

THE CAREER OF GARY ROBINETTE IN
THE CONTEMPORARY HISTORY OF
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

by

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ABSTRACT

THE CAREER OF GARY ROBINETTE IN
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Gary Robinette has practiced landscape architecture since 1963. During that time he has overseen policy and research that affects landscape architects in the United States and those in countries who model their regulatory system after the United States. His career has taken him through administration of the leading professional organizations, into the private sector, and the better part of his time he spent in the field of academy or scholarship teaching at The University of Wisconsin at Madison and The University of Texas at Arlington. He has contributed to the landscape architecture body of knowledge through his prolific writing with 22 books. He has lectured at 17 different universities in his career. Robinette has been recognized by his professional peers with the highest title given by the American Society of Landscape Architects: Fellow.

This biography provides an oral history of Robinette, a character who was directly involved in the development of the American Society of Landscape Architects in the early and mid 1970s as well as The Program in Landscape Architecture at The University of Texas at Arlington. Information within this research will help shed light on the development of the profession of landscape architecture in America in the second half of the twentieth century, a period that saw tremendous growth and increased professionalism in the discipline. By documenting and understanding Robinette's professional concerns and development, this research provides materials which can enable future studies of this period in American landscape architecture history.

This thesis employs qualitative research to reveal how Robinette responded to the ever changing political, social, legal, and technological tides over the past 50 years. In essence it is an examination of how Robinette influenced history and in turn how history influenced him. Additionally, there is an examination of his pedagogy and authorship.

Findings reveal that Robinette had considerable influence on the history of the profession of landscape architecture without as much reciprocation from history or the profession. In terms of his pedagogy, there are considerable data which concedes he had a tremendous impact on the lives of the students which is usually polarized in positive and negative aspects (J. Buchanan, personal communication, March 26, 2012; C. Feldman, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

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PART I – PREPARATION

This part of the thesis provides the information which explains how the research was conducted. Additionally, it holds secondary research which provides the contextual information from which to contrast Gary Robinette's background

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Significance Of This Research

Robinette is a rich source of historical data for the profession of landscape architecture, not only because he witnessed events which shaped the profession, but because he participated in those events. The primary mode of research was one-on-one interviews with Robinette, which also provide source material for future studies of this period in American landscape architecture history. The purpose of this study is to document Robinette's biography; place him within the contextual history of landscape architecture; and analyze how he influenced the outcome of events or determine how these events influenced his life and career. This research examines the career of Robinette, contrast this examination against the known body of history of the profession of landscape architecture, determine what role the history of said profession has upon his career, and to explore how he used those experiences to influences his teaching. Additionally, the research adds to the body of knowledge of landscape architecture.

1.2 Research Objective

To better organize this study and assist in operating within its constraints, several questions are presented whose purpose is to focus the research. The study is not limited to these questions. They are merely guidelines. These questions are:

- How did Robinette's work reflect the overall framework of the profession of landscape architecture?
- What are Robinette's most significant contributions to the profession?
- How does Robinette connect to significant historical events?
- What was the nature of Robinette's pedagogical approach at The University of Texas at Arlington?

1.3 Definition Of Terms

Specific terms used within this thesis are defined not by the author, but by well established uses in the literature used to research this topic.

Anonymity: The ability to remain anonymous in order to prevent embarrassment, legal problems, self-aggrandizement, and concealment of important details and information (Taylor and Bogden, 1998).

Factual truth: The actual evidence of what occurred (Janesick, 2010).

Interviewing: A meeting of two persons to exchange information and ideas through questions and responses, resulting in communication and joint construction of meaning about a particular topic.

Landscape: An assemblage of all the living species and non-living material with and upon the land, both natural and human made (Marsh, 1991).

Methodology: The way in which one approaches problems and seeks answers (Taylor and Bogden, 1998).

Narrative truth: A person's story and narrative of how something occurred, as well as what occurred and how that effects the individual (Janesick, 2010).

Oral history: The interviewing of eye-witness participants in the events of the past for the purposes of historical reconstruction (The Oral History Reader, 1998).

Qualitative interviewing: Nondirective, unstructured, non-standardized, and open-ended interviewing (Taylor and Bogden, 1998).

Social truth: The social context and history of what occurred (Janesick, 2010).

Thesis: A document that reflects the scholarly rigor necessary for conducting original research and presenting its findings prior to publication (Taylor, 2011).

Narrator: One who recalls the past and asserts his or her interpretation of that past (The oral history reader, 1998).

1.4 Literature Review

It is important to know what has been written prior to starting a research project. In this thesis, it was thought prudent to become proficient in both the purpose of structuring interviews and enriching analysis in order to contextualize Robinette's own history to that of the profession. For this reason, a thorough examination was made of available literature which focused on three key interests of this research.

1.4.1 Landscape Architecture Background History

In order to contextualize the career of Robinette to the profession of landscape architecture, a review must be made of major and significant contributions to the profession during the life time of Robinette, and for context, the time period immediately prior to Robinette. Several books were relied upon heavily to do this including Alofsin's (2002) *The Struggle for Modernism: Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and City Planning at Harvard*; Walker's (1996) *Invisible Gardens: The Search for Modernism in the American Landscape*; Simo's (1999) *100 Years of Landscape Architecture: Some Patterns of a Century*; as well as a number of biographical precedents written by Marc Treib to name but a few.

1.4.2 Career Of Robinette

There are no publications in existence already detailing the career of Robinette. Most of the information on Robinette came from his 18 page curriculum vitae provided by The University of Texas at Arlington. Some information collected on Robinette came from unlikely places such as a short biographical paragraph on the inside cover of some of his books or came in pieces like the date and publisher of each of his books.

1.4.3 The Process Of Taking Oral Histories

There is art to taking an oral history which this researcher knew nothing about prior to entering this project. For this reason, several publications were relied upon heavily prior to and during the taking of Robinette's oral history including Janesick's (2010) *Oral History for the Qualitative Researcher*:

Choreographing the Story; The Oral History Reader (1998); as well as Yow's (2005) *Recording Oral History*.

1.5 Method Of Research

This study uses qualitative research to answer the key questions. This is accomplished by interviewing Robinette in oral history format and key witnesses in a direct question interview.

1.5.1 Selecting Informants

Informants provide the bulk of information collected in this research. They hold vital information necessary to reconstruct the events of Robinette's career.

Life histories are written on the basis of in-depth interviews with one person or a small handful of people. Although all people have one good story to tell-their own-some people have better stories and make better research partners for the purpose of constructing a life history (Taylor and Bogden, 1998).

Additionally, they are necessary for fact-checking against each other in order to obtain a more accurate version of the truth. Informants in this study were categorized into one of two sections. The first category contains the main informant, Robinette. The second category contains all secondary informants. The selection of secondary informants was based on information from Robinette, the faculty of The Program in Landscape Architecture at The University of Texas at Arlington, and his former students. Many people know and have worked with Robinette. Interviewing them all is neither a realistic possibility nor necessity for this study. Informants are needed who can provide rich answers to the key questions mentioned above.

Final selection of informants was limited by external factors. One source of potential informants came from the alumni list of The Program in Landscape Architecture at The University of Texas at Arlington. Informants were selected at random to represent an equal spacing throughout Robinette's time at the university. However, locating these individuals proved to be difficult and the research resorted to speaking with individuals in the list who could be contacted.

1.5.2 Contacting Informants

Robinette himself was contacted via letter and informed of the intent to study his career. Robinette agreed to cooperate with this study by way of a series of interviews and by duplicating personal documents.

Other individuals who were identified as potential informants were contacted first by phone if a number was available, then by e-mail if available. Potential informants were explained the scope of the research and how they potentially connected to the research. Informants who wished to cooperate with the research were then scheduled for an oral recorded interview.

1.5.3 Interview Questions

A review of written history such as his curriculum vitae, resume, books, and his pertaining to Robinette gives the skeleton of his career but very few of the details. This skeleton, however, is robust enough to formulate thoughtful open ended questions about specific events when contrasted against the plethora of information found on the profession of landscape architecture. The first interview with Robinette provided the missing details in the framework of his overall career. Two more interviews were conducted to explore, in-depth, his political, social, legal, and technological ideals both past and present and how they related to his career. The structure of the interviews is as follows:

- Interview I- Filling gaps in his biography and his current company, Agora.
- Interview II- Discussing larger trends in the profession of landscape architecture and his pedagogy.
- Interview III- Research and authorship.
- Interview IV- Verification of data.

All other informants who participated in the interview process were asked to identify a quiet setting of their choosing as the location for their interview. The interview questions varied from informant to informant depending on which particular portion of Robinette's life they were privy. In general each informant was asked these questions:

- What is your relationship to Gary Robinette?

- How do you connect Gary Robinette to the profession of landscape architecture?
- How do you perceive Gary Robinette's actions to be important?

If the informant's answer to these questions produced data which required greater exploration, then further questions were constructed in real time to extract the needed data from the informant. This process continued until the interviewer believed there was no further data pertinent to this research.

1.5.4 The In-Depth Interview

There are many ways to collect data for a biography. Interviews with Robinette yielded considerable data by which to analyze, as did the testimonies of other character and historical witnesses. Though they are the richest means of data collection, they were not the only. This study utilizes the author's observations while the interviews are being conducted as well as secondary data such as documents.

No matter which format is used to interview informants, each person has entitlements. The interviewee must be made aware of these entitlements such as what is to happen to the recording of his interview after the study is complete; must he answer questions which he does not want; will his answers be held in anonymity; and will he have the right to review a transcript of his interview? These entitlements must be made apparent prior to the interview so as to protect the informant and preserve the accuracy of the data.

There are multiple methods of interviewing which may be employed to draw information from an informant. One such method used in this study is the Life History Study (LHS). In the LHS, the researcher attempts to capture the salient experiences in a person's life and that person's definitions of those experiences (Taylor and Bogden, 1998).

The distinguishing characteristic of the LHS over a conventional autobiography is the presence of the interviewer actively pursuing information and steering the informant to certain areas of interest. The interviewer has the responsibility to ask questions which produce information useful to the study. His diligence, when applied wisely, keeps the informant on track and honest.

The primary tool for gathering information in the LHS is the in-depth interview, or oral history, which allows a participant's first-hand knowledge to be recorded for posterity and further research. Time's effect on memory can be harsh and some of the history recalled by Robinette is more than 50 years old. It is acknowledged that some events cannot be reasonably verified but it is assumed that Robinette's version of events is factual. However, Robinette seemingly enjoys telling the stories of his past and has told many events over and over to his students. In essence Robinette has refreshed his memory constantly throughout the years. These particular stories are better remembered than the ones in which he works to reconstruct the details.

Because the history which is being stated by the interviewee of the oral history may not be recorded up to that point, it is open to the interpretation of the narrator. The narrator of an event may want to embellish some facts and omit others for personal motives. Additionally, memory of a historical event diminishes with time and health which can lead to gaps in the story. This study relies on the interview of multiple individuals when possible to assist in verifying facts, filling gaps, and dispelling fiction.

The second method of data collection employed by this study is the interviewer's account. This method utilizes the interviewer's observations of the interviewee. This is a powerful tool as the observer has unique information that may not be recordable by the media device, such as emotion, physiological changes, or body language.

