

OAKWOOD ORAL HISTORY PROJECT TRANSCRIPT

Peter and Barbara Batchelor (Peter moved to teach at NCSU in 1968; did not live in Oakwood, but contributed to saving the neighborhood)

Interviewed by Peter Rumsey and Liisa Ogburn on December 15, 2011 at his home.

Peter R.: Now, before we get started, also Barbara or Peter just a moment ago mentioned something about a letter that you had written to the chancellor.

Peter B.: Conversate, phone conversation.

Barbara: No I didn't, It was a phone call. I did not make it.

Peter R.: Okay and this, this is applicable or?

Peter B.: It is because there were winners and losers in this Shore Southside Charrette and I both won and lost. Barbara will tell you one of the things, one of the ways in which I won, okay?

Peter R.: Okay. Well this is going to be fascinating. Liisa go ahead.

Liisa: Okay, so first of all let's start with you introducing yourselves.

Peter B.: Alright, my name is Peter Bachelor. I'm a retired professor of Architecture and Urban Design from the College of Design at NC State University. I retired in 2007 and before I started in 1968 at NC State, I had graduated from the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania, and that is very germane in fact, to the Shaw Southside Design Charrette.

Liisa: And Barbara would you like to introduce yourself?

Barbara B.: I'm Barbara Bachelor, Peter's wife of many years, and I was at home during a lot of this time, that was going on. I was aware, very aware of what was going on because we talked a great deal about it, but we had two young children at that time, and I just got more and more excited. This was a smaller city than what I was used to, and it just seemed so exciting that all these people were moving around, and it seemed like a great conglomeration, but very exciting. That's about how it felt to me, I did not get in there and participate it was just wonderful to watch, when I had the chance.

Liisa: Right, Peter so you contacted me after reading my op-ed, why don't you tell me the context which put you in the center of this story.

Peter B.: Well, when I read your article Liisa, you mentioned that there was a developer and real estate broker that talked about the fact that there was a freeway that was going to go through historic Oakwood, and obliterate in fact, all those fine Victorian and late Victorian homes. I thought yes, that's true, but there's another piece of the story that is worth telling. I started to think about it, because all I've got are memories at this time,

until I start digging myself back through my own photographic archives. It was not only one of the most memorable events in my life, to the point of being highly emotional for me, it was my introduction to the south.

Raleigh was very racially divided then at this point in time, but it was scrambling to keep up with what was happening in the nation, and what was happening in the nation was the African American culture had begun to realize that it had some power and some voice. There were riots in many, many cities in this country. In Washington D.C., in Philadelphia, in Boston and Atlanta. This was partly the result of Martin Luther King and his influence on the African American culture, but it was also because at this point in time, most of the blacks lived in slum conditions. They were deprived in many ways. Poor housing and they were being told that they had a voice and could get active in politics so it was an incredible background to this story in the Shaw Southside Charrette and it's basically about citizen advocacy in city planning. That's really what the whole theme is all about. Anyway I'm deviating a little, but you asked me what it was about your article that got me interested. It was my introduction to the south. It was my introduction to the city of Raleigh and I frankly didn't know what I got myself into when the Charrette started, okay. The outcome was incredible in many, many different ways

Liisa: So tell me about the Charrette. How did that come to be and how did that, at what point in this concept of the highway did that Charrette take place?

Peter B: Well, I was in my second year of teaching in the School of Design as we called it in those days, and I was approached by the department head at the time and he said that, "Shaw University would like you to conduct a workshop to study its plans for expansion." But they didn't tell me at the time, well probably didn't even know, but they didn't tell me at the time that there was a freeway planned to run throughout the city called the North-South Expressway. They knew that I was both an architect and city planner and I'd be ideal for the task. So in the Fall semester of 1969 I was asked to put together a workshop and I used all of my students in that class and if we can find the names of the students in that class - and it would be relatively easy at NC State to get a class list, there's gonna be a lot of people out there who experienced this event. I don't remember any of their names except one actually at the time, but anyway it came through as a request through the University through the School of Design, for me to conduct a workshop. That's all I knew at the time. I was a neophyte. I was naive, I didn't really know what was about to happen.

Liisa: And so how did you go about starting to arrange that?

