A TEI Project

Interview of Robert Kennard

Contents

1. Transcript

1.1. TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE JUNE 20, 1990

HENDERSON:

> I'm interviewing Robert A. Kennard, and his lovely daughter Gail Kennard Madyun is here. For the interview, what I'd like to start with is some personal data and family background, so I'd like to get your full name and when you were born, date and place.

KENNARD:

> My birth name was Robert Delsarte Kennard. Delsarte was my grandmother's maiden name on my father's side. But when I was about four years old, my

father changed my name to Robert Alexander, because he had made a pact with one of his dear friends, whose name was Robert Louis Alexander, when they were kids that if they had a boy they would name it after each other. Robert Alexander never had any children, but my dad finally had a son after having four girls.

MADYUN:

Three girls.

KENNARD:

No, four.

MADYUN:

Oh, four?

KENNARD:

One died at birth.

HENDERSON:

And your birth date?

KENNARD:

September 18, 1920.

HENDERSON:

Can you let me have your father's name and mother's name?

KENNARD:

My father's name was James Louis Kennard and my mother's name was Marie Louise Bryan [Kennard].

HENDERSON:

Do you remember any name from your grandparents, from that generation?

KENNARD:

Yes. On my mother's side, her father was named Daniel Bryan, and her mother's name was Mattie Bryan. On my father's side, his father was named

Perry Kennard, and his mother's name was Anna Delsarte. I don't remember their middle names.

HENDERSON:

That's all right. And your parents or grandparents, do you know where they moved from or where they lived before coming to California?

KENNARD:

My father was born in Lambertsville, New Jersey, but they moved around New England a lot because my grandfather on my father's side was a barber. You know, in those days, many black families, men particularly, had barbershops because you didn't shave yourself. Barber¬shops were the thing. They had beards and they had goatees and things like that. So they had barbershops. I know one was in Worcester, Massachusetts. So my father was from the New England area. He was from Lambertsville, New Jersey, on the Delaware [River] border. My mother's parents were from Charleston, South Carolina. Her father was a very unusual man, Dan Bryan. He was what they call an artisan. He carved wood for mantlepieces, very fancy carving, and he was very successful. Many years later I visited the house that he'd built for the family in Charleston. It happened to be on 82 Lee Street. I never will forget my mother telling me—I visited the house when her stepmother was still living. And all the homes in those days, there was no central heating, so they all had fireplaces, and all the mantles were carved by my grandfather.

HENDERSON:

Were you born in California and grew up in California?

KENNARD:

I was born in Los Angeles at Forty-ninth [Street] and Central [Avenue]. Actually, I was born in the [Los Angeles] County [General] Hospital [now Los Angeles County USC Medical Center],

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

But my family lived at Forty-ninth and Central. And since I was the fourth of four children, the youngest—I had three sisters. When I was about four years old my family moved to Monrovia, California, which is about twenty-five miles east of here. We lived in Monrovia most of the time I grew up. I was raised in Monrovia. My father had about a half acre of land, and he raised oranges. That was not his primary occupation.

HENDERSON:

Was he a barber out there, as well?

KENNARD:

No. He gave up barbering. When he first came out here, when he gave up barbering his first job was—he ran on the road [railroad]. He was a Pullman porter.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

After he and my mother got married, I believe they moved to Worcester, Massachusetts, and he was a barber then. He took over my grandfather's barbershop. However, when my grandfather died and he gave up the barbering, he began running on the road. He ran from the East to Saint Louis. So he's going back and forth to Saint Louis and—oh, no. I'm sorry. They moved to Westerly, Rhode Island. They moved to Westerly, Rhode Island, and he had a barbershop in Westerly, Rhode Island. In Westerly, Rhode Island, my oldest sister was born—Anna [Kennard-Hunt]. The barbershop business was going down, so he got a job as a Pullman porter, and he ran on the road to Saint Louis.

HENDERSON:

From the East?

KENNARD:

From the East. He went back and forth to Saint Louis. He kind of liked Saint Louis, so he talked my mother into moving to Saint Louis. So they lived in Saint Louis. I'm not sure what he did in Saint Louis, but I think he still ran on the

road. And then he got transferred. He started running on the road—and I had a sister that was born in Saint Louis.

HENDERSON:

Oh? And what's her name?

KENNARD:

Marguerite [Kennard]. She was born in Saint Louis. Then he ran on the road to California, to Los Angeles. And going back and forth to Los Angeles, back and forth to Los Angeles, he decided that this was really the place of golden opportunity, so they moved to Los Angeles.

HENDERSON:

About what year was that?