1.5.4.1 Recording Data

The oral histories and interviews given in the process of this research were recorded by a Sony ICD-PX312 hand held digital recording device and recorded at 192 kbps, with a lapel microphone placed on the interviewee when possible, which is the best quality at which this device can perform. Recordings were then transcribed to paper. Additionally, as a backup, a Zoom H4N professional series recorder was placed in the room with the interviewee. The Sony ICD-PX312 performed without flaw and ultimately the backup recording was never needed.

During the interview, key observations were recorded about the informant. Body language, for example, is a key component of communication but does not translate to the audio recording device used for this study. Nevertheless, it is still pertinent and must be recorded by the interviewer (Taylor and Bogden, 1998).

Upon conclusion of each interview, the interviewer located a quiet place to recall and record in depth observations made of the informant's interview. Recollections were recorded about the interview until exhausted.

1.5.4.2 Recording Oral History

There are two common reasons for writing an oral history: portray the events and experiences of an extraordinary person and to emphasize a person whose life illustrates the experiences and history of others in the region (Chalton, 2007).

Oral history coincides with human history. People throughout history have learned about their past from the oral history of their forefathers. Before there was written documentation of human behavior, stories were passed from one generation to another orally. Until the mid-nineteenth century, historians regarded spoken history with as much reverence as they treated documents recording events, laws, and customs (The Oral History Reader, 1998).

Complete preservation of history in the written form is difficult for average people to obtain. Celebrities are often followed by press and other observers ready and willing to report on their actions, but not so with average people (Janesick, 2010).

Technology has become a double edged sword in the preservation of history, though one side is much sharper than the other. One might think that the ability to record history through audio or visual devices has become the absolute 'end all be all' of documentation. It is true that these devices leave little wiggle room as to what may have happened at a particular point in time when a camera captured an event, but other technology has alleviated the need to record history.

With the advent of the telephone, letters ceased to be written to keep relatives up to date. Airplanes have bridged long distances and made travel more affordable and accessible. A businessman

can easily leave New York, conduct business in Los Angeles, and be home for dinner that same day as opposed to the week long process of mailing documents. Newspapers are diminishing in popularity and by some estimates will cease to exist in their current form as early as 2017 (Dawson, 2012).

Conversely, technology has made recording history much easier than in previous, even recent times. The simplicity and instantaneous nature of e-mail makes sending, resending, and duplicating so easy that it has, in many ways, replaced the written letter. Blogs can be created journaling the life of a person, organization, or movement. The advent of social networking sites like Facebook.com or Twitter.com have allowed the users to post status updates on the happenings of their life, thus leaving a written trail of their history. Documents are often produced which journal an event such as meeting minutes which are posted and never removed. A simple search on an internet search engine can produce thousands of leads to explore when researching ones history, depending on the individual being researched. The extreme ease, and in some cases pleasure, of these technologies coupled with the ability to store, share, and preserve copious amounts of data at very little cost makes technology an ideal partner to historic preservation (Janesick, 2010).

Oral history methodology encompasses a series of process steps that support and focus the interview and make it available to users (Sommer, 2009). Good interviewing skills are as vital to a good interview as the source of the history. Interviewing tactics and other aspects of oral history interviewing vary with the type of person being interviewed (The Oral History Reader, 1998). The best interviewers listen carefully between the lines of what is said for what the narrator is trying to explain and then have the presence of mind, sometimes the courage, to ask the hard questions or simply have the presence of mind to let the interviewee tell their history without interrupting them (George Mason University, 2011).

The strongest argument for a completely free-flowing interview is when its main purpose is less to seek information than to record a 'narrative interview,' a 'subjective' record of how one man or woman looks back on their life as a whole, or part of it. Just how they speak about it, what they miss out, how they order it, what they emphasize, the words they choose, are important in understanding any interview; but for this purpose they become the essential text which will need to be examined (The Oral History Reader, 1998).

Often, participants in oral history do not understand what they have to offer. They assume that they have no information of value to the historian. The contrary is true. By taking the history of a diverse sampling of a culture, a more complete picture can be seen of that culture (Chalton, 2007).

1.5.4.3 Cautions In Interviewing

Great care is taken to ensure an atmosphere in which people feel comfortable talking openly about themselves (Taylor and Bogden, 1998). Failure to create this environment can lead to awkward moments and behavior and strains the free flow of information from the informant to the interviewer. Other cautions exist when interviewing informants which could produce faulty information. The informant may not feel well, but chooses to keep this information to himself and proceed with the interview for motives unbeknownst to the interviewer. Other problems may arise due to the interviewer's behavior. It is important that interviewers do not pass judgment on the informant. During the interview, the interviewer should go out of his way to reassure people that they are "all right" in the eyes of the interviewer after they have revealed something personal, embarrassing, or discrediting (Taylor and Bogden, 1998). Above all else, the interviewer should remain unbiased in his research and pass the facts, and in the case of this research, the narrators story, on to the reader without sending them through his or her own personal or moral filters.

Typically in research, anonymity is valued because information can be collected from individuals who do not wish to be associated with the data. This may be important for any number of reasons and this wish for anonymity should be respected. But for a historian, anonymity negates a basic principle of oral histories. An anonymous source lacks credibility. Knowing the identity of a source allows the historian to contextualize the relationship of the source thus allowing him to appropriately weigh his testimony (Shopes, 2012).

1.5.5 Secondary Data

There are several documents which have been collected for the purpose of assimilating data into the body of this document. These documents include, but are not limited to, Robinette's Curriculum Vitae; Robinette's fellows nomination entry form to the ASLA; historical literature; and class notes from

the author. These data are important to research because it provides groundwork by which to structure the research, allows the author to verify testimonies, refresh the memories of interviewees, and help place characters into proper context with each other. These materials are cited on various occasions in order to solidify testimony and research.

1.6 Limitations Of This Study

There are two major limits to this study and one potential conflict which influences some of the results. First, the scope of this study is limited to the geographic limits of North Texas; and second, the study is intended to take approximately six months in total time. The potential flaw in the study is my own respect for Robinette as a professor in the department in which I am studying. The researcher makes a good faith effort to report on the facts as they are, but acknowledges that he does not want to write anything detrimental to Robinette's image.

1.7 Chapter Summary

Robinette is a knowledgeable source of information which is of interest to the landscape architecture body of knowledge. This is an opportune time to take his oral history because, at this moment in time, he has completed most of his career work and has the ability to recall the facts of that work. Additionally, there are literature and other data available to verify, support, or contradict his testimony which will be used to determine the legitimacy of his oral history.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND HISTORY OF MODERN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

The history of landscape architecture in the 20th century has as well-known trajectory established in such key texts as: *Invisible Garden*; *Design on the Land*; *Landscape Design: A cultural and architectural History*; and *The Struggle for Modernism: Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and City Planning at Harvard*. I present a summary of this history here for the purposes of outlining the background for Gary Robinette's own education and professional development. Through the changes in landscape architecture in the 20th century, we can find the sources for some of the main concerns in Robinette's later career.

2.1 The Close Of The Gilded Age

The early 20th century in America saw the gap between the rich and the poor grow wider by the year. For the landscape architect, there was much work creating grandeur estates for the rich in the manner of Beaux-Arts architecture. The City Beautiful Movement which had started in the 1890s was also underway. This movement, or philosophy, encouraged the landscape architect to look at a city not as bits and pieces of architecture, but as a whole entity which should be designed. At Harvard University, university president Charles Eliot took advantage of a grant from Nelson Robinson and in 1899 began the first landscape architecture program in America, built a building to house the architecture and landscape architecture programs thus further separating landscape architecture further from the profession of horticulture and allying it with the design professions (Alofsin, 2002).

During the Gilded Age, the tradition of social responsibility diminished. Large moguls of steel, railroads, and banking expressed interest in the work of the landscape architect and soon, they found themselves in the employ of the rich to design their estates. This diverted, briefly, the traditional attention of the landscape architect from public service to private (Lawson, 1975).

In 1913, Henry Ford streamlined the assembly process making the automobile more affordable. With the increased mobility came the design of planned garden cities and suburbs that united architects and landscape architects. Radburn, New Jersey, the first town built to suit the motor vehicle was founded in 1929. These events, coupled with the earlier City Beautiful Movement, influenced many a landscape architect to abandoned their discipline for its kissing cousin, urban planning. To cater to this movement, Harvard offered the first curriculum in urban planning in 1929 (Boults, 2010).

The stock market crash of 1929 followed by the Great Depression and six years of world conflict slowed the economy down to a crawl and forced much of the country into government work programs. New Deal programs from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) employed landscape architects to plan and protect national forests, design roadways, and other infrastructure across the country. Simpson Lawson writes:

Meanwhile, the severe economic strains of the Great Depression were directing the profession back toward public service ventures. The federal government's new emphasis on public works and park development during the 1930s attracted many landscape architects into public service at a time when private practice dipped precipitously (Lawson, 1975).

This tendency of landscape architects to work for government agencies, coupled with the lack of personal expendable funds experienced by much of the nation, focused the work of landscape architects from personal property to large scale regional planning.

2.2 Modernism Born

For landscape architecture, the late 1930's and early 1940's was a time of ferment. The profession of landscape architecture was in somewhat of an identity crisis. Some members of the ASLA even proposed a name change to the American Society of Land Planners (Simo, 1999).

As the economy gradually recovered and the federal government's emergency programs were phased out, more opportunities did in fact allow landscape architects to return to private practice. In the late 1930s the pages of *Landscape architecture* were filled with large photographs of estate gardens, national parks, parkways, the malls and monuments of Washington, D.C. and the New York World's Fair. At first glance, it might appear that not much had changed in landscape architecture since the late 1920s. But the changes were evolutionary. Increasingly landscape architects were venting their frustrations over the name, the content, and the direction – or lack of it (Simo, 1999, page 101).

In 1936, three Harvard students, Dan Kiley, James Rose, and Garrett Eckbo, adopted a new way of thinking contrary to the beaux-arts being taught in schools. These young landscape architects believed that the organization and composition of space itself should be the focus of the garden and developed plans based on user needs and functional spatial relationships and that landscape architects had to conform to applying one and only one method to professional practice (Boults, 2010; Way, 2009). While still a student, Eckbo went as far as to publicly vent his impatience with formulas, rules, axes and focal points in *Pencil Points* and *Magazine of Art* (Simo, 1999). This public rejection of the authority of the previous generation's Beaux-Arts principles was the unofficial birth of modernism for the landscape architect in America.

Modernism in landscape architecture refers to the rejection of traditional styles and approaches and the embrace of functionalism. The new aesthetic of modernism overcame the eclectic mix of historical styles that was prevalent at the turn of the century. Modern designers articulated in their work values that were democratic, accessible, and reflective of a new more casual life-style. Landscape designs were anti-axial and omnidirectional, and incorporated nontraditional materials, abstract shapes, and sculpture. Designers employed plants and sculptures purely for aesthetic impact, not their associative meanings (Boults, 2010, 211).

Of Kiley, Rose, and Eckbo, only Eckbo would earn his Masters in Landscape Architecture. Rose and Kiley would continue to practice in spite of their differences with Harvard, in the eastern United States while Eckbo took his degree and ideals back to the west coast where another prominent landscape architect, Thomas Church, had already set up practice. Kiley and Rose remained on the East Coast after leaving Harvard without degrees (Walker, 1994).

After World War II, a population boom was in progress across America. A massive effort, or social reconstruction, was well underway in response to heal America from its war wounds with such programs as the G.I. Bill of Rights (Treib, 2002). California was no exception. Construction projects in the state were numerous. Wealthy citizens, government buildings, commercial building projects all desired the services of the landscape architect.