Peter B: Well, the background to this is I came out of the University of Pennsylvania with three computer languages under my belt and I was gung-ho as a computer geek. Now this was 1969, we didn't have desktop computers then. The first Apple computer was in the early 80's, so I was working with mainframes and I had this idea that the city of Raleigh should have a data bank called The Urban and Regional Data Bank. So I got my class working on it, preparing maps and documents which are now in the DHL Library archives. It was the first of its kind in the state, and only very few existed in the

country at that time. And the purpose was to study the city and develop characteristics for planning. One of the characteristics was travel time from the city center. So we made contour maps of isochromes, which are the lines of equal travel in transportation, and I developed what we call a studio project around this. These maps later became useful. They were hung in the workshop of the Charrette. They were both hand drawn drawings and computer print outs. I then took this stuff and put together a team of people to help me organize the workshop and I was very fortunate in having some very capable students. We were given the old Sanders-Ford building which I believe, I'm not sure, but I believe is now the art studio - Art Space - that's right. It's both an automobile showroom and a garage. A huge building, as a matter of fact, we had the entire space but we had a big budget. The budget was enormous by anybody's standards. Now think about this, the now defunct Department of Health, Education and Welfare was very much involved in urban renewal/urban development and things like this. They were very interested in this project. I understand the funds of this project were \$70,000. Put that in the perspective of today's money and you're talking over \$200,000. That's a lot of money for a workshop. So we had a lot of money. We were able to build a seven hundred seat arena and I'm thanking my lucky stars that I had students that were capable with a saw and hammer.

We set up the arena in the garage space itself, but out front in the showroom, we built booths for WSHA radio. We had a daycare nursery run by students of Shaw University. Other students used a van and picked up working mothers and stay at home mothers so they could attend the proceedings. Across the street in the old Sir Walter Raleigh Hotel they had a hospitality suite where the federal officials came down and I understand, I never partook, but I understand the liquor was flowing very freely in that hospitality suite. The whole thing was an extremely lavish affair by anybody's standards and I'm saying this now because one of the later consequences of this. There was a delay of about 12 or 13 years - I set up something called the North Carolina Urban and Regional Design Team and I took design teams first of all, all around this state, and eventually to Maryland, Washington state and Oregon conducting these kinds of Charrettes and we didn't have that kind of budget. The budget never went over \$50,000 dollars anytime. So \$70,000 in 1969 was a huge sum of money and consequently I don't know where it all went. I wasn't privy to the flow of funds at all, but we had so much at our disposal it's just incredible by anybody's standards. Now I got to the point where I was what you would call a facilitator in the workshop actually, and I was and am very white. I had no idea of the volatility of the situation and I found out not only was this North-South Freeway planned, but it was going to consume a lot of the lands of the Southside area and Shaw University and I said in my email reply to you that the overt objective was to stop the freeway, the covert objective was to actually make sure that Shaw University didn't lose any of its land in its expansion. I only found that out many, many years later actually. So there was this background and the citizens of Southside were just as deprived of housing and resources in life as any other urban community. It wasn't exactly a slum, but it was very run down, very dilapidated. Shotgun houses that were falling apart and so on and there was so much emotion running, almost like a fever in the Charrette that we got through a couple of days of community presentations then we were taken over by what one would consider a rebel-rouser black student from Columbia

University and he redirected the whole structure of this workshop. Now I'm probably getting ahead of myself okay.

Liisa: How long was this workshop supposed to last?

Peter B: From November 3, 1969 to November 10. A week.

Liisa: And how were those, how were people identified? How many people were invited? So you said there was seven hundred seats?

Peter B: Yes. I would say how many people- anybody who was anybody was invited. The entire City Council, the Mayor, the Chancellor of the university, who didn't come but my Dean, who did come, and certainly it seemed to me half the administration of Shaw University were there. Many, many business representatives were there and although the place would hold seven hundred, it's more likely that more than a thousand actually came to the event. Out of the seven hundred they were repeats - People coming back day after day. The redevelopment agency was there. The Transportation Planning Secretary was there. The City Council dropped in from time to time, community leaders came from both the black and the white community. It was quite a big event.

Liisa: And you were facilitating the entire event?

Peter B: Yes that's right, and I set it up in a way that I would make presentations about the current state of planning for the Shaw Southside area and then future planning for the city of Raleigh and downtown. Very methodical kind of academic way, I set it up, so people would get an overview of what was about to happen to their lives. Of course, I don't think they were greatly interested in that. They came because they were more concerned about their property and their area and so on. They didn't want an academic exercise at all. But I, they stayed with me for two days and heard me out. But on the third day we got taken over by a militant, black leader. That not only changed my life, but it changed everybody else's life at the same time.