KENNARD:

It had to be 1915. It had to be 1915, because Marguerite was born in 1914 in Saint Louis, and my youngest sister was born in 1916 in Los Angeles. So it had to be then. And then I was born in 1920.

HENDERSON:

Okay. And the youngest sister's name is—?

KENNARD:

Elizabeth [Kennard King].

HENDERSON:

Elizabeth. Now, the reason I perked up when I heard Pullman porter is that I've been finding out that a lot of the blacks that came to L.A. came via railroading.

KENNARD:

That's right.

HENDERSON:

Because that was an industry that hired blacks and really used blacks.

KENNARD:

They worked in the dining car and as Pullman porters. And, of course, that was the first big union; A. Philip Randolph established that. It was the first big black labor union where he unionized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. My father, when he came here, he drove a laundry truck. It was a horse and buggy. He had so many children that he didn't want to run on the road anymore. So he got a job as a laundry truck driver, although he was educated as a mortician in Philadelphia. But he lost his hearing, plus he was a very jolly person, and he always said that being a mortician was just not in his life. And he says, because every time anybody asked, "Was business good?" [laughter]

HENDERSON:

You don't know what to tell them.

KENNARD:

And he said it was good, but for everybody else it was bad. And to show you what kind of person he was, his nickname was "Sunny Jim." So he was not a person who should have been a mortician. [laughter] Anyway, he lost his hearing; it was a pretty bad hearing loss. He needed a more steady job, so he got a job as a custodian With the Los Angeles [Unified] School District. It was during the Depression, and he worked real hard. I mean, he worked two or three jobs. He worked for the county [Los Angeles County] as a custodian. And I remember, during the Depression he had extra jobs at night. One of the jobs he had—I never will forget—was in an architect's office downtown. And sometimes he would take me with him in the evening, and I'd kind of help him, and I would empty the ashtrays and empty the wastebaskets and go around with him and help him. By that time, I was probably eight or nine, ten years old. And I never will forget, I was in this architectural office, and, you know, years ago everything was done on yellow tracing papers. And I remember they used to color the yellow trace. Right on the tracing, they would color it. And then they would mount the tracing. All blueprinting had to be taken up to the roof, and it was done by sunlight, you know.

HENDERSON:

Oh, I don't remember that.

KENNARD:

Oh, yeah. Before the machines. They'd take it up on the roof and they'd put the ammonia in it. I don't know how it worked, but it would print the thing on a blueprint. That's why the background was blue and—

HENDERSON:

And the lines were white.

KENNARD:

Yeah, the lines were white. So it would bleach it out. I don't know the process. I had no idea of being an architect at the time, but years later I remembered that he had this job taking care of that one office.

HENDERSON:

You've talked about your father. What do you remember about your mother?

KENNARD:

My mother was a very strong person. She had a lot of strength to carry her through. I mean, she had a mind of her own. She used to tell us stories about Charleston, South Carolina, and the segregation. Because her father was pretty well-off—he worked for a company that did wood moldings and fancy carving. He didn't have his own business. He worked for a company that carved wood.

HENDERSON:

These mantlepieces.

KENNARD:

Mantlepieces. It became a pretty large company. There was one floor there that did nothing but carving of the mantlepieces. Well, her father, Dan Bryan, was very good at what he did, and he was very responsible. My mother tells a story that they finally promoted her father to head of the whole floor. Now, for that to happen at the turn of the century to a black man was incredible. And the fellow that ran the store—and I'm not too sure about this name, but I think his name was Hearst. I'm not too sure about that. It just kind of sticks in my mind. He promoted Dan Bryan the head of it, and, of course, a lot of the

whites were just very upset. And he said, "I don't care what you say. If you want to quit, fine, but Dan Bryan's my best man, and he's here on time, and he's responsible, and that's what's going to happen." And he kept him. He stayed there and worked till almost his late seventies. He died at eighty-six. He was a very healthy person. My mother said she never remembered him going to the doctor at all.

MADYUN:

Well, he was having children until he was in his seventies.

KENNARD:

See, he got married again. His wife died when he was forty-eight, and he married at around fifty to a woman twenty-four, who was the same age as my mother. He had six children by ray mother's mother, and he had nine by his second wife, whose name was Mattie, as well as his first. Both their names were Mattie. It was really interesting. His last child was born when he was seventy-two.

HENDERSON:

Lord have mercy.

KENNARD:

So I have an aunt and uncle that are younger than I am.

HENDERSON:

Okay. [laughter]

KENNARD:

They are. They're younger than I am. He died at eighty-six. And when he died it was very unusual, because he was just sitting next door on a bench talking to the guys at the service station, and somebody cracked a joke, and in the middle of laughter, [snaps fingers] he was gone. It's a great way to go.