California was the right mixture of social and economic conditions to grow a landscape architecture practice in the 1940s. Its temperate climate was very conducive to outdoor living (Boults,

2010). Eckbo and Church both did exceptionally well in the California market due to the reasons stated and their philosophies of bringing landscape architecture to the masses at any scale.

As the affordability of the automobile was becoming greater, so too was it making living away from the city possible. Cheap land was more accessible. Men, exhausted from war, returned home in search of leisure and freedom. They too wanted a private oasis. Church was an avid contributor to *Sunset Magazine*. His projects often made their way into the magazine which was distributed across America. The magazine offered images of beautiful landscape in laid back atmospheres for the homeowner (Treib, 2003).

2.3 Planning And The 1950s

In the 1950s, with the close of World War II, the attention of the country and profession of landscape architecture turned from war to that of reconstruction. The 1950s were pivotal in defining landscape architecture. The world was a more complex place and society too more complex. Planned communities popped up throughout the country and became common place. Robert Woods Kennedy explains:

A remarkably large fraction of our population is already living in such planned communities and it now appears certain that this number will increase steadily. Yet we have no idea of how well or poorly the existing projects function, socially speaking. The planning professions, faced for the first time with entire neighborhoods to design, find that they are dealing in a new dimension—that of the family's whole social life. Yet, they have little or no idea how this new dimension might affect physical design. (Tobey, 1973, 222)

Whereas the City Beautiful Movement sought to design the city as a whole, urban planning sought to design thoughtful places within the city at a human scale. At a time when landscape architects were already struggling with identity, this new denominator of planning served to narrow the focus of landscape architecture a bit further.

By the early 1950s, membership in the ASLA had over 540 members (B. Hinrichs, personal communication, December 29, 2011). So heavy was the activity of not only Church and Eckbo but other landscape architects in California, in order to protect the public, in 1954, California became the first state to register landscape architects. Louisiana followed that same year while Georgia passed legislation in

1958 and New York in 1960 (Way, 2009). Professionalization of the discipline was gaining traction country wide and a legislation boom took place in the mid 1960s to early 1970s affecting an additional 17 states including Texas.

But while the population boom sent many Americans west, there was one aspiring landscape architect who traveled in the opposite direction. Born and raised in California, Hideo Sasaki began teaching at Harvard University in 1950 (Walker, 1994). His design philosophy roots were in the California school of thought and the modernist movement. Ironically, just twelve short years after Harvard expelled a student for an incompatible design philosophy, Harvard had a professor teaching the same philosophy. Sasaki would stay at Harvard for the next twenty years influencing the next generation of landscape architects (Walker, 1994).

2.4 The Environmental Movement

In the 1960s, concerns for the environment began to surface, particularly in response to atomic testing; population booms; and chemical use in industrial applications. Rachel Carson's book *Silent spring*, 1962, educated and empowered the public with knowledge of the use of pesticides in the landscape and their destructive powers (Merchant, 2007).

In 1968 Paul Ehrlich wrote *The population bomb* which brought awareness to the rapidly growing population. A greater population, he warned, would bring exponential environmental repercussions. His prediction of a world population of six billion in 2000 came to pass in October of 1999 (Merchant, 2007).

Congress passed several laws in the 1960s to respond to the public's cries. The Clean Water Act of 1960, as well as the Clean Air Act of 1963, and Water Quality Control Act of 1965 were all passed and put into law. The Wilderness Act of 1964 aimed to preserve remaining wild areas by designating certain federal lands off limits to commercial development. America agreed to an above ground nuclear test ban with the USSR in 1963 (Merchant, 2007).

Scientific and social reform mounted pressure on all industries of America in the 1960s and landscape architecture was not exempt, nor was it at a loss for champions of the cause. Ian McHarg, an

ecologist and landscape architect, and Lawrence Halprin both managed environmentally conscious firms during this time period and pioneered the way for other like minded landscape architects. Grady Clay, a journalist writing for *Landscape architecture*, regularly filled the pages of the periodical with tough critical stories on land reclamation; pending legislation; and ecology, among others, which he hoped would spur his readers into action (Simo, 1999).

In 1969, Halprin published *RSVP cycles: creative processes in the human environment*. This book outlined his ideas of how humans and nature relate to each other and that a holistic site analysis was essential to successful design (Boults, 2010). McHarg developed a methodology to analyze the social and environmental impacts of any given project which is the foundation of the modern day design process (Boults, 2010). McHarg would propagate his ecological ideals through the founding of another prominent school of landscape architecture in 1954 at The University of Pennsylvania and would later pen *Design with nature* in 1969 (Walker, 1994).

2.5 Professional Development

The ASLA moved their headquarters to Washington D.C. in 1960. At this time, membership in the organization had steadily increased to 1647. One year later, the Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards (CLARB) organized as a subsidiary of the ASLA until 1970 when it incorporated to become its own entity (Simo, 1999).

In the early years of the 1960s, the call for greater professionalism in the profession grew louder and louder. Robert Neal in *Landscape Architecture Magazine* complains that engineers and architects are legitimized by their ability to sign documents under law by which no one else may. “Without this you have no position from which to provide leadership” (Future of the profession, 1962, 26). He is referring to state licensure by which only five states at this time had legislation in place to legitimize the profession.

ASLA president Theodore Osmundson (1967-1969) spent much of his tenure working on the infrastructure of the profession. At that time, there were close to eight-thousand professional landscape

architects in the nation and ASLA membership totaled only 1500 (G. Robinette, personal communication, April 11, 2012). Simo writes of Osumndson:

Stepping down as ASLA president in 1969, Theodore Osumndson still yearned to make his profession a force in the larger society. From 1967 through 1969, he noted in his final report, the ASLA had not grown appreciably, and the society's finances were limited. Nevertheless, he and his colleagues had spent the past two years reorganizing the ASLA, upgrading its publications, and making other changes that were urgently needed (Simo, 1999, 164).

In the professional world, a second wave of professional offices opened which was unlike the firms of the 1930s such as Eckbo Roy Williams. These new partnerships were interdisciplinary to achieve complex solutions to customers who had complex problems to the ever expanding profession and practice of addressing urban planning. This wave was characterized by the inclusion of even more disciplines, drawn from the natural and social sciences as well as the arts (Walker, 1994).

Harvard professor Hideo Sasaki made it a regular practice to hire students and on more than one occasion elevated them to partners in his firms. Firms bearing Sasaki's name alongside other notables such as Stuart Dawson and Peter Walker formed in the late 1950s. The early 1960s brought in a new era of business for the landscape architect. In 1962 David Wallace and Ian McHarg combined efforts to make Wallace McHarg and Associates. Wallace was an architect and planner and McHarg an ecologist and landscape architect. This firm's strength was the ability to analyze the land and provide scientific backing for planning and analysis (Walker, 1994).

This business model was adopted by many other firms in the mid 1960s, such as Helluth, Obata and Kassabaum (HOK); RTKL; Eckbo-Dean-Austin-Williams (EDAW); as well as Myrick and Associates. This model continues to this day. Not uncommon are firms such as these who have run their course or have partners retire, who bring on new partners and simply reinvent the business model to suit their current market and business needs often keeping the name or parts of the previous name.

The profession took a turn in the 1970s and deviated from the business model which had become the norm in the 1950s and 1960s.

Corporate offices had begun to take on large percentages of planning work, in contrast to projects intended to be built. At The SWA Group, this approached 60 percent of revenues and, at EDAW, Inc., it reached 90 percent. This series of events meant that

managers, planners, and processors rather than designers gained political direction of the firms. By the early 1980s, when staffs often numbered a hundred or more, Garrett Eckbo, Hideo Sasaki, Peter Walker, William Johnson, and Ian McHarg had already left the large firms they had founded. Lawrence Halprin, too, had left his large, unwieldy studio practice. Like the younger people who resisted submersion, these men formed smaller firms, became consultants, and/or returned to academic life (Walker, 1994, 296).

Landscape architecture seemed to be succumbing to the national business model of moving to larger more robust and competitive models of business and away from the mom and pop boutique shops.

2.6 Post Modernism And Environmental Art

The 1960s and 1970s also gave rise to a new way of looking at the landscape as more than just place. Designers were questioning and reworking the theories which arose in the 1930s. Landscape architects like Peter Walker, Ian Hamilton Finlay, and Martha Schwartz used art to express their ideals in the landscape as opposed to the axiom of form follows function (Boults, 2010).

In the latter half of the 20th century, philosophers, artists, and writers began to challenge the idea of a privileged or dominant point of view. They thought of contemporary culture like a collage, subject to many different influences and interpretations. In the arts, postmodernism was characterized by ambiguity and simultaneity. Meaning could not be embedded in a work of art; it was relative to the viewer. Space, too, was considered neutral (Boults, 2010).

2.7 Technology And The Global Market

Technology was a powerful innovator in the offices of landscape architects in the 1980s. By the mid 1980s, America was climbing out of a terrible economic depression and work was picking up across the entire economy. The mid-1980s brought affordable computers to the market. Tasks which required teams of people were quickly becoming more efficient with the processing power of the computer. Firms could devote resources to other tasks.

AutoCAD, a computer aided drafting program, was launched in 1982; and in 1987, Thomas Knoll invented an image editing program which allowed users to easily manipulate a digital image. Knoll would sell the program to Adobe the next year and Photoshop, was added to the landscape architects toolkit.

The advent of the internet made our already tiny world even smaller. Digital documents such as the PDF in 1983 and email communication made world commerce more accessible than ever. Some of these countries who benefited from trade with the west adopted western influences in fine arts such as landscape architecture and with a lack of a solid base in their own indigenous landscape architecture corps, American landscape architects found themselves designing projects in far off places like Dubai and Beijing.

Today, video conferencing and real-time presentations continue to shrink our world. Computers bring ideas to an unprecedented and seemingly real rendering of a concept. Less emphasis is being placed on the hand graphics which made the profession since the advent of the landscape gardener in ancient history. Students graduating from landscape architecture programs are required to know complex software packages before a company will even look at them for hire.

Technology is growing at an unprecedented rate. Copious amounts of time are required to learn and relearn skills as new products are released. Gone are the days of the landscape architect who learned everything he needed to know in school. Gone are the days of the professor who had years to master a skill before he had to teach it.

This history leaves us with questions unanswered when we consider Robinette's career within this context. Where does Robinette fit in the context of this history? How did the corporate movement of the 1950s influence his career? How did his directorship with the ASLA influence the corporate movement? How did Robinette, a man who never learned AutoCAD and still used slides during his final year of teaching, deal with technology when it was such a prominent role in the education of students?

2.8 Chapter Summary

To place Robinette into the context of history, especially landscape architecture history, this thesis has recalled the significant eras beginning just prior to Robinette's life and follows that timeline up to present day. The major eras of landscape history, as determined by this research, are:

- The Gilded Age
- Modernism

- Urban planning
- Environmental planning
- Professional development
- Post-modernism
- Technology and the global market

PART II – THE BIOGRAPHY OF GARY ROBINETTE

The following three chapters are the history of Robinette based in large part on the oral history collected March 12, 14, and 16 of 2012 and supported by secondary data and supplemental interviews with historical witnesses. Every reasonable attempt to verify major historical facts pertaining to landscape architecture was made by further examination of the literature on the subject or cross verification by another living witness to that fact.