Liisa: Tell me about that

Peter B: Alright. Somewhere exists a picture of this guy. He was a young student from Columbia. Somebody in Shaw University contacted him and said "look we got a situation here. We got this white guy," I think they called me a white cracker actually - "we got this white cracker who's trying to tell the city what they should do" and that wasn't really my purpose at all. It was try to get the citizens to agree on a course of action. He came down overnight and he took over a meeting - an afternoon meeting, and in a very noisy way. The arena was full and for some reason or other my Dean had decided to come down here and he was sitting in the front row. If anybody knew Henry Camphefner, first of all you never told him what to do, he told you what to do. He was one of the most feared and respected architects and educators in this state, then and even in memory if you ask his students, it would be the same way. And he was appalled that this black leader said "okay all you white people gotta leave okay," to what was mostly

white people at that time. Henry Camphfner went red in the face. I secretly laughed, but it wasn't funny because I was still a neophyte on the faculty, but eventually with pressure and shouting and yelling they managed to get everybody, every white person to leave that place and it was sometime like 8 or 9 o'clock at night we just had to go home. There was nothing we could do when the black students took over. When we came back the next day the blacks that I had befriended were extremely apologetic about being thrown out of my session so rudely. But looking back on it, what finally happened was the black, militant leader managed to make the whole group cohesive and Shaw University at the same time, invited a black architect from Memphis called Berry McKissic, and he came in and he organized in a way that I couldn't do it. Organized using great big charts and big pieces of craft paper, a map on which the Shaw Southside people plotted their future. So it was an emotionally charged event, but I think it changed everybody's life.

Liisa: How does this new map, how does that relate to the North-South Freeway at that time?

Peter B: Well first of all, the North-South freeway was eliminated in that plan. Instead we had something called a transportation sub-committee in the workshop and they prepared four, alternatives to take what essentially is Western Boulevard, and run it through the area and connect with what we now call Martin Luther King Boulevard and what we see today is actually an evolution, in different ways, of the four plans that we produced. The residents wanted to minimize the size of interchanges and we worked on that a lot to try to shrink them down. I do have a minor in transportation planning, so I knew what I was doing but I'm not a transportation planner and subsequently, they had to expand the freeway interchange. What did happen, was that public housing was created in - I think it's - is it Walnut Terrace where you went when you were...- there's a public housing project there and that was something that didn't exist before the Charrette, but the interchange never worked and it's just in terms of Raleigh's future now - It's just a connection between two streets. a little bit devious because when you get around memorial auditorium you gotta go down different streets to connect, but around the back of memorial auditorium you can connect with Martin Luther King Boulevard.

Peter R: What was the status of the highway proposal at that point? Was it on the thoroughfare plan? What was the specific status of what had been laid out?

Peter B: It was on the state thoroughfare plan. It wasn't on the city thoroughfare plan but the city apparently backed it very strongly. It was presented to us, and if you can find any one of these two documents I put down on paper, you'll find actually, a diagram, that shows where it is and gives you the name and so on. It was presented to me as an accomplished fact, and I took it into the workshop and it got ripped apart very quickly

Liisa: Do you remember conversations that week with Peter?

Barbara B: I don't remember specifically. I remember him coming home early one night, or day, and just kind of didn't say very much but I sensed I knew that something had

happened ya know, and eventually we got to talking about it.

Peter R: You mentioned the discussion with the Chancellor at NC State, is that related to this?

Barbara B: Not right yet.

Peter R: Okay.

Peter B: No but it does have - the outcome.

Barbara B: It came later.

Peter B: The outcome, it came later that's right. It's the one way in which I won in this situation. I also lost in many ways but I won in some other ways too.

Barbara B: You did indeed dear.

Peter B: One of the consequences, and it's a wonderful study in civic participation, out of this incidentally, out of these kinds of things, and there were lots of them they called them community design centers. They were springing up all over the country and out of this comes Raleigh's modern movement of the Citizen's Advisory Committee. This was the grassroots stuff that laid down civic involvement for ordinary citizens and we now enjoy the benefits of that. But I do remember that the Raleigh Housing Authority at that time, which was heavily involved in what we used to call urban renewal, had its director there and one of its administrators and there was a big argument that went on between a woman - if I think hard enough I might come up with her name and a community leader from Southside and I captured it on film. And the thing that is bothering me now is that I had so limited space when I vacated my office at the school of design in 2007, I threw all that stuff out. So somewhere this stuff is documented. Anyway I think if you contacted the Shaw University Photographic Department their archives will show hundreds of pictures, well they should anyway, and I'll start digging and see if I can find any too.