HENDERSON:

That's the great way to go.

KENNARD:

He was eighty-six years old. She said she never even remembered him being sick in his life.

HENDERSON:

Well, maybe let me ask you questions about what you remember from growing up in Monrovia, maybe elementary school, if you remember that far back, or junior high school.

KENNARD:

Yeah, I remember all that.

HENDERSON:

Oh. [laughter]

KENNARD:

Unfortunately.

HENDERSON:

Oh, well, let me sort through some of the memories and ask you this key question, okay? Do you remember the first time that you knew you were black? When the issue of race first sort of came up?

KENNARD:

Oh, I probably knew I was black when I was quite young. I moved to Monrovia when I was four and a half, and I don't remember being in Los Angeles. So my first recollections are things, probably, when I was five, six years old.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

Monrovia had a population of about twelve thousand people. About 10 percent were black, which is a heavy population for a small town. Probably another 10 percent were Latino and maybe another 4 or 5 percent were Asian. So the minority population was pretty large for a small town. But the street that we lived on was the community dividing line for the white community and the minority community. Not that some whites didn't live in the minority

community, but no blacks lived north of that line that I knew of. But on that street, it was really mixed. We had primarily black and white, but there were a couple of Latinos that I remember later on. But as the blacks moved into that street, naturally, the whites were very resentful. So we walked down the street, and they would call you "nigger." I'm sure that—I don't remember, but I probably asked my mother what a nigger was. [laughter] And they would sing this song, "Nigger, nigger, nigger, pull the trigger, trigger, trigger, with the pink coat and black shoes—." Now, they'd pick out what you wore.

HENDERSON:

Oh, my goodness.

KENNARD:

It was a song they sang. And, of course, when we got older, when we caught them at any distance from the house, we'd beat the hell out of them, because the blacks would get together, and sometimes the Latinos would get together, and there would always be—not gang fights like you have now; the worst thing we had was slingshots with staplers on them.

HENDERSON:

Yeah, they have Uzis now.

KENNARD:

They were little metal staplers, not the stationery staplers. Have you seen the staplers that carpenters tack things up with?

MADYUN:

They're big, thick ones.

KENNARD:

It's a "U"-shaped stapler.

HENDERSON:

Oh, yes, yes.

KENNARD:

We'd use those, or we'd take a pin and we'd bend it. Of course, we had very fancy slingshots, so we used the slingshots. The worst thing that would happen is it might embed in your skin when it hit you. That's the worst thing. And, of course, there were a lot of rock fights. And you'd put rocks in the slingshots. Now they have, as you say, Uzis and eveything else. [laughter] But that's the worst thing. We had little gangs, you know.

HENDERSON:

Yeah.

KENNARD:

So the gangs, the blacks and whites, would fight. So there was a lot of calling of "nigger" and "poor white trash," and stuff like that. I mean, it was a very racist community, very segregated. The theater was segregated, the schools were segregated. The only restaurants you could go into were ones that were owned by blacks. So it was very, very segregated.

HENDERSON:

Was there any tie between the black community in Monrovia and the black community in Los Angeles?

KENNARD:

Oh, yes.

HENDERSON:

Like, could you ride into the city?

KENNARD:

Oh, yeah, you would drive back and forth.

HENDERSON:

And what about trolleys?

KENNARD:

Well, they had the [Pacific Electric Railway] red car—you know, the red car that they'd taken out and now they put back in again. Now they've got the [Metrorail] Blue Line. My father took the red car in from Monrovia every

morning. He left around five o'clock, then he'd come back that evening. It was an hour ride. He'd read the paper. It was a great experience for me when he'd take me in on the red car. And on Sunday you could ride the red car for a dollar, anywhere on the red car. And I remember when I was about eleven or twelve he took me one whole Sunday, and he took me all the way to Venice, Redondo Beach, and we went to the beach, and all on the red car for a dollar. That's all it cost, because not many people rode on Sunday. It was mostly for business people during the week. But there was a big connection with the black community here. And the reason why is because, with the exception of maybe one or two white doctors—there was one, I think, that my family went to—when there was anything serious, we came to town. We had Dr. Gerald Stovall, who was the black doctor. You've heard of him.

HENDERSON:

I've heard of that name, yes.