CHAPTER 3
ENTER ROBINETTE

3.1 Early Life

Robinette was born in 1932 in Mankato, Kansas, and spent most of his boyhood with just his mother and maternal grandmother. Robinette recalls being fatherless for the first years of his life; until his father came home under threat of legal action from the courts. “My mother traced him down, she tracked him down. It was during the depression and she threatened him with a lawsuit for support” (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 12, 2012). It wasn’t long after that that his parents reconciled their differences and moved to Iowa in search for a better life. Life improved slightly after that, but ultimately the damage between Robinette and his father had been done. Their relationship would never fully recover and the two would stay at odds for most of their lives.

When Robinette was 14, his mother convinced the landscape nursery across the street from their house to give him a job for sixty-five cents per hour and seventy-five if he worked especially hard the week prior. It was here that Robinette first found a love of plants. He would continue to work in the nursery on and off until he left for college at age 18.

Robinette, a Baptist since birth, felt God’s call to the ministry and applied for and accepted an invitation to Northwestern Christian School in 1950, a religious institution in Christianity headed by Billy Graham. Here, he enrolled in the religious studies program. In June of 1952 Robinette married his wife, Margaret.

Times were lean for the Robinette family and not working during college was not an option. Robinette worked at various jobs in college, one of which was a tractor factory. The stress of working and going to school caught up to him and his grades were too dismal to protect him from the draft. He was shipped to Fort Chaffy, Arkansas in 1955, then Fort Sill, Oklahoma to serve a short stint in the artillery corps as a chaplain’s assistant. He never finished school at Northwestern Christian.

Robinette resolved to go back to school with his G.I. Bill and make a better attempt at a career for himself to support his family. This time, it was not God calling him back to college, at least not to religious studies, but nature (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 12, 2012).

3.2 Michigan State University

Landscape architecture was the only thing he really considered, so just before he left the service in 1956 he and Margaret worked together to narrow down their short term options. “I had decided when I was in the army in Oklahoma. Margaret and I went to the library for a weekend and we studied...” he says. “There were only 16, 15 schools of landscape architecture at the time. Iowa State was one of them. I didn't want to go to Iowa State.” Citing Margaret's chances of landing employment in the larger town of East Lansing, Michigan over Ames, Iowa, the Robinettes moved to Michigan after his discharge in 1956 to establish residency (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 12, 2012).

Robinette went back to the nurseries to help put himself through school. He states he worked 60 to 70 hours a week, less during school, for Smith Tree Service. Having worked in banks before, Margaret too went back to the familiar and secured employment at Michigan National Bank to put her husband through school.

There was one downside to choosing Michigan State over Iowa. None of the course work from Northwestern would transfer. Robinette describes this as just the cost of going to Michigan. The upside to this choice of school was that none of the poor grades followed him either, nor was he discouraged by them. His first semester he tackled 23 credits, mostly because he had already taken the basics at Northwestern College and knew the material. So outstanding were his academics that he didn't anticipate what would hit him next. Robinette claims:

I got into Michigan State and I found that I had to draw, and I couldn't draw. I just couldn't draw. In the course of getting into school I got good grades in the academic courses but when it came time to take the drawing courses I did very, very, very poorly. I dropped out for a year, and worked full time and took classes, drawing classes in the rest of the time and at the end of the semester, at the end of the year, I didn't draw any better than I did. I just wasn't very good at drawing. I did realize I had to have a lot of drawing (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 12, 2012).

Robinette went back to school after the year off and later persevered, but not before first meeting Milton Baron. Baron was the campus planner who also taught planting design for the landscape architecture department; Robinette also reported to Baron during his internship in the campus planning office. Baron was an autocratic professor who, according to Robinette, lacked imagination in his teaching. Robinette recalls one assignment as being below him, “I had worked in a nursery for 10, 12 years by that time, and had done everything that could be done in a nursery at that time: dug plants and planted plants, and ran spraying crews and did everything. And so I was fairly knowledgeable. He had us write a five-page paper on transplanting trees.”

Incensed by what he perceived as a menial task, Robinette did as he was told and wrote a five page paper. The paper, however, was not on transplanting trees, but instead an informative paper on how planting design could better be taught. Baron was livid. At the end of the class, according to Robinette, Baron pulled him aside and told him that if he could do it better, write a book.

Upon his graduation in 1962, according to Robinette, the top two students of the graduating class in the bachelor program in landscape architecture at each of the universities were offered a scholarship to Harvard by Sasaki. Since Robinette graduated second in a graduating class of two, he qualified. The scholarship was full but other fees would leave Robinette with \$600 of debt for his master’s degree. He elected to stay at Michigan State to complete his master’s work. In 1963, after completing his thesis on, large scale regional land planning, he graduated with his Masters.

When asked what he wanted at that point of his life from his new degrees, Robinette did not respond with a noble cause, nor did he respond with ambition or conquest: his motives were simple. “I had spent my whole life in the Mid-West. I was born in Kansas, I grew up in Iowa, I went to school in Michigan and I spent my whole life there in that situation. I said that I’m either going to go to California or I’m going to go to the east coast” (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 12, 2012).

When discussing these options with his faculty advisors, one of them put him in touch with Larry Coffin, an old classmate. Coffin worked in New York for the civil engineering firm Andrews and Clark.

The Robinettes made their way to New York to speak with Andrews and Clark and other prospective employers. They stayed at a cheap hotel in Times Square where Robinette describes himself as the only customer not renting a room on an hourly basis. He did well in his interviews, and in the end, had five job offers in New York among other places. He chose Andrews and Clark. New York it would be.

3.3 New York

Robinette earned a position with Andrews and Clark as Assistant Chief Landscape Architect. It was in this firm that he would gain his first exposure to the profession and work on projects such as DeWitt Clinton High School Athletic Field Renovation; Bayswater Park in New York, New York; Wantagh Park of Nassau County, New York; and the Mid Manhattan Elevated Expressway. He would also spend time contributing to the 1964 World's Fair and the post fair master plan (Robinette, 2006).

He also earned a reputation. "I was very aggressive and I was pushy, and I did everything I could to succeed in every way I could... When I worked in the office, I was aggressively looking for other jobs and looking for other work, and looking for other avenues." In a firm with 175 civil engineers and just 12 landscape architects, Robinette had found the attention of Mr. Andrews himself through his desire to enter the firm in a competition; a practice the firm did not usually do. For winning the competition, Mr. Andrews sent young Robinette to Europe (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 12, 2012).

Robinette did well for the civil engineers, but a large firm was not where he truly wanted to be. He knew himself and knew that he would get lost in such a place. In essence, he knew there would be no future there. Robinette credits his mother's declining health and a random encounter on the subway for being the catalyst of change.

I was riding the subway, and it was 100 degrees, 105 degrees, and the subway was air conditioned but it wasn't. It was really unpleasant. One morning I was on my way to work and I went to get on the subway car...it took me an hour and 45 minutes to get to work in New York. I took the train and then I took the ferry, the Staten Island Ferry, and then I took the subway. I had to transfer in the subway. Well, I was getting off the subway and somebody pushed me in the back, really hard. I got on the train and I turned around and looked and I didn't see anybody. And as I turned around and looked there was a woman that was about five foot high, she was the one that pushed me. I

was gonna hit her, but you know, I couldn't swing my arms that low. So I got to the office and there was a job offer, a letter from the University of Wisconsin wanting to interview me at the ASLA annual meeting in Hartford, Conn. the next week. So I went to Hartford, talked to the guy, and he was a real nice guy (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 12, 2012).

Robinette left Andrews and Clark in 1965 to return to the mid-west. He took a professorship with The University of Wisconsin in Madison and stepped into the world of academia.

3.4 Madison, Wisconsin

While The University of Wisconsin in Madison was starting to dabble in large scale regional land planning, which was Robinette's first love, Robinette was not. He taught two courses in plant design and one in professional practice along with other design courses dealing with human scale. In addition to teaching he wrote research papers and textbooks as well as articles for professional and popular publications (Robinette, 2006).

Another dilemma at the university was the presence of a man Robinette describes today as being, "One of the most influential human beings in the profession of landscape architecture today" (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 12, 2012). Phil Lewis had joined the faculty at the university, transferring from state employment, around the same time Robinette did. He was a large scale regional land planner who liked to plan regions and states. Lewis would later go on to model the Wisconsin program after the work of Ian McHarg at The University of Pennsylvania. Robinette describes Lewis:

I knew one person at the University of Wisconsin. His name was Phil Lewis. Phil Lewis was a really important person in the profession of landscape architecture. I had never met him, I knew of him. If I'd met him, I'd never have gone there. But I didn't meet him, so I went there, and he was --little short guy, about five foot tall, and very aggressive. I mean aggressive, boy, he'd tear your leg off. And he's still aggressive, still alive and he's still aggressive. (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 12, 2012).

Lewis and Robinette mixed like oil and water. Robinette describes Lewis as one who "brook" no competition. Those who worked for Lewis understood that they worked under him, not with him. In 1968 when Lewis was promoted to head of the landscape architecture program, Robinette could not see

himself working for such a man and again decided to seek employment elsewhere. This time, there was no little lady pushing him in the back.

CHAPTER 4

WASHINGTON, D.C.

4.1 Associate Executive Director

In 1968, the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) hired Executive Consultants Incorporated (ECI), a company owned and operated by Al LaGasse to run the society. Though technically a landscape architect himself, LaGasse's business was not landscape architecture. LaGasse made a modest salary in the 1960s and 1970s operating societies who were not large enough to have their own staff like the National Recreational Park Association and the American Institute of Park Executives. Robinette remembers LaGasse being involved in sixteen or seventeen different organizations.

LaGasse contacted Robinette by letter in 1968 inviting him to work with him on transforming the ASLA into a vision he had. Unbeknownst by Robinette at the time, LaGasse's contract stated that he needed to hire as his assistant, a landscape architect who was more active in the profession than he.

Robinette states:

ASLA had just fired their executive director, who was -can't think of his name now- they had just fired their executive director. So Al stepped in and made a proposal to manage ASLA as one of the groups that he managed, and they accepted it. He became the Executive Director of ASLA with the provision that he had to hire a landscape architect to work with him... when the job offer came [from] Washington, DC from Al LaGasse it seemed like an opportunity of a lifetime. It really was. I didn't realize all the things about it at the time, but I accepted it. And it was more money than I was making in Wisconsin and it was the opportunity to do really significant things (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 12, 2012).

LaGasse was largely there in the first years of the transition. Robinette complains that he would pull him away from his duties to have coffee and socialize quite a bit in the first days, hence making him work into the night to get the work accomplished which needed to be. LaGasse was using this time to instill the vision he had into Robinette.

According to Robinette, the ASLA was in dismal shape when he and LaGasse took it over. There was no real momentum by the association to advance the profession. In 1969, according to

Robinette, ECI Management released a study of the ASLA. One of the chief goals of ECI was to double the number of schools accredited by the ASLA in a five year period, bringing the total to thirty-six.

Robinette states:

At that time, we had a real serious problem ASLA schools. The schools were being accredited by the ASLA committee on education, which had been formed ten years after the society was formed and had pretty much been a separate entity within ASLA with very little control on the part of the society or the committee on education. The committee on education was made up of largely educators and they kept the schools at a real limited number” (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

In 1970 Robinette’s role with the ASLA altered slightly and job title changed to Associate Executive Director for Education and Research. This new role directly charged him with school accreditation reports and scheduling visits to academic institutions who were accredited with the ASLA.