Liisa: Tell me about that night that you were sent home early.

Peter B: Well I had a good night's sleep

Barbara B: Best and last.

Peter B: There wasn't much sleep going on in those days and we were in the workshop until maybe 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning. We had incidentally, and I forgot to mention this -we built a model of downtown. A scale model showing maybe about eight or ten city blocks and it was made of two 4'x8' sheets of plywood and it had wheels on the bottom. We could roll it out in front of the audience. So what happened is during the daytime people would get up and say what they wanted, and at nighttime we would actually build this model out of wood blocks and cardboard and then roll it back into the arena the next day. I said that I was naive. I sure as hell was naive, there's no question

about it. See, I had this crazy idea that in order to dramatize the event we had to have a public address system. We had to have mics and speakers around the place and we had flood lights and klieg lights hanging from the ceiling and we had spot lights shining on people who got up to speak. But the crowd did not want this dramatized. They were already hot under the collar and so the sessions got to be at least verbally violent, if not physically violent. And that's what I didn't understand. This was such a huge deal in the city and the residents were really worked up even before we got there. After the militant takeover, things calmed down and I remember thinking there's a big difference in this room. The whites would talk respectfully to the administrators of Shaw University before, but afterwards they would touch them. They would literally touch them, ya know, put their arms around their shoulders and so on. There was some real breakdown that occurred in the barriers that prevented communication between people and that was one of those things that happened.

Liisa: He has a cold. He might need some water.

Peter B: Oh, pour him a glass of filtered water

Barbara B: I'll go out and see.

Liisa: Sorry. I wanna get more into this but I don't want the doors to be opening and closing. How old were you when this took place?

Peter B: Actually, thirty-five.

Liisa: And how recently had you arrived in North Carolina?

Peter B: One year before, in 1968.

Liisa: And who was mentoring you through this process or were you alone?

Peter B: I felt like it. At least in the academic sense I was alone. This was not the sort of thing that academics even in Architecture undertook. The whole business of citizen advocacy was still on the horizon for most people. They didn't know what it was and there were some sanctions I think, against architects actually advocating for citizens at that time. They were never actually written down I just felt that that was true. We were supposed to design buildings and not advocate for citizens. But a professor at the University of Pennsylvania Paul Davidoff said that the real way in which city planners can influence city planning is through politics and that they had to get involved in a political arena. He published a paper in 1965 and I happened to be one of his students, and it was published in the American Institute of Planners Journal advocating or saying that city planners should aspire to city leadership - City Council, city Mayor, and so on in order to see their plans realized. It was an extremely novel idea because at that time city planning was considered a profession, but a technical profession that really shouldn't get involved, shouldn't get its hands muddied, in internal politics there should be some separation. And I think that's still a little bit true in many ways. A city planning department really aren't a political arm of City Council here or they shouldn't be and I

get that message reinforced in the City Planning Commission too.

Peter R: Sorry.

Liisa: That's okay.

Peter B: Did you get your water?

Peter R: I'm okay.

Barbara B: No, he did not want any water.

Peter R: I have some cough lozenges.

Peter B: I've got some Fisherman's Friends upstairs if you need them.

Peter R: I'm taken care of, thank you. If it happens again I'm just going to upset myself and let this not be the focal point of the discussion. Excuse me, go ahead.

Liisa: Ok, so going back to that time you were thirty-five years old you had come in, you were identified for this role. Who was really pushing? If this was kind of a new concept to have citizen advocacy and involvement, who was really pushing this? I mean, I could kind of see it going both ways, not pulling it off or?

