort of space would you have liked?

IMP: I would have liked to have a meeting place, which a conference center would have been, where not only the scientists would gather from time to time but also the visitors would come and see exhibits and so on. And have a knowledge of what's going on in this institution. If weren't bound by such budget constraint, I would have asked to include something like that, so that the center has a heart.

LW: Well, you know the main lobby is used very much that way. When there's a Christmas party, the entire staff gathers standing up on those balconies.

IMP: But because of lack of program and because of lack of money and lack of space therefore, we weren't able to make it into a very exciting and spiritually exciting space that it should be and could be. That's the only regret I have.

LW: In addition to the third tower not being built, I assume.

IMP: Ah, that may yet come.

LW: That may yet come, yes. We haven't given up.

IMP: I'm going to speak very loudly on that one someday when I can, and so that they can understand this spirit of this and that to really fully capture the spirit of that site that group of towers must. Then you can see the animals, the wild flowers, the mesa you don't walk but you look closely. Because you cannot appreciate from a distance. Sometimes a hyena is down there and I didn't even see it. And not to mention heather, flowers. But if you get to be two stories above, you begin to see all of it. I would like someday to be able to see it and not get down to it--see it.

LW: Just look over into it. This is a question I even hesitate to ask, but I am baffled by a quote that I saw in *Newsweek*. Philip Johnson has called NCAR the first postmodernist building. I don't see it. You don't see it either.

IMP: I don't see it.

LW: OK, that's all I wanted to know. I don't know what he means. How, then do you think the building has influenced--it's a difficult question to answer, I know; everybody's influenced by everything around them--but do you see any influence of the NCAR building on architects?

IMP: Yes. I think unfortunately the influence is more formal, more a question of copying forms, than the spirit. Yes, you can see that. Those forms frequently reappearing, appearing, reappearing. But the spirit is not there. How can it be, you because it can only be there. It has to be in that context, has to be in that site, on that site. And there will unquestionably others coming given a similar charge of a great site, they may also have to search for the same kind of elusive quality. They may find this useful. Maybe informative. But it's only at that level that I think the influence

will be significant. The cribbing of forms is of no interest to me.

LW: I have one other quick thing. Do you have anything to say about the Fleischmann Building? I know very little about the process of designing that.

IMP: Yes, the Fleischmann Building came very late, and by then I was involved in other things, but I was able to spend quite a lot of time myself on it too, inspite of the fact that I was not able to give totally of myself to it. I was able to spend enough time so that I see that this is in fact does relate very well to the complex. And the siting was Dr. Roberts' choice. And I respect his choice. And it was well hidden in the trees. He wanted it to be hidden. And he has his own program. I think it works very well for him and for his program. It's UCAR, isn't it?

LW: Yes, that's right.

IMP: And so I think it's a little less challenging as an architectural assignment than the original one. It more or less follows the footsteps of the original one, and wherever we have succeeded and not succeeded in the original one, this new small addition couldn't add or subtract.

LW: Well, I thank you very much for taking your time. I'm just checking through my questions and I think I've hit them all.

IMP: If not, you can always call me.

LW: Well, that's very nice of you.

IMP: You can call me. I'm going to be gone next week.

LW: Wonderful. And I'll talk to Ms. Black about maybe fixing up a time for you to come out to NCAR. I don't think there's any particular date that you need to fit in with. This is our 25th anniversary.

IMP: Just let me know when. Give me plenty of notice and I can tell you now when I'm not available. I have to go to Paris in the summer once for a stay of again a week or ten days, and very likely going to be before August. August is a holiday. So the month of July is probably a time, end of July, middle of July I'll be gone. Just before August. Then I go to the Far East for an extended trip in October--end of October, middle of October.

LW: So September or July.

IMP: September's a good time. Or before the 15th of July.

LW: OK. Well, we will work something out, and I am delighted to have met you.

IMP: I am too.

LW: You have the reputation of being very easy to interview and very charming and you have lived up to your reputation.

IMP: I don't know about that. I like to talk about things that I enjoy.

LW: Well, you know I've read all the confidential correspondence on your choice as architect...

IMP: Oh, really?

LW: And the theme that goes all the way through it is "We just like this man better than the others. "He wants to do the project, we love his ideas, but we really think we'll work well with him."

IMP: You see, I had practically no credentials at that time. We do this project, you know, because you see I'd been doing low-cost housing and eliminating slums and I had nothing whatsoever to show to anyone saying...

Tape unplugged. Pei escorts LW to elevator. End of conversation not recorded.