KENNARD:

I know his son very well, Gerald Stovall. Dr. Stovall used to come to Monrovia and Duarte on certain days and treat the people. He was a very well-respected doctor. And Dr. [H. Claude] Hudson did the dental work. So we came into town for our dentistry and we came into town for our doctor. That way you made the connection with the black community in Los Angeles. You got to know them and some of their children, because there was not a whole lot of social life in Monrovia. I mean, you socialized, you went to parties in Monrovia, but Los Angeles was where. the action was, where a lot of the girls were. So when you got to be sixteen, seventeen, you'd get a car, and you had to come to Los Angeles. [laughter]

HENDERSON:

Okay. So what do you remember from your school times—elementary school or junior high school?

KENNARD:

Well, as I said, the elementary schools were segregated. All of my sisters and myself went to Huntington Drive [Elementary] School, which was the black elementary school. It was black, Latino, everything, all minorities. The parents

began fighting for integrated schools. There was only one black family that lived beyond the black community, and their name was Simons. They were caterers. They had a very good business; they were caterers throughout the community. But they happened to live way out. They may have moved out there before the white community got out there. So they had to go to a school called Orange Avenue [Elementary School], because there was no way they could get way back in town. It was about a mile and three quarters, and that's a long way in those days when not many people had cars. But the parents got together. They said, "If you all live in this district, why do you have to go to this school?" Well, it turns out that on Walnut Avenue, where I lived, the demarcation line is down the middle of the street. So everybody on the south was supposed to go to Huntington Drive, and everybody on the north was supposed to go to a school called Wild Rose [Elementary] School. Well, when my folks and some of the black families that lived on the north found that out, we decided to challenge the school district.

HENDERSON:

And you lived on the north side?

KENNARD:

I lived on the north side. And I will say that some of the teachers—most all the teachers were white; in fact, I think all of them were white—were very supportive. Most of them were not very vocal, but there was one that was very vocal. Her name, believe it or not, was Mrs. Savage. She encouraged my family to fight, because she said, "Listen, your children are very smart, and there's no reason they shouldn't be going to a school that probably has better supplies and everything." It was very segregated not only racially but in supplies and books and things like that. Now, she couldn't come out against the board because she'd lose her job, but she was in the background, very supportive of the black parents. The thing that was so interesting about her, she was one of the strictest teachers I've ever had. They used to tease her, saying that "Mrs. Savage is savage." [laughter] But she was a real good teacher. She was demanding. So my mother and father, when I was seven years old, at the beginning of the school year, they were going to send me to Wild Rose. So every morning my mother would pack my lunch, and I'd walk—it was about a good three quarters of a mile, because it was the pretty northern

part of the city, but it was still in our district—to Wild Rose school. And every day they'd send me back. That went on for weeks. My mother would not send me to Huntingtion Drive; she just sent me to Wild Rose.

HENDERSON:

But, now, when they sent you back, did she send you to the other school? Or you just stayed at home?

KENNARD:

I stayed at home. She kept me out of school. I didn't go to school. [tape recorder off] By that time, my sisters were in junior high. There was only one junior high school and high school, so they naturally had to go to an integrated school.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

So every day they sent me back. Up and back. And I used to ask my mother later on in years, "Why did you subject me to this kind of stuff?" She said, "Because I wanted you to know the kind of world you were going to grow up in. You might as well learn now, because don't think that you're going to have it that easy." So finally we were going to file suit. My dad got a lawyer, and we were going to file suit. But I think they knew they were going to lose. And even though this was before 1954, it was a big battle. So they finally said, "Well, I'll tell you what. We're not going to let you go to Wild Rose," because Wild Rose was in a pretty upper- middle-class area, but they let me go to Orange Avenue near where this other black family lived. They were the only black family near there. But at least they'd concentrate all the blacks in one school. So I started going to Orange Avenue, which was quite a ways from home. I had a bike, and I rode my bike and stuff like that. But it was hell because I was the only black student in my class, except for the Simons family, and they were in this school but they were not in my class, in my room. I had a big battle. We played soccer a lot, so some of the racist kids, they would purposely kick you in the shins and all that kind of stuff. It was a battle. I mean, we just fought our way up.

HENDERSON:

I'm surprised you played soccer. I would have thought football would still have been the main thing, or baseball.

KENNARD:

Well, we did play baseball. We played football. I used to play soccer a lot. I used to like to play soccer. And I played some baseball. I also was very thin, so I wasn't too good at football. I'd get myself killed. We played sandlot football, but, I mean, I never went out for it. I was more interested in track. But I had a good family. My mother and father were very supportive. They were very supportive about education. And we were good students, so gradually—I think in most cases the teachers either treated you like everybody else or they were very nice to you. I can remember a few teachers that we knew were prejudiced. But as I got into high school, I remember several teachers that were extremely supportive. See, my sisters had gone to the high school, and they were all very good students. They all got into the California Scholarship Society. That was the big thing then.