Peter B: Nobody was really pushing it. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare however, wanted to see what advocacy would do at the local level for improving the status of African Americans. I couldn't honestly say they were pushing it but they certainly funded it very generously. Nobody was pushing it from my end. It was just a simple request from one university to another to set up a workshop. Maybe that question is better answered by anybody that's still alive from the Shaw administration. As I said I had come from the University of Pennsylvania and we had one professor who's specialty was actually as a lawyer, was citizen advocacy and also as a city planner, citizen advocacy but it was a very new idea. It was only four years before I came here that this guy published a paper and it was quite epoch making paper for the time. All these were new things but its not one thing that occurred, it's many, many things happening at the same time. The breakdown of law and order in American cities, the influence of Martin Luther King, the sense that blacks had an entitlement they weren't using. They weren't active in politics and civic involvement, that they need to do this and somehow I created the forum for this to happen in ways I couldn't imagine in the city of Raleigh and that's what I meant when I said I was naive. I didn't really mean to do it all. An ordinary space would of done it, but now we had an arena with loudspeakers and lights and everything else. We had women from the community, particularly women, jostling for the microphone because they liked to hear their voices speak. So it became a kind of a stage, there were frequently verbal battles even if there weren't physical battles going on. All at the same time my students were amused by all of this. They'd never seen anything like it before. They were North Carolinians. They never traveled outside the state. A few of

them had never had much interaction with blacks of any kind at all, and we had black students coming in on an equal basis. Coming into the Charrette, in the showroom. Young students were taking care of mother's kids in the nursery. Shaw University Radio was broadcasting on an hour by hour basis. It's just unbelievable what was happening there. My students, with all their skills, made what I call super graphics - wall-sized graphics - of black leaders, and if I can find those photographs you'll see that and hung them all over the place. It was drama in the most extraordinary way, but not for an audience. It was for us and everybody. It was like I created theater without realizing it.

Peter R: Was there participation by people from the Oakwood neighborhood that you were aware of?

Peter B: Not that I was aware of. If white people came to the sessions, and they would be white I think, if they lived in Oakwood, they were semi afraid of all these big, black people and their different clothes, and their different voices. Blacks and whites didn't mix very well in those days and I think the city fathers that came, the city council members and anybody in civic agencies kept what I would call, a very low profile because they were afraid of at least being verbally attacked by anybody that identified them. When I believe, we had the redevelopment agency, one of its administrators came, she was booed and hissed at and everything by the audience. So I began to think "what have I got myself into?" Ya know, I really didn't know. I hate to over work the word, but I was naive at that point, but I grew up in an awful hurry too

Liisa: You said you were changed by the experience?

Peter B: Yes, very much so. Having come from England to Vancouver where I studied at an architectural school and then to Philadelphia, I didn't actually have much contact with blacks so I didn't know them as a culture and also in many ways, I admired blacks. I was one of the founders of the Modern Jazz Society in Vancouver and the two people we had come to it was Sammy Davis Jr. and Mel Torme for one of the opening sessions. I had some kind of feeling at least, through the music, if nothing else about them. So I really had nothing that would inhibit me in any way in dealing with blacks in this situation. And sorry I've forgotten what your question was.

Liisa: You said you were changed by this experience.

Peter B: Changed! That's right, yes. I had always assumed that city planning was a technical issue. Like I said I was a bit of a computer geek and we had learned the value of comprehensive planning and urban land economics and so on. I always thought it was kind of like an academic issue. I never though really, that it was an issue of involvement of the citizens at all and it started me on a long history of citizen advocacy for communities around this state and then Maryland and Washington State and Oregon. It changed me in the career sense in that way. Another change that occurred that was not good was that the North-South Expressway was seen as a panacea for the declining downtown. The merchants I think, saw it as a way of not only getting building construction going on in the downtown area, but also people would come off the freeway

and purchase goods and services in the city center. And I believe that I was viewed as a trouble-maker. It's the fan. Do you want to stop?

Liisa: Can I turn it off?

Peter B: It's the furnace fan. It's behind that wall.

Liisa: Can we turn it off, or no it's not possible.

Peter B: I don't know

Peter R: Can we turn the thermostat off?

Peter B: Yeah, that's possible

Peter R: Talk about that.

Peter: Hmmm.

Peter R.: Now, before we get started, also Barbara or Peter just a moment ago mentioned something about a letter that you had written to the chancellor.

Peter B.: Phone conversation.

Barbara: It was a phone call. I did not make it.

Peter R.: Okay and this, this is applicable or?

Peter B.: It is because there were winners and losers in this Shore Southside Charrette and I both won and lost. Barbara will tell you one of the things, one of the ways in which I won, okay?

[Interruption for phone call]

Peter Batchelor: I think you were asking me in what ways was I changed, and what ways other things were changed too. I believe that the...I'm going to call them the city fathers. The people. The movers and shakers of the city of Raleigh, at the time, regarded me as a trouble maker. That certainly wasn't my intention, but that's how I was perceived.