At that time, there were twenty-one accredited schools under the ASLA accreditation program (R. Leighton, personal communication, March 23, 2012). Each school could only churn out so many students within a time period so the possibility to produce licensed landscape architects was limited severely by this number. In the 1968 academic school year, for instance, only 333 bachelor degrees were awarded alongside 83 masters (Fein, 1972a). LaGasse and Robinette proved to be ahead of their time in this move to improve the educational system. By 1972 when Fein issued his report on education, he states:

It is clear that a great deal – but by no means all – of the responsibility for change in this profession will fall on the educational system – that which already exists and that which will have to be created to accommodate such changes (1972a, 5-18).

He further states that changes in the system cannot come piecemeal and that the system must act more coherently.

There was, at that time and per Robinette, an unspoken rule to keep the accredited schools limited and states that accreditation teams would sometimes be inconsistent in their processes (G. Robinette, personal communication, April 11, 2012). Additionally, the schools which were accredited were behind in their accreditation. The first report written by Robinette was for Penn State who had received their visit eighteen months prior.

In order to fix the problem, the ASLA decentralized the accreditation process and formed three separate but distinct teams responsible for different actions: one to accredit schools, one to advise new programs, and one to govern the rules of accreditation. No one person could be on multiple teams. Additionally, they made it a point to replace older members of the accreditation team with newer ones whose views were more in line with the current administration.

Robinette reports not only meeting the goal of doubling the number of the original fifteen accredited schools in 1968, but bringing the total to almost forty by the time he left the ASLA in 1975. According to Robinette, the problem was corrected. The ASLA states that there were twenty schools accredited in the 1969-1970 school year while Fein (1972a) reports that there were twenty-one in 1970. The ASLA again states that that there were thirty-six in 1974. In any event, the exit number is substantial, as the number of schools accredited in 1968 was twenty (R. Leighton, personal communication, March 23, 2012).

His other duties within the ASLA governed the supervision of office staff and work with volunteers as well as other officers of the society. He worked as an editor for Landscape Architectural News Digest and the Landscape Architectural Bulletin (Fellows Nomination, 1996).

His role in the society was a constant evolution. In late 1969, he was assigned the executive director position with the American Society of Landscape Architects Foundation (ASLAF) where he oversaw the staff of offices in both Washington, D.C. and McLean, Virginia. Additionally, he wrote research proposals, and explored funding potential for conducting and exploring research, both new and existing (Robinette, 2006,) and edited the ASLA Council of Education publications.

4.2 Landscape Architecture Foundation

In 1966, The Landscape Architecture Foundation was created by Campbell Miller, Ian McHarg, and six other landscape architects in order to provide research for problems plaguing the environment (Landscape architecture foundation website, n.d). By 1969 when Robinette took control of the foundation, it was largely a bank account with a small amount of money in it. There was no work or research being done, and no fund raising being done to enable research. Per agreement with LaGasse,

Robinette was not to touch existing funds to complete his mission. He was to raise his own funds from which he was paid a commission. *Landscape Architecture* vaguely supports this claim stating that customarily, the foundation took a percentage of each donation to cover administrative costs (Lawson, 1975)

After a couple of years of Robinette's attention, the foundation found itself in much better shape. Robinette states, "The foundation was growing and chugging along. We were bringing in money. One day we got sixty... seventy thousand dollars in checks from the Ford Foundation and from education research." Robinette estimates in his four years as head of The Landscape Architecture Foundation, they raised over a million dollars" (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

It was with this money that Robinette would conduct research for several books and other projects such as research to study the profession itself. In all, Robinette would publish six books between 1970 and 1975, his tenure as Associate Executive Director for Education and Research. *Landscape architecture* writes of this time period:

In the past eight years, ASLAF has become a prolific publisher of books, manuals and teaching materials, sponsoring research and pouring streams of new publications into universities and offices clamoring for help. ASLAF has also mediated the most complete study of the profession of landscape architecture in its history and set in motion an array of new ventures (Lawson, 1975).

Robinette tells how his book for making landscapes accessible to all, *Barrier Free Design* was funded during this time period:

We originally went to HUD for a grant... The Secretary was an African American guy, and he... was late. He ran overtime, it was 5:00 and we were supposed to meet at 4:00. We had waited and waited and waited, and so we got ushered into the office. He held the door and was ushering people in, and was talking to people as he went, and as he got ready to close the door, he closed the door on Allen Winslow's crutches, metal crutches. Allen Winslow was our handicapped guy from VPI [Virginia Polytechnic Institute]. [The Secretary] said, "Oh, I'm sorry." He apologized profusely. And he said, "Now what's the meeting about?" And he said, "I think it's a hell of an idea, let's fund it" (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

Lawson (1975) reports that by 1975, "largely through the entrepreneurial efforts of executive director Gary O. Robinette, has been able to generate approximately \$1 million in grants and contracts which finance research and publications" which backs Robinette claim. In 2010, according to tax records filed

with the Internal Revenue Service, The Landscape Architecture Foundation has assets in excess of over four million dollars.

4.1.3 FIDER

By 1972, Robinette became a trusted and well proven administrator for LaGasse and his duties were expanded with another administrative position with a Washington D.C. foundation for the betterment of interior designers. Robinette became the Executive Director of the Foundation for Interior Design Education and Research (FIDER) where, among other things, he recommended the accreditation protocols for schools of interior design throughout the United States and Canada.

By 1976, Robinette was gently being edged out of his positions in Washington due in part to LaGasse's wife who ran his business. Robinette tells:

Now I think he was forcing me out but it took six years eight years to do that. That's ok. That was the idea that I went in there with. When I went to work for him he said look I've got two sons, my wife is secretary of the business, she wants those two sons to have that business and there is no future for you so just know that when you start. You can work your head off you can be as good- the perfect employee, and you're going to be edged out. That's just the way it is. I knew that and it was a struggle the whole time but it's part of the job" (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

4.4 Center For Landscape Architecture Education And Research

That same year, 1976, he formed a series of corporations using the LaGasse model; the head of which was Educational and Research Management (ERM). One organization under ERM was the Center for Landscape Architectural Education and Research in Reston, Virginia (Robinette, 2006). There was another for his publication company, Environmental Design Press; and yet another for his wife's company in the public arts. Robinette continued to do the same work he had been doing since taking the reins of the Research and Education division of ASLA.

This venture continued for another five years. According to Robinette, it was the election of Ronald Reagan that brought an end to his business. He states:

I had an office two blocks from the White House and parked in the alley there as well and ran around Washington scarfing up money. And it was a good life. I made \$40,000 a year, and at that time that was a lot of money, and went around from agency to agency looking for money. Now what happened was, Reagan got elected and all the money dried up. When that happened, that was the end of... I was not spending enough

time looking to future possibilities. So this sort of thing dried up” (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

After 14 years in the greater Washington, D.C. area, with no other ventures on the drawing board, he moved his family one the last time to begin again as a marketing director for a landscape architectural mega-firm in Dallas (Robinette, 2006).

CHAPTER 5

DALLAS METROPOLITAN

5.1 Myrick Newman Dahlberg

In 1982 and at the call of Walter Dahlberg, Robinette moved to Dallas to take the helm of the marketing division of Myrick Newman and Dahlberg. According to Dahlberg, Robinette was brought in to “[get] our name in front of the right crowds, the right people, the right clientele whether it’s commercial, institutional, or government” (W. Dahlberg, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

One thing consistent in the data is that Dahlberg was chief among the principals in retaining and keeping Robinette for the time he was there. Robinette speaks very highly of Dahlberg, calling him, “one of the greatest landscape architects who will never be recognized in the profession. He’s probably one of the greatest landscape architects that Texas is ever going to produce or has produced so far” (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 14, 2012). Of the other partners, he speaks cordially of Gene Newman, praising his engineering efforts, but openly admits he had many differences with the lead principal, Richard Myrick. It is conceivable that these differences led to his dismissal from Myrick Newman and Dahlberg after just one year.

In any event Robinette was without employment by 1983. Robinette limited his search for new work to the Dallas area for reasons related to his wife’s employment:

When we came here I took a job here and after a year, the job dried up. I said I'm going to leave and [Margaret, his wife] said be sure to write. She said I'm not going anywhere. I have gone and gone and gone for all of these years and I found a job that I want and I'm going to stay here. I then went out to the University and looked for a job out there. I finished off my career out there. Margaret had the job she wanted by coming here (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 12, 2012).

Margaret Robinette, his wife, simply dismisses the story as an over-embellishment.

5.2 Agora

In 1983, Robinette formed another company still in existence today, Agora. Agora is short for A Gary O. Robinette Association. This company was originally meant, according to Robinette, to serve as a publishing company (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 12, 2012). However, several landscapes designed by Robinette carry the Agora name. Robinette reported that Agora did not live up to the aspirations he had for it.

5.3 The University Of Texas At Arlington

Robinette spent a great deal of his career at The University of Texas at Arlington. There is much information Robinette gives, as do others, which falls outside of the scope of this research. For this reason, the body of this research will touch briefly on the major issues, but will not dwell on interdepartmental problems which fall outside the scope of this research.

5.3.1 Directorship

In addition to Agora, Robinette started teaching part time at The University of Texas at Arlington. It was not until five years later that Robinette was offered a position with the university as director of the program. Robinette used this time to work on seven landscape plans and publish eight different books through Van Nostrand Reinhold (Robinette, 2006).

In 1989, Dean Baum offered Robinette the vacant position of program director left by Harry Garnham (E. Baum, personal communication, March 25, 2012). Robinette enjoyed working at the university and welcomed the opportunity to be back at the helm of a large organization.

First among goals for Robinette was getting the program accredited. Accreditation provided a sense of professionalism and recognition from the profession which was badly needed at that time.

Robinette states that he knew he was going into a hornets' nest when he took the job (G. Robinette, personal communication, April 11, 2012). "Gary is the proverbial bull in a china shop," states Richard Rome, associate professor in landscape architecture at the time (R. Rome, personal communication, March 15, 2012). "He was the General Patton of landscape architecture." When asked if Robinette was suited for the directorship, Dahlberg shares a similar view, "He probably had the

educational knowledge; he just didn't have the people skills" (W. Dahlberg, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

Aside from directorship, Robinette's visions for the program were very aggressive at the time.

When asked where the program could go, Robinette states:

I would make it a separate program from any other program. The idea behind it would be that it would be an undergraduate program very similar to many other undergraduate programs. But the graduate program would be oriented around three to five different orientations. We would have six to eight faculty members in the graduate program, and they would also teach in the undergraduate program. They would have a specialty in their area, but they would also teach in that specialty in the undergraduate and the graduate program. The program would be three to four hundred students and there would be maybe five hundred students" (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 14, 2012).

In support, James Fitch wrote in *A Study of the Profession of Landscape Architecture*:

At the present time, to my knowledge, there is not a single institute anywhere in which one can study the special problems of landscape design in sub-Arctic; in the semi-arid lands of the American Southwest, North Africa, or Asia; in sub-tropical and tropical regions or in those of high altitudes. Most criteria are based upon the so-called temperate regions of Western Europe, England, and the Atlantic Coast (Fein, 1972a, 5-20).