HENDERSON:

So they were going to college after high school?

KENNARD:

Yeah, they all could have gone to college, you know. They had' very good grade point averages. So with three Kennards who were good citizens and worked hard and everything, by the time I got there they said, "Oh, here comes another Kennard. They're pretty nice." And my mother and father—always my mother, particularly—never missed an open house at the school. She was very careful about being there, talking to the teachers, seeing what's happening, because teachers are very responsive if they know the parents are concerned. But it's funny when you look back at high school and you remember the teachers. There were three teachers, four teachers, that I remember very well, that made a remarkable impression on me. One was an English teacher named Coblentz, Mrs. Coblentz. She just loved literature, she just loved it. And she encouraged me a lot to get up and speak before the students and recite poetry and everything. And I remember every year they'd have this Mark Twain "Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" kind of ceremony. It was a deal where you celebrated Mark Twain. I didn't want to do it because it

was a kind of a quasi- social kind of thing, and the black students kind of stuck together. She just insisted that I get up and do it, and she pushed me toward it. She was very encouraging, whereas a lot of other teachers may not, would just as soon exclude you. Then there was another teacher by the name of Edinger. I can't remember his first name, but he had sons who were also in school, and he was a biology teacher. He had a reputation of being one of the most liberal of the teachers. He was always very nice to the black students. He bent over backwards to help you and do things for you. Everybody liked his class, and it was a very interesting class. I had another teacher who was my art teacher. Her name was Edna Chess.

MADYUN:

Gee, I can't see how you can remember these names.

KENNARD:

See, that's why teachers are so important. The ones that are just neutral were either racist or they weren't nice, so you forget them. The other people, the people who were nice to you and supported you and had interest in you as a person, you don't forget. Edna Chess was my art teacher. She subscribed to a lot of books and magazines. So when she finished them she'd say, "Come up Saturday, Bob." Because I used to love to draw. She said, "You like art. Why don't you come to my house and I'll give you all my old magazines." So all the magazines, art magazines, I'd come up on a Saturday a couple of months after she had read them, and I'd pick them up.

MADYUN:

From her house?

KENNARD:

From her house. I'd go up on Saturday, ride my bike up there, get my books. She was very encouraging to me. Now, there was one teacher who was a science teacher. He was a racist son of a bitch. [laughter] He was. His name was Pfaff. You know, the science classes, they had raised levels. The seats weren't flat in the classroom. In the chemistry and science classes, they stepped up.

HENDERSON:

Oh, they had steps. Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

He would always put all the blacks up on the back row, because that was the way they did it in those days. Blacks sat up in what they called the "peanut gallery." When you had segregated theaters, you either sat on one side, or you had to sit up in the last rows of the balcony, or you didn't get in at all. Well, of course, gradually, the people complained, and the kids went home and told their parents, and they had to change the rules in his class. They made them sit in alphabetical order. That's the only way they changed it. But he was really a racist bastard.

HENDERSON:

Do you have any friends that you remember from that period that you kept up with or have kept up with you from those early days?

KENNARD:

I have some that kept up with me for a while, but there was one fellow, aside from the black students, which I kept up with. The black students I've always kept up with.

HENDERSON:

You mean even now there's still a few? I mean, through college they've kept up?

KENNARD:

Not so much now. Most of them have died. One of my closest friends just died a few years ago, Steve Powell. He moved up to Washington [State], and I just heard that he died.

MADYUN:

Well, Al Hudson.

KENNARD:

Well, Al Hudson, Elbert Hudson, although he was the son of Dr. H. Claude Hudson, he came to Monrovia when he was eight years old. That's how I met the Hudsons.

HENDERSON:

You mean they moved out there?

KENNARD:

No, Al had asthma, and they sent him out there because Monrovia was a very healthy climate, and they had a lot of sanatoriums out there. There was Pottinger's Sanatorium, a very famous tubercular sanatorium. The climate was really good. Not now it isn't, but it was very clear. It was high; it was up near the hills. So Elbert came out there, and they had him live with a family out there. That's how I met Elbert. And, of course, Elbert's still a very close friend of mine. I've known him since I was eight, and we've been close friends ever since. So a lot of the black kids, particularly more in my sister's grade. But I still know the Milton Simonses. I mean, I see them every once in a while, but I'm not real close to them. We kind of scattered around the wind.

HENDERSON:

Sure.

KENNARD:

The only person I kept up with for a long time was a very good friend, a white fellow named George Craig. George S. Craig.

MADYUN:

He was a neighbor?