I sensed being shut out, for a number of years, from things that could have been useful to the city--particularly in the city planning area. I believe that it cost me my professional credibility for a few years anyway, maybe a decade or more.

And so one of the consequences is I changed my focus. I took an interest in computer aided design and changed it to computer aided land use planning and worked with several

coastal counties. Currituck and Dare County. And produced the first viable land use maps using computers. And they are in the University archives right now too.

Eventually I took the citizen advocacy issue outside the city of Raleigh. I've never done any work ever in the City of Raleigh. Even now. And started helping other communities with downtown revitalization, waterfront development and so on, and built quite a reputation in the area. And I believe that came out. That was an unintended consequence of the Shaw South side Charrette .

It was good for other communities. For example, what you see in downtown Southern Pines is largely the work of myself and another city planner. The same in Salisbury, North Carolina. There are probably about ten communities in this state that I helped plan their downtown areas, but I never helped Raleigh plan its downtown area, and that's a significant loss for me actually.

I think Raleigh is over its problems with me now. It was many years ago as a matter of fact. What else happened was that I believe the course of downtown development changed. Shaw University strengthened its hold on the properties that it had, maybe enlarged them, and I think I saw a bit of that recently in the planning commission.

It took a while for Raleigh to pick up on the notion of downtown planning. It first of all made the tragic mistake of closing Fayetteville Mall, which was actually a viable street when I first came here. That almost killed downtown completely. It just about knocked it out of the loop. It started to pick up maybe about ten years ago again with a number of different things which you now know about.

But I felt like what it did for me was it deflected my interest to other things when I could have spent that attention locally. Helping local organizations, planning for them and so on. And I think Barbara has something to tell you about another positive outcome with this Shore South Side (inaudible). You want to tell them?

Barbara Batchelor: Well there's....

Peter Batchelor: Yeah. Please do.

Barbara Batchelor: Well, this was later. Let's see. What time was the graduation after that?

Peter Batchelor: It was the following spring.

Barbara Batchelor: Yeah. Anyway, I was at home and Peter wasn't, and the phone rang. This voice said "Mrs. Batchelor?", and I said "Yes." He said, "I have a message for you, and I'd like it to remain private."

And I thought *who is this?* Well, it was the chancellor. I said “Can you tell me is there something wrong?” He said, “No”. And he said, “Is your husband planning on going to the graduation this year?” Everybody did in those days didn’t they?

Peter Batchelor: Yeah, you pretty much had to.

Barbara Batchelor: Yeah. You’re supposed to wear your gowns, etcetera. And he said “Would you please just make sure that he understands he must go.” And I said, “Is there something special?” He said “Yes.” And I said “Well, can you tell me so I can at least discuss with him?” He said, “You might not want to discuss this with him.”

Go shoot somebody. But really. He said, “I just wanted to tell you that we have an award at this university. And it is been decided that your husband will win the award this year.” And I was just...I couldn’t say anything very much. I was thrilled and I thought of all the times you would come home, and he worked very hard, and thought what a joy. But I had to keep my mouth shut. I couldn’t tell anybody until that day.

Peter Batchelor: And it was the Outstanding Teacher award, and the Alumni Fellowship. And it was based...I’m pretty sure pretty largely on my efforts on behalf of the Shaw South Side people. While I believe I lost credibility with the...I call the movers and shakers, while I lost credibility with the white leadership structure of the city at the time, I was something of a hero in the eyes of my students.

At the end of these sessions we were weeping with emotion, weren’t we? Just thinking back on it. My students had their arms around Shaw University students. It was just one helluva emotional time, and I think the students realize that. It was a huge event for them too, not just me.

Peter Rumsey: We’re aware of various League of Women voters, citizens base, and follow on activities in the early seventies that put together alternatives to the thoroughfare plan and things like that. Sounds like quite possibly many of those things were catalyzed by the Charrette that you had put together.

Peter Batchelor: Yeah, it’s quite possible.

Peter Rumsey: Were you familiar with those activities that followed?

Peter Batchelor: Actually, yes as a matter of fact. But only after the fact, not before the fact. And I realize I was approached by the League of Women voters for my opinion about certain kinds of things. Certain things that were happening. Not just highways, but schools, parks planning, and so on. You’re right. Catalyze is a wonderful word, because that’s what this event did. It catalyzed people into taking charge of their own lives.