There was not, at that time, enough diversity in teaching. This report was sponsored by the Landscape Architecture Foundation at a time when Robinette was the executive director and may be the motive behind his ambitions.

Edward Baum, then dean, defends his decisions and states that when Robinette came into the program, there were no tenured faculties. It was the perfect time to shut down the program if they were going to do that. Further, Baum spent hundreds of hours over the next three years on The Program in Landscape Architecture (E. Baum, personal communication, March 25, 2012).

It was clear after three years without progress and without accreditation, that this circumstance could not continue to exist as is and Robinette tenured his resignation as director of the program, but not his professorship. He was fully tenured by this point and had no intention to leave. Pat Taylor, was offered the directorship by Baum in 1993. He accepted.

It is important to note at this point that the plight of Robinette and Myrick's is shared across the industry and not specific to UTA. Even Harvard had its share of power struggles (Alofsin, 2002). These

plights are brought forward in this document to explain why Robinette resigned the directorship and, in this case, highlight a failure to accomplish one of his career goals.

5.3.2 Pedagogy

Robinette was willing to discuss the topic of his directorship, but he did not spend much time on the topic of his pedagogy. He recalls a couple of colorful stories of good studios, but in the end, would not answer additional questions on the topic.

Over the course of the next eighteen years, Robinette focused on his students. Though Robinette's first love was planning in large scale, he had no experience in this area. He set about transferring knowledge to students based on the experiences he did have and his writings.

When asked what courses he was most influential at, planting design was first off his tongue. Moments later in the course of the oral history he concedes that it may have been history or environmental design, but he had never written or contributed professionally to the subject matter, thus the knee-jerk reaction towards plant design.

In the few minutes he did spend on the topic, he states that he really enjoyed teaching and that teaching and the transformation into landscape architects was what it was all about and the purpose of everything. As to his style, he concedes that after a few years of teaching, he noticed patterns in his students or personality profiles. He admits being able to group students into profiles, such as enthusiastic with no talent or students who were there strictly for the technical data, which allowed him from experience to tailor his teaching to certain individuals and groups of individuals.

Robinette struggled with this method of teaching in the last two years of his career. The students, in his opinion, had become too different from generations past. He did not understand them as he did others and this led to a lot of frustration. However, he also admits that there was some good talent in those last couple of years.

The students he liked the most were the enthusiastic, excited, full of ideas and brought something to the profession. He discloses that he would have liked to teach more design classes in the later years and that he resents being pushed out of the plant design class.

There is one student who especially identified Robinette by his “notoriously difficult” tests; particularly in the subjects of professional practice and history. When asked about this, Robinette defended himself by saying that students who wanted to learn the material did not really have a problem with the tests. He was also aware of, because he administered the same tests year after year, that some students knew the quiz material before they were given the test.

Robinette claims he could still differentiate between who genuinely knew the material and who did not. Pass or fail, these individuals were not going to learn the material anyway and to address the issue would have distracted from those who were interested. His greatest frustration in this area was seeing students who had the potential to learn the material and master it but chose to short change the system.

If nothing else, Robinette believes that his presence and namesake alone at the university was an asset. He thought that it lent stability to the program because he had an identifiable name.

It was at The University of Texas at Arlington where Robinette would finish his teaching career. In the fall semester of 2010, while on a field trip with his Environmental Design class, Robinette suffered a mild stroke. The next semester would be his last.

CHAPTER 6
AUTHORSHIP

6.1 Books

In 1967, while teaching at The University of Wisconsin, Robinette became frustrated teaching in large part because he could not find good texts which suited him. He complains that at the time, the only two books written on the subject of planting design were authored by Florence Bell Robinson almost 25 years prior.

A search of Google Books as well as Amazon.com contradicts this statement, though only slightly. A search between 1942 and 1967, produced two books aside from the ones mentioned and several publications who touched on the subject. The two books available are *Planting Design*, in 1951 by Brenda Colvin and *Planting Design: Principles and Practices in the Use of Plant Materials by the Landscape Architect*, in 1955 by Lyle Blundell.

Robinette assimilated his notes and constructed a simple book, *Off the Board/Into the Ground* and took it to a local publisher in Madison, Wisconsin to try to acquire twenty-five copies. The publisher agreed but liked the book so much he offered Robinette a deal for the book, and an author was born. Robinette tells the story of Milton Baron who told Robinette to write his own book one day while still a student at Michigan State:

So anyhow, one day he came into class and the veins were popping out in his forehead, and I knew he'd read the paper. He got me after class and he sat me down and read me the riot act. And I defended myself, I was a veteran, I was in my early 20's, and I said, "No, you're wrong. You're just - you're really wrong in doing that. Spend time on teaching the class and get things back to us on time, within a week," and on and on and on. ... He said to me at the end of the meeting, "You get out of school and write books if you don't like it." And I said, "I'll do that." And so every time I wrote a book, I sent him a copy, an autographed copy. And the first five or six books, he got copies of them (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

In 1972, after another three books were published, The United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, took an interest in his book, *Plants/ People/and Environmental Quality*. He had

written the book when working for the university in Madison, approximately 1967, but it was not until 1972 that he made any attempt to sell the book. He showed the book to his then boss, LaGasse, who in turn contacted a friend of his who was the assistant director of the National Park Service, Ray Freeman.

Freeman immediately took an interest in the book but agreed to publish only four chapters: Functional uses of plants; Architectural uses of plants; Engineering uses of plants; and Climatological uses of plants. These four chapters, along with introductions and conclusion, would become the book.

The book became very popular and eventually sold over 250,000 copies and was translated into Japanese. Robinette routinely spoke of this book as he recorded his oral history and is very proud of the circulation records it has achieved.

On the tail of *Plants/people/environmental quality*, Robinette used his momentum to push another two books he had already in the works. With *Landscape Architectural Education Volume I and II*, he openly admits taking advantage of Kendall-Hunt Publishing Company in order to get the books published. An act he admits was somewhat selfish but done mostly for the preservation of the data for posterity. Robinette believes that as time fades away that these are the books which he will be remembered for.

In 1976, in order to publish at will, Robinette founded Environmental Design Press which he used to publish three of his books; *Parking lot Landscape Development*; *Landscape Architectural Site Construction Details*; and *Roofscape*. Environmental Design Press, which was a publishing arm of his larger company The Center for Landscape Architecture Research and Education, was liquidated with all other parts of the parent company during Robinette's transition to the Dallas/Ft. Worth metroplex. The new owner of Environmental Design Press, Van Nostrand Reinhold Publishing Company of New York, New York, who now owned the rights to the three books just mentioned, contracted Robinette to produce a series of other books on the landscape. This series coincided well with Robinette's dismissal from Myrick Newman Dahlberg and he used the time to write his next five books; *Planting Details*; *Evergreen Form Studies*; *Trees of the South*; *Landscape Planning for Energy Conservation*; *Water Conservation in*

Landscape Design and Management; and edit three others; *Energy Efficient Site Design*; *How to Make Cities Livable*; and *Anyone Can Go Anywhere* (G. Robinette, personal communication, April 11, 2012).

Robinette's last two books; *Parking Lot Landscape Development* and *Local Landscape Ordinances* were published through his current company Agora in the mid 1990s. Since then Robinette has worked on four other books including one on Ted Osmundson, president of the ASLA from 1967 to 1969 which he believes is an important topic, but not a very popular one. He jokes he expects to sell only four books of this title to Osmundson's immediate family.

Robinette's legacy as an author does not only live within his works but others as well. One person approached Robinette with an idea for construction details. Robinette, swamped at the time, told him to go write the book himself. He took Robinette's advice and Ted Walker not only published that book but six others. Robinette explains how he encouraged this:

There were many people out in the profession that were competent to write books, and they didn't think they were and so they didn't write them. When I wrote books there were no books, there was no literature in the field. So when I started writing books people said, "That isn't very good," and I said, "Fine - do a better one." And they did. And so, all of a sudden as a result of that, the one thing that I think that I had the greatest influence in the profession was in getting people to write books (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

However, there is no other secondary evidence to support that he spawned other authors. However, Robinette himself started writing due to motivations pertaining to what was available on the market. It is not unreasonable that other authors may have taken note of Robinette's works and set off to improve upon his ideas, but the major premise that he spun off other authors is not supported.

6.2 Other Publications

Books were not the only written work which Robinette produced in his career as an author. While working for the ASLA, he published several pamphlets and publications on a wide variety of topics intended to educate, inform, and develop professionalism within the realm of landscape architecture. These publications had titles such as *Goals for Landscape Architectural Education*; *The Black Landscape Architect*; *History of Schools of Landscape Architecture*; *The Economics of Landscape Architectural Education*; and *Training Landscape Architects for Urban and Community Service*. Some

publications became very large and seemingly had no distinction from books like *Handbook of Landscape Architectural Construction – Volume One* and *Street Graphics*.

After Robinette left the ASLA and founded The Center for Landscape Architecture Research and Education, he took a multi-media approach to disseminating the data. Starting in 1976 on the topic of new towns in America, he prepared and sold slide shows complimented by a taped narration and a guidebook. In 1977 he published a series on new interiors for old buildings; and in 1978 and 1979, he published series on community landscape development and professional development respectively (Robinette, 2006).

Robinette found profit in publishing 24” by 36” graphic posters on plant material as well as books. His works, including titles such as *Landscape Trees of Texas* and *Tropical Foliage Plants*, earned a merit award in communications from the Texas chapter of the ASLA (Robinette, 2006).

Last, there have been over 120 articles which have been published in professional journals and newspapers such as *The New York Times*. These works appeared mostly in publications from 1969 to 1973.

6.3 Authorship Summary

Robinette explains that his early success in writing lent great credibility to his efforts with The Landscape Architecture Foundation which made it easier to raise funds. This reciprocated back to him in the form that the grants he won led to other publications which he authored.

There was no real rhyme or reason behind the order of what was published. In his oral history, he uses phrases like, “It’s just what was needed,” and “It dawned on me that there was another book and it was out of material that I had gathered up” (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 16, 2012). Several of his books are strictly graphic, while others are quite pen heavy. Some such as *Energy and environment* and an unspecified parking lot book were simply the result of having enough material left over on a previous book that he could spin off another book.

Robinette had a knack for collecting large amounts of technical data and assimilating information into one piece of work. Thus, all of the books which Robinette produced are technical in

nature. The one subject which Robinette left alone, surprisingly, was history. When asked, he simply states that he got close once about ten years ago, but could never get all of the information organized at one time in order to write.

Robinette states some of his works did well simply because there was a vacuum on the subject while others did well because there was a strong need. It never seemed like he was in competition with anyone to create a better book. He simply acknowledged that there wasn't one already. That may summarize Robinette's career as an author.

PART III – SUMMATION

This last part explains how the data was analyzed and the findings. Additionally, further research is suggested based off of the findings of this research.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

To pull all of these data together, this conclusion revisits the primary questions and offers a summary of these data. Additionally, suggestions are made to as to how to further and compliment this research as well as some personal thoughts of the researcher

7.1 Primary Questions

There are many questions and patterns which arose in the course of this study. To organize the analysis, each transcript was scanned for reoccurring themes within the data, as well as direct answers to the key questions. When a reoccurring theme was detected within the data, it was assigned a color code and highlighted, thus at the end of analyzing the transcripts it was clear where individuals choose to spend their time reflecting on their relationship and experiences with Robinette. For instance, many of Robinette's co-workers and colleagues migrated back to Robinette's bullish and persistent nature and some could talk about his past achievements, whereas his students chose to emphasize his ability to encourage them, but had little to say about his past.