KENNARD:

No, he wasn't a neighbor. He was in school. He was from an extremely poor white family, a very nice family, and a very smart family. And George suffered kind of the same discrimination I did, because he could never move with the middle-class white kids. They were so poor. And I remember he really got close to a young woman there whose father owned the hardware store in town. He was really crazy about this girl, but the family were very careful not to let George come around too much. George was very smart, and he went into teaching, and I think he was either superintendent—the last time I heard, he was superintendent [of schools] at Milpitas [California]. But I've lost track of him. I just don't know where he is. I'n not even sure he's alive. But he used

to come down every once in a while, and he'd come by and see Helen [King Kennard] and I when we were married. And we kept up. We exchanged cards for a long time, but that's a long time [ago]. A lot of people are gone now. They just dropped out.

HENDERSON:

Let me ask you one more quick question before I cut the tape off. Were you in the armed forces?

KENNARD:

Yes.

HENDERSON:

Okay. So you served in World War II?

KENNARD:

And the Korean [War].

HENDERSON:

[United States] Army?

KENNARD:

Army, yes.

HENDERSON:

Okay, okay. All right.

MADYUN:

There are a lot of stories in that, too.

KENNARD:

I can tell you! Just wait till I get to that! [laughter]

1.2. TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE JULY 11, 1990

HENDERSON:

I listened to the tape from last time. You talked about the elementary school years and some of the early high school years and high school teachers, and where I wanted to pick up was in high school.

KENNARD:

Oh, that's right. I remember. I was trying to think of where I stopped.

HENDERSON:

Where I want to pick up in high school is a takeoff of what you told *The Wave* newspaper. That was—and let me read from this. It says here: "Kennard, who was born in Watts, stumbled into architecture in high school. 'In the eleventh grade at Monrovia High I wanted to take an easy elective, and a friend whose father taught mechanical drafting suggested I take her dad's class' said Kennard. The teacher and Kennard's sister [Anna Kennard-Hunt] told him about the noted black Los Angeles architect Paul [R.] Williams." So I'm very curious about when you decided to go into architecture. You can tie that into your—

KENNARD:

Well, it was a result of that mechanical drafting class. And, as I said, I always liked to sketch and draw. I was drawing nuts and bolts in this mechanical drafting class, because that's all they taught. The teacher's name was Eller, Mr. Eller. He said, "How would you like to draw a house?" And he mentioned Paul R. Williams and asked if I knew about him, and I said no, I did not. And that's when my sister went and got the information about Paul Williams. Somehow she got a brochure of his and brought it home to me. And, of course, like most of the black architects, we were mesmerized by Paul Williams. I mean, we didn't know any white architects, and then to see a black architect do all this work.

HENDERSON:

And this was about what year? You were in high school when?

KENNARD:

It was my eleventh year. It was my junior year in high school.'

HENDERSON:

Okay. And that would have been about 1935 or '36?

KENNARD:

It was about '36. I was about sixteen. So I went and started looking up houses. Instead of drawing nuts and bolts, he gave me the opportunity to draw a house, which I thought was very nice. I mean, he was a white teacher, but knowing about Paul Williams I thought was interesting, in retrospect now, and equating me with that, as a person who liked to draw, that maybe that's something I'd like to go into. Because in those days a lot of teachers didn't encourage blacks to do anything but menial work, and I thought that was pretty interesting. He was a very nice person. He's one of the professors that I remember by name as being very encouraging to me.

HENDERSON:

I like hearing this story, because it's very different from what I read that Paul Williams went through himself. That is, his teacher in high school discouraged him from being an architect.

KENNARD:

Yes, they discouraged him. I read that, too, yes. You know, Monrovia was a small town, twelve thousand people, and I think there was probably a little more relaxed and comfortable nature among the, quote, "liberal" whites. I mean, they weren't as threatened by blacks. There weren't that many. [laughter] So, you know, we weren't going to take over the world. So I started drawing these houses, and I kind of liked it. I kind of enjoyed it. And that's when my sister brought me Paul Williams's brochure. I think I stayed in that class through my senior year. I kept taking drawing. And I began taking more art classes from the teacher I told you about, Miss Edna Chess, my art teacher. I took more art classes. And that's when I decided I'd study architecture. I went to Pasadena Junior College [now Pasadena City College]. I entered in '38. I graduated in the spring of 1938 from Monrovia High School. And I can't remember whether I waited till June or whether I went right to Pasadena Junior College. I can look and see. But I went to Pasadena Junior College. They were one of the few junior colleges that had a course in architecture.

HENDERSON:

Oh, they did?

KENNARD:

Yes.

HENDERSON:

So you went right to architecture directly?