Liisa: They had something to say. Was there ever a moment during the Charrette that you felt like things would get out of control? That it would somehow have to be called off?

Peter Batchelor: Not that it would get called off, but certainly when this black student from Colombia, he literally took the running of the Sharet out of my hands actually, and took over. And I didn't know frankly what was gonna happen, but I do remember coming back the next day, unlocking the doors of the Sanders Ford building.

Incidentally we had security too. We had security guards guarding all the maps and everything in there. I almost forgotten some of the big beefy guys they had guarding this. I think they expected some kind of physical altercation to go on. But anyway, coming back the next day, as I said, the Shaw University's students, particularly the women, were so upset about us being thrown out of our own workshop.

I remember one of them, I even remember her name, Martha Hinton, she cried when we came back into the workshop saying "I hope you weren't upset by this." I said "No, it's all in a day's work." Of course, I didn't know what I was saying.

Liisa: Did those relationships from that Charrette continue beyond the end of that workshop?

Peter Batchelor: Not for me. Cause NC State and Shaw University were two distinct entities, two ivory towers, of their own kind. Like I said, I think I was engaging in activity that some academics would frown on. Research is fine. Publication is fine. Designing buildings is fine. Citizen advocacy is not OK. And I was stepping outside the bounds of professionalism by doing that. So, I don't think much happened between those two institutions then. I'm not even sure much happens today.

Peter Rumsey: You're sitting on the planning commission today.

Peter Batchelor: Yes.

Peter Rumsey: Playing an active roll now. Planning the activities of the city. Tell us more about what that's like and how your experiences have informed what you're doing today.

Peter: I actually wanted to sit on the city planning commission all the time I was teaching, but one of the problems is for a teacher you can't just arrange your schedule around planning commission meetings. And there are subcommittees and things you have to attend. So, I could never carve the time out of my academic schedule to do that.

And one of the city council members of at least fifty years ago, his name is Barlow Herget, wanted me...he was advocating for me to join the city planning commission, and I couldn't find the time. But over the course of some fifty years involvement in city planning and urban design, I have actually written design guidelines, written codes for zoning ordinances, acted as an advocate for developers, as well as a protagonist against developers.

I wrote and illustrated the entire Chapel Hill design guidelines in the late 1980s, and I thought look, I at least got some technical expertise that would enable me to be an

effective city planning commissioner. Well, to make a long story short, when I retired I had the time to become the city planning commissioner. That's really how it happened.

Although I've only been a commissioner for two years, what I find is that what they're concerned about is the administration of a code. What I'm concerned about as an urban designer is the physical appearance of the city. So, we get into some tussles over that. I find that the lawyers on the city planning commission and I frequently have some disagreement.

Peter Rumsey: Witnessed the other day.

Peter: Yes. Exactly.

Peter Rumsey: From the experiences you've had, are there names of other people that you might suggest we talk with and interview as part of this? (inadubile)

Peter: I think one of the class members of the Charrette--his name is Lyn Adams. He is the architect, or was the architect, for the North Carolina Zoo in Asheboro. He may have some interesting observations. And if I can get hold of a class list I could probably tell you who might be around to talk about it. If you could find it for me that might even make it quicker. Some of these people of course have probably passed on. Most of them are retired I'm sure.

Peter Rumsey: Within the black community, you had mentioned a woman whose name was Hinton. Were there others?

Peter: Yes. A student Martha Hinton. I don't know what she would remember about it. There was a Mrs. Taylor, who was a black advocate for the community. There was a Mrs. High, who was I believe somehow related to the urban renewal administration. I keep a diary. It's quite possible I could look back through those days and see if I can come up with anything.

But I was also at that time what they call a contributing editor to the North Carolina American Student Architect Journal. And I wrote this article, put down at the time all the things that were going on and all the names. And then I wrote another article for a book called "Eleven Views: Collaborative Design and Community Development." And that too will have names and images.

I didn't manage to do this, but I was going to go on Amazon and see if I could find a copy floating out there somewhere. And the School of Design might actually have its own archives and the university certainly would.

Liisa: I'll definitely look for those. I think that's it. Is there anything else that we haven't...

Peter: Well, if I have, I'll get in touch with you immediately. I've been a photographer for at least sixty years, and I have my own slide files, my own black and white negatives, color negatives and so on. This could be an awesome task to go back through them, but maybe I can find something.

Liisa: Thank you very much. Thank you very, very much.

Peter Rumsey: Thank you.