It is prudent to recall the key questions of this study and address those before broadening the findings. The key questions are:

- How did Robinette's work reflect the overall framework of the profession of landscape architecture?
- What are Robinette's most significant contributions to the profession?
- How does Robinette connect to significant historical events?
- What was the nature of Robinette's pedagogical approach at The University of Texas at Arlington? (eg, What influences did it reflect, how did it change across time, what contribution did it make to the profession in North Texas?)

7.1.1 Reflections

There was a popular movement in the 1960s to become environmentally aware both within landscape architecture and the general public. This movement becomes increasingly more important in the 1970s, and still carries significant popularity at the time of this publication.

Robinette graduated from college in 1963 and went to work for a “very conservative” civil engineering firm. Upon transition to The University of Wisconsin at Madison, he taught planting design and other inconsequential courses. It was not until his fourth year at the ASLA, 1972, that his book *Plants/People/Environmental Quality* was published and sold 250,000 copies. However, Robinette does state that he had the book for four years prior to publication. It is conceivable that he was teaching this material at The University of Wisconsin at Madison.

Robinette went on to pen other books including *Energy and Environment*, 1973; *Site Planning for Solar Energy Utilization*, 1974; *Roofscape, Landscape Planning for Energy Conservation*, 1984; *Water Conservation in Landscape Design and Management*, 1985, and edit *How to Make Cities Liveable*, 1984; and *Energy Efficient Site Design*, 1985.

These are significant examples of both Robinette and the profession influencing each other. Without people interested in the topic, the books would not be written. Without Robinette contributing the books, the movement would not progress as quickly.

In 1972, the ASLA code of ethics changed allowing firms to advertise freely on the market. Eleven years later, Robinette took a position as the head of marketing for Myrick Newman Dahlberg. This opened his career path to Myrick Newman Dahlberg, which consequently led him to the Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan area, where he would remain to this day. This alteration in the code of ethics had a significant influence on his career without any real reciprocation from Robinette.

So far as public art is concerned, this affected Margaret Robinette more profoundly than him. He does state that her work in public art informed his teaching in the environmental art class and also that because she had found a good job in Dallas in her field, that anchored them to the metroplex. It is without a doubt that the public arts impacted Robinette, but more so in a secondary manner.

By 1983, Esri, the maker of Arc GIS, and Autodesk, the makers of AutoCAD, were formed and their products started infiltrating into the workplace. At this time in his career, Robinette was working as a marketing director and author. A few years later he took the directorship of The Program in Landscape Architecture at The University of Texas. By this time, digital design products were in the workplace and Robinette did not have any experience with them. He continued to his retirement without learning these products. In this manner, neither he nor the profession influenced each other except in the way of limiting what he could teach.

Technology impacted Robinette once more with the advent of the Xerox machine. Robinette states how this technology touched book publishing industry:

There used to be 50 books a year being published. Because they needed fewer copies and they printed fewer copies, and so they were able to... Now, you don't store them, market them, etc. I used to print copies - 500 - and would sell 500 - I could sell 1,000 and make a profit and that was it. Now you can't - first of all, you can't make money on small runs anymore and it's hard to sell them because people Xerox them. They'll Xerox them. They'll get one copy and Xerox five copies (G. Robinette, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

Because he made a portion of his living producing books, this was a significant impact in his career. Without the advent of the Xerox machine, some books he wanted to publish may have fallen within the acceptable limits for profit; maybe not.

7.1.2 Significant Contributions

There are many who would say Robinette's major contribution to the profession of landscape architecture and humanity was his books. On the surface, there is no doubt this is a major contribution. However, the data found in this research uncovers at least two other major contributions.

First, and in the opinion of this researcher, foremost, he broadened the scope of accredited schools. This may have originally been the vision of LaGasse, but it was Robinette, the "General Patton of landscape architecture," who carried out the orders (R. Rome, personal communication, March 15, 2012). At the time of this publication, there are 66 accredited schools in the United States (R. Leighton, personal communication, March 23, 2012).

His second greatest contribution is likely to be getting the ball rolling with The Landscape Architecture Foundation. The foundation today is a research juggernaut generating a million and a half dollars a year to find solutions plaguing the profession.

Lastly, but certainly no minor accomplishment, is his contribution to his students. This is best stated by his wife, Margaret Robinette:

I think he's made a very significant contribution, probably most importantly in human lives, in the lives of some of his students, giving them the kind of start and the confidence that they needed and the realization that they could really, really do something in this field" (M. Robinette, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

Only one student out of the six interviewed really knew any specifics about his history. The other four generalized or construed historical facts such as stating he was the first director of the landscape architecture program. Indeed, his passion and enthusiasm for the profession and his students was stated by all students in the research. Carol Feldman states:

He was pointing us in the direction that he felt landscape architecture was going and directed us there... But Gary was enthusiastic. He says, well you don't need to know. Just try. He was very positive in that respect... The thing that has stuck with me is his enthusiasm about whatever he has done (C. Feldman, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

Patricia Quaid recalls:

He was always so complimentary of whatever your skill is. If you had a skill, he would be able to focus in on that and really make you feel good about that and you're doing the right thing. You need to do this and he was very excited about his students (P. Quaid, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

Clay Walker states that, "he got everyone enthusiastic about landscape architecture" (C. Walker, personal communication, March 13, 2012). Bryan Adams, one of his old students said, "He was always in everybody's corner. When I was there, and even to this day, when pro-practice classes were coming, Gary was always supporting students in what they wanted to do and their achievements" (B. Adams, personal communication, March 16, 2012). Jack Buchanan who had several uneasy moments with Robinette while studying at The University of Texas at Arlington recalls some of his better memories:

He seemed to be quite excited about my future growth in the program and further into the profession of landscape architecture...He was inspiring. I enjoyed listening to the guy... I would say that he was encouraging about the future of the

profession. He had a way of like instilling a positive outlook for those undertaking the process of becoming a professional in this field (J. Buchanan, personal communication, March 26, 2012).

It is not the benefits of the shade the tree provides which is its greatest legacy; not the wood, not the phytoremediation, the taste of the sweet fruit, or the beauty. It is the seeds it produces which carry its DNA into the future. Long after Robinette has passed from this world, and his books have been shelved in the far reaches of the library, his development of landscape architects will carry on.

7.1.3 Connecting To Contemporary History

Robinette has many stories concerning the history of landscape architecture. From this researchers experience, he could tell you obscure facts such as why Sasaki specified bald cypress in front of Peter Walker's project at the Nasher Sculpture Garden. Richard Rome states that, "Robinette is an encyclopedia of landscape architecture. He has an amazing handle on the profession of landscape architecture" (R. Rome, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

But does having some well detailed and interesting stories connect you to history? Certainly, he played a major role in the ASLA. But he does not state in his oral history where he connected to any significant historical events and likewise the oral history does not state he does not.

Rome states that he was a major figure in the expansion of the profession, but does not state how. Dahlberg states that he made very significant contributions, but aside from the well known fact that he was an author and publisher, stops short of any details.

It is the general consensus of the research population that he was indeed important, but it is unclear why they feel that way. Their feelings could be based on assumptions that because his stories are so vivid and he witnessed these events, that he too is connected to these events and thus make him an important figure. This is not to say that he is not important, just that the population does not know why.

To answer the question, according to documents provided mostly by Ron Leighton with the national ASLA, the greatest expansion of the school accreditation system occurs between 1968 and 1974 with the addition of sixteen schools over the course of six years.

Table 7.1 School Accreditation by Year

1952	11 Schools
1968	20 Schools
1974	36 Schools
1985	44 Schools
1995	54 Schools
2012	66 Schools

This in itself is a significant historical event and Robinette was indeed head of the Education and Research branch of the ASLA during this time frame which connects him to this event. As for the expansion of The Landscape Architecture Foundation, Lawson (1975) reported in Landscape Architecture Magazine that Robinette primarily had been responsible for raising the first million dollars of research funds which too connects him to this separate but significant event.

7.1.4 Pedagogical Approach

Robinette, as stated above, was a tremendous influence on his students, mostly in a positive way. Robinette states that he enjoyed teaching. Additionally, his students, for the most part, felt like he was a positive force in their learning.

Seemingly the only difference in style came at the very end where he states that he could no longer categorize the students and thus could not figure out the best way to instruct them.

Robinette stated that he reached out to the Dallas/Ft. Worth region, both to the community and to the profession. His colleagues Rome and Harwood confirm that claim. Right up to his last classes, Robinette was taking his classes to professional offices to expose the students to local firms. Seemingly, this has gone unchanged since 1991.

7.1.5 Additional Thoughts

One emerging theme coming from the research, particularly from the elder population, was Gary's personality and how that influenced each position he held throughout his career. Rome describes

Robinette as, “the proverbial bull in a china shop,” while Dahlberg states that what held him back was simply his mouth (W. Dahlberg, personal communication, March 16, 2012; R. Rome, personal communication, March 15, 2012).

From what has been collected for the purpose of this research, it appears that Robinette set out and accomplished much work during his life with sheer persistence and conviction for his profession. Geoff Hall admires Robinette for his want to get back to work so soon after his illness in 2010, even to the detriment of himself (G. Hall, personal communication, March 20, 2012). Comments like these are peppered throughout the interviews consistently.

Still, there is much evidence that this sheer persistence and conviction held him back in some positions, particularly at The University of Texas at Arlington. His willingness to openly state his opinion and indifference to the architects made for a hostile environment.

It is curious to this researcher how similar Robinette was to Myrick in spite of their differences and Robinette’s disdain for Myrick. Myrick may not have been cut from the same cloth as Robinette, but they were both made into the same garment. Myrick graduated from Harvard. Robinette passed on a scholarship offer from Harvard. Both were authors, though Robinette far exceeded Myrick in volume. Myrick was head of his business for most of his life. Robinette too owned his own business and though it never took the same shape or size as Myrick’s, however, he did perform best in the ASLA with little to no supervision. Myrick became director of the landscape architecture program and struggled with architects to expand the program; Robinette followed suit. James McRee in his master’s thesis explains that Myrick enjoyed teaching about plant material, design and history (McRee, 1992). Again, in his oral history, Robinette describes those same topics as his most influential.

7.2 Summary

There is much to be said about anyone who has accomplished so much, and worthwhile at that, in their life as Robinette. Good, bad, or indifferent to him, the facts at the end of the day are just that, facts. He authored or edited over 67 different publications in his life on various topics under landscape

architecture. He taught his profession for over half his career to those willing to learn what he had to say. Least of all, the ASLA expanded the accreditation and research programs while he was at the helm.

It is said that if you are not making waves, then you are not moving. Robinette certainly never set out to change history or even write it. At the end of the day, he was an opportunist and a staunch advocate for landscape architecture; nothing more, nothing less.

7.3 Further Research

There is a wealth of topics which Robinette rattled off at the end of his oral history on March 16, 2012 which he believes would benefit the landscape architecture body of knowledge. Robinette suggests researching three obscure landscape architects who would otherwise never get their story told, Ted Osmundson, the author; Campbell Miller, former president of the ASLA; and Dick Dee, an illustrator. Further, Robinette believes the landscape architect's role in certain areas needs to be touched on, such as regional landscape design. In short, he would like to see more historical research.