KENNARD:

Yes, I went right in. They had a course. They were one of the few. And I stayed there until I got an associate arts degree. It was an interesting time in Pasadena, because there were very few blacks there. You know, one of the most famous blacks was Jackie Robinson.

HENDERSON:

Oh, yes.

KENNARD:

He was at school there, and I got to know Jackie pretty well.

HENDERSON:

This was before he became the ball player?

KENNARD:

Oh, yes, way before. He was a student at Pasadena Junior College. See, he's about my age, or would have been my age.

HENDERSON:

That's right. He grew up in L.A.f didn't he?

KENNARD:

Well, he grew up in Pasadena. He and his brother, Mac Robinson, and Jackie Robinson, the whole family grew up in Pasadena. It's a whole other story about Jackie, but it's a very interesting story about him. But I did pretty good at this school. The professor of architecture was a guy named William J. Stone, red, very fiery red hair, and a tough but very good teacher in architecture.

Very demanding. A lot of racism at Pasadena Junior College at the time. You know, Pasadena has always been a very racist town.

HENDERSON:

Really?

KENNARD:

Oh. [laughter] It was no different than Monrovia. They were all pretty racist. But generally, I will say this about Pasadena: I don't remember any overt racism by the professors. And Stone was tough, but I saw no difference in the way he treated me than anybody else.

HENDERSON:

Do you remember anything about the classes themselves? That is, were they promoting, say, a certain style? Or were they just emphasizing drafting?

KENNARD:

No, what they did—in those days there was a strong emphasis on drawing.

HENDERSON:

Right.

KENNARD:

We had to draw all the Greek columns.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

And we did it with Chinese ink, you know, where you ground the blocks and practically made the colors.

HENDERSON:

Goodness.

KENNARD:

You ground the blocks in water, and you took your brush and you did shades and shadows. They taught you shades and shadows, perspective drawing. A great part of it was competence in drawing: perspective, shades and shadows, the whole Greek columns—Doric, Ionic, and whatnot—history of architecture, and some study of contemporary architecture.

HENDERSON:

Oh, really? Modern or international modern?

KENNARD:

Yeah, some of the contemporary architects, the Bauhaus. The Bauhaus started in the thirties, so it had just happened.

HENDERSON:

Some other architects I've interviewed didn't study Bauhaus architecture at all at this time.

KENNARD:

Yes, well, I don't think it was a major course of study, but in the courses of history they gave us a lot of books that we read about [Walter] Gropius and [Ludwig] Mies van der Rohe.

HENDERSON:

Sounds pretty open.

KENNARD:

Yeah, it was pretty open. Stone was a good teacher. He was a very good teacher. Funny guy, a very humorous guy, and a pretty demanding guy. And the kids that went there, we used to call him—behind his back we nicknamed him W.J. His name was William J. Stone. We nicknamed him W.J. [laughter] The class was upstairs, our drafting room was upstairs, and it looked down on kind of a quad with the tennis courts. So we hung out the windows and we'd look at all the girls. [laughter] And sometimes we'd all be out there looking, and Stone wouldn't be in there. He'd come in, and when he came in, boy, we just [claps hands], we scrambled back to our desks. He didn't chastise us too much, but he made some crack about, "You're never going to make it if you keep looking at girls."

HENDERSON:

[laughter] Any fellow students from there that made it big in the L.A. scene?

KENNARD:

Yes. There was only one other—there may have been more than one black student, but there was only one other real good black student. It was Ben [Benjamin F.] McAdoo [Jr.]. Did you ever meet Ben McAdoo?

HENDERSON:

No. I've heard the name.

KENNARD:

Yeah, Ben McAdoo was my good friend. He lived in Pasadena, and he was studying architecture. And Ben was a Seventh Day Adventist, so he never went into the service. His family was very nice to me. I used to go over to their house a lot. After PJC, he moved up to the University of Washington in Seattle and he studied architecture. He had a practice there for years, and we kept in touch.

HENDERSON:

Is he in NOMA [National Organization of Minority Architects]?

KENNARD:

He was in NOMA. He died about—I think Ben's been dead seven or eight, nine years by now.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

Oh, a lot of the older guys in NOMA know him. He was a very, very talented architect. But among the other architects who are alive, the one that was probably more successful, who was ahead of me, was Howard Morgridge. Howard was a very talented artist. He was a wonderful delineator. Of course, all of the younger guys in the classes below him would try to copy his style. He was a very fine artist. He became a partner in later years. He went to ' SC

[University of Southern California], and he became a partner in Smith, Powell, and Morgridge, a major firm, a big firm that did a lot of school work. Howard still has a little one-man practice down in Tustin or Newport Beach or something. In fact, we did a job with Howard at Lynwood High School. We were a joint venture. He brought us in on the deal. I haven't talked to him in quite a while. Now, as a matter of fact, he's consulting architect at Cal [California] State [University] Northridge.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

The other one was Cal [Calvin C.] Straub. Do you know him? Do you know Cal Straub?