This researcher would like to see further research in two other areas. First, an in-depth historical thesis on the history of The Program in Landscape Architecture at The University of Texas at Arlington is warranted before we lose that history to time itself.

Last, there are already two theses from this university on Richard Myrick and Gene Newman. With the advent of this thesis, the geographic proximity, the credibility of his work and interest in his personality, an oral history thesis on Walter Dahlberg is warranted.

APPENDIX A

EXEMPT APPROVAL LETTER



Office of Research Administration
Box 19188
202 E. Border St., Suite 214
Arlington, Texas
76019-0188

T 817.272.3723
F 817.272.1111
<http://www.uta.edu/research>
Executive@UT.Arlington
<http://www.uta.edu/executor>

March 23, 2012

Jason Lackey
Dr. Taner Ozdil
School of Architecture
Box 19108

Protocol Title: *The career of Gary Robinette in the contemporary history of landscape architecture*

RE: Exempt Approval Letter

IRB No.: 2012-0373e

The UT Arlington Institutional Review Board (UTA IRB) Chair (or designee) has reviewed the above-referenced study and found that it qualified as exempt from coverage under the federal guidelines for the protection of human subjects as referenced at Title 45 Part 46.101(b)(2). You are therefore authorized to begin the research as of March 09, 2012.

Please be advised that as the principal investigator, you are required to report local adverse (unanticipated) events to this office within 24 hours. In addition, pursuant to Title 45 CFR 46.103(b)(4)(iii), investigators are required to, "promptly report to the IRB any proposed changes in the research activity, and to ensure that such changes in approved research, during the period for which IRB approval has already been given, are **not initiated without IRB review and approval** except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject."

All investigators and key personnel identified in the protocol must have documented Human Subject Protection (HSP) Training or *CITI Training* on file with this office. The UT Arlington Office of Research Administration Regulatory Services appreciates your continuing commitment to the protection of human research subjects. Should you have questions or require further assistance, please contact Robin Dickey at robind@uta.edu or you may contact the Office of Regulatory Services at 817-272-3723.

Sincerely,

Patricia G. Turpin, PhD, RN, NEA-BC
Clinical Associate Professor
UT Arlington IRB Chair

BaAMark

APPENDIX B

PERSONAL COMMUNICATION WITH DIRECTOR OF
EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC RELATIONS:
RON LEIGHTON

22 March 2012

From: Ron Leighton, Director of Education and Academic Relations
To: Jason Lackey

Hi Jason,

Thanks for email. I just listened to your voice mail message.

Unfortunately, I don't have all the details you are asking about. I'm attaching a pdf of a handwritten chart (and a copy of 1969 schools) that I have used for initial accreditation of many programs and an excel spreadsheet that lists accredited programs since 1980.

I had looked through materials here to try and get a growth trend over the years:

Number of institutions with an accredited program in 1949 (April LAQ)	11
Number of institutions with an accredited program in 1968-69	20
Number of institutions with an accredited program in 1974	36
Number of institutions with an accredited program in 1985	44
Number of institutions with an accredited program in 1995	54

Currently 66

Prior to 1980, only 1 program at a school could be accredited. Since then both an MLA and undergraduate program could be reviewed.

There are 18 or 19 schools that have both accredited.

There was a time where LAAB reviewed schools in Canada (the excel spreadsheet will show that).

Hope this helps.

Sincerely,

Ron L.

1968-69 LIST OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Issued by the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION - AMERICAN SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

Degree indicated is lowest professional degree conferred.

- | | |
|--|--|
| * CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC COLLEGE
Pomona, California - B.S. in L.A.
Department of Landscape Architecture
Howard O. Boltz, Head | † MICHIGAN, UNIVERSITY OF
Ann Arbor, Michigan - B.L.A.
Department of Landscape Architecture
Walter L. Chambers, Chairman |
| * CALIFORNIA, UNIVERSITY OF
Berkeley, California - M.L.A.
Department of Landscape Architecture
Garrett Eckbo, Chairman | † NEW YORK STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF FORESTRY
Syracuse, New York - B.L.A.
School of Landscape Architecture
Bradford G. Sears, Acting Director |
| † GEORGIA, UNIVERSITY OF
Athens, Georgia - B.L.A.
Department of Landscape Architecture
Hubert B. Owens, Head | † NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY
Raleigh, North Carolina - B.L.A.
Department of Landscape Architecture
Richard R. Wilkinson, Head |
| HARVARD UNIVERSITY
Cambridge, Massachusetts - M.L.A.
Department of Landscape Architecture
Charles W. Harris, Chairman | † OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
Columbus, Ohio - B.L.A.
Division of Landscape Architecture
George B. Tobey, Jr., Chairman |
| † ILLINOIS, UNIVERSITY OF
Urbana, Illinois - B.L.A.
Department of Landscape Architecture
William G. Carnes, Chairman | † OREGON, UNIVERSITY OF
Eugene, Oregon - B.L.A.
Department of Landscape Architecture
George S. Jette, Acting Head |
| *† IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Ames, Iowa - B.S. in L.A.
Department of Landscape Architecture
Thomas A. Barton, Head | PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
University Park, Pennsylvania - B.S. in L.A.
Department of Landscape Architecture
Wayne H. Wilson, Head |
| KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas - B.L.A.
Department of Landscape Architecture
Robert P. Ealy, Director | PENNSYLVANIA, UNIVERSITY OF
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania - M.L.A.
Department of Landscape Architecture and
Regional Planning
Ian L. McHarg, Chairman |
| *† LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Baton Rouge, Louisiana - B.L.A.
Department of Landscape Architecture
Robert S. Reich, Head | RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN
Providence, Rhode Island - B.L.A.
Department of Landscape Architecture
Alexander E. Rattray, Head |
| † MASSACHUSETTS, UNIVERSITY OF
Amherst, Massachusetts - B.L.A.
Department of Landscape Architecture
Ervin H. Zube, Head | † UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah - B.L.A.
Department of Landscape Architecture and
Environmental Planning
Burton L. Taylor, Head |
| † MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
East Lansing, Michigan - B.L.A.
Division of Landscape Architecture
Miles G. Boylan, Director | † WISCONSIN, UNIVERSITY OF
Madison, Wisconsin - B.S.
Department of Landscape Architecture
Philip H. Lewis, Jr., Chairman |

* "Provisional" accreditation for less than the normal five year period.

† Graduate Program Available.

Committee on Education - ASLA
Wayne H. Wilson, Chairman
293 Nimitz Avenue
State College, Pennsylvania 16801

This Accredited List is valid only until
the next list is issued.

15 NOVEMBER 1968

State	AIR	SDRE	1ST YEAR ACCRED.	1976-1977	1975-1976	1974-1975	1973-1974	1972-1973	1971-1972	1970-1971	1969-1970	1968-1969	Notes
Ala	✓	✓	1977	BLA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Arizona	✓	✓	1974	BSLA	BS BSLA MS MLA BLA MLA	BS	BS-	-	-	-	-	-	* AIR IMPROPERLY FILLED OUT
Ark State			1973		BLA	BLA	BSLA	-	-	-	-	-	
Cal Poly - Pom.	✓	✓	1963	BSLA	BSLA	BS	BS	-	-	BSLA MLA	*	BLA MLA	* NO REPORT ON FILE
Cal Poly - SLO	✓	✓	1975		BSLA	BS	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Central 1927	✓	✓	1927	MLA	*	MLA	MLA	-	-	BLA AB MLA	BLA MLA	BLA MLA	
Davis													
2274	✓	✓	1973	BS	BS	BS	BS	-	-	-	-	-	
Central	✓	✓	1971	BSLA	BS	*	BS	-	-	-	-	-	
Florida	✓	✓	1972		BLA	BLA	BLA	-	-	-	-	-	
Georgia X	✓	✓	1958	BLA	BLA MLA	BLA	BLA MLA	-	-	BS BSLA BSLA	BLA MLA	BLA MLA	
Hawaii 1929					MLA	MLA	MLA	-	-	MLA	*	MLA	
Illinois 1929	✓	✓	1929	BLA	BLA	BSLA	BLA	-	-	BSLA MLA	*	BLA MLA	
Iowa 1929	✓	✓		BSLA	BSLA	BSLA	BSLA	-	-	BSLA MLA BLA	BSLA MLA	BSLA MLA	
Iowa			1964		BLA	BLA	BLA	-	-	MLA	*	*	
Iowa			1960		*	BLA	BLA	-	-	*	*	*	
Iowa			1960		MLA	MLA	MLA	-	-	MLA	MLA	MLA	
Iowa			1952		BS BSLA BLA	BLA	BS BLA	-	-	BS ED BS BSLA MLA	BS BSLA MLA	BS MLA	
Utah 1929	✓	✓		MLA	MLA	MLA	MLA	-	-	BLA MLA	*	BLA MLA	
Utah	✓	✓	1971	BLA	BLA	BLA	BLA	-	-	BLA	-	-	
Utah	✓	✓	1973	BLA	BLA	BLA	BLA	-	-	-	-	-	
Utah X	✓	✓	1958	MLA	MLA	MLA	MLA	-	-	BSLA MS BLA	*	*	
Utah 1929	✓	✓	1952		BSLA	BSLA	BSLA	-	-	BSLA BLA BLA BS MLA	*	BS LA	
Utah			1950		BLA	BLA	BLA	-	-	-	-	-	
Utah ST	✓	✓	1957	BLA	BSLA BLA	BLA	BS	-	-	BSLA MLA	-	-	
Utah *1944					BSLA BLA	BLA	BSLA	-	-	BFA	-	-	
Utah	✓	✓	1971	BS	BS	BS	BS	-	-	-	-	-	
Utah PENN	✓	✓	1958		MLA	MLA	MLA	-	-	MLA	MLA	-	
Utah	✓	✓	1970		BS	BS	BS	-	-	BS MS MLA	-	-	
Utah X	✓	✓	1957	BLA	BSLA MLA	BLA	MLA	-	-	MLA BSLA MLA	BLA MLA	*	
Utah	✓	✓	1970	BSLA	BS	BSLA	MLA	-	-	-	-	-	
Utah Tech	✓	✓	1970	BS	BS	BS	BSLA	-	-	-	-	-	
Utah	✓	✓	1966	BLA	BLA	BLA	BLA	-	-	BLA MLA MS ED	*	BLA MLA MS ED	
Utah	✓	✓	1973	BLA	BSLA	BLA	BLA	-	-	-	-	-	
Utah	✓	✓	1973	MLA	MLA	MLA	MLA	-	-	-	-	-	
Utah ST	✓	✓	1973	BSLA	BSLA	BSLA	BSLA	-	-	-	-	-	
Utah Wash.	✓	✓	1969		BLA	BLA	BLA	-	-	-	-	-	
Utah	✓	✓	1966		BSLA BSLA	BSLA	BSLA	-	-	BSLA MS	-	-	
Utah	✓	✓	1974	BLA	BSLA	BSLA	BSLA	-	-	-	-	-	

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now to RISD in 1945.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Jason Lackey is an entrepreneurial landscape designer who resides in Dallas, TX with his wife and three kids. He holds a bachelors degree from The University of Texas at Arlington in Interdisciplinary Studies. His primary love in the landscape is water conserving and Texas native plantings. He will complete his Master of Landscape Architecture degree in the Spring of 2012.