HENDERSON:

The name Straub is familiar.

KENNARD:

He graduated, went to 'SC, and was a professor in design at USC for years. Then he went to Arizona [State University]. I think he's retired.

HENDERSON:

Yeah, I've heard that name, Straub.

KENNARD:

But he was at Pasadena. Kemper Nomland—Oh, a whole bunch of architects. But Morgridge and Straub were probably the most well known in the general L.A. area.

HENDERSON:

Was Pasadena Junior College feeding into USC?

KENNARD:

Yes, they fed into USC. See, USC recognized Pasadena City College's associate art degree. So if you had an A.A. degree from Pasadena, you could start as a

third-year student at USC. They would accept you. I could not go to USC because I couldn't afford to go to USC, even though it was only $14 a unit.

HENDERSON:

Fourteen dollars? Oh, goodness.

KENNARD:

In 1940, it was less than that, because it was $14 when I finally went.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

It was probably $10. But, you know, that was a lot of money.

HENDERSON:

[laughter] Okay.

KENNARD:

So I said, well, the only way I'm going to go is I'm going to have to stay out and get a job and work and save my money. So when I got out of school, I tried to get a job. I had won some awards at PJC in competitions. In fact, there was one competition I won not only first prize, but I won third prize. [laughter] Ben McAdoo won second prize.

HENDERSON:

Goodness!

KENNARD:

Yeah. It was for a house. And I had a good grade point average. So I wrote thirteen letters to various small architects in L.A. and Pasadena to try and get a job. I got an answer from every single one of them, and seven invited me to come in. I sent some copies of my articles and stuff, and seven of them invited me to come in to be interviewed. And not one hired me. They didn't know I was black.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

Naturally, I didn't broadcast it. I just walked in there—some of them didn't even invite me in. Some of them just said, "Oh, we don't hire colored people." You know, that's what they called you, "colored." They probably said "nigger." [laughter] But it made me very discouraged, because I said, "I can't even get a junior position, office boy, anything." And I went to all these seven. Some of them were very encouraging in the letter. When I walked in, they just dismissed you offhand. It was just awful. So I just got menial jobs for a while. That was when I told my mother [Marie Bryan Kennard], I said, "Listen, I see no reason to go through the university." But finally, after about six to eight months, maybe about a year, of not getting into any office, I just said, "Well, I'll go and just knock on the door and see." And I went to this building that is still standing at Arroyo Parkway and California [Street], It was a Spanish building right on California Street in Pasadena where somebody told me there were a lot of architects. There were about six or seven architects in that building. In those days, most offices were one- or two-man offices; they didn't have a lot. And there was an interior designer in there. So I said, "Well, I'll just go there. I'll stop by and I'll just knock on doors." So I knocked on them. A couple of them said they didn't have anything. But I finally went and knocked on this door, and this architect, a very tall, very handsome guy, [H.] Curtis Chambers, answered.

HENDERSON:

Curtis Chambers.

KENNARD:

Curtis Chambers. He was in his shirtsleeves, I never will forget, working on the board. I think he didn't have anybody working for him at the time. He did a lot of houses and apartment houses. So I said, "Do you think you have anything for me, any work or anything?" So I showed him some of my work. And I never will forget—he was a very quiet kind of guy. He looked a lot like Gary Cooper and he acted like Cooper. And I never will forget, he rubbed his arm back and—you know, it's funny how you remember these things. He rubbed his arm back and forth, and he looked at me, and he said, "I might be able to have

something for you." And, you know, my whole world was opening up. He said, "How about—?" He said, "What kind of salary?" I said, "I don't know. Whatever you think is right." So he said, "How about $20 a week?" Fifty cents an hour? Shoot! I got excited. Man, I thought I was rich. [laughter] Twenty dollars a week, fifty cents an hour, when I had been doing menial work at about twenty and twenty-five cents an hour, you know, raking leaves and stuff. So I started working for Curtis Chambers. I drove from Monrovia every day in my little old 1928 Pontiac. This was in 1940. And I learned a great deal from him.

HENDERSON:

And it was just you and him?

KENNARD:

Just me and him most of the time. Most of the time it was myself. Once in a while he'd bring another person in. There was an old—not an old man, but he was a very senior guy that came in once in a while and worked for him. But it was a very relaxed office. I mean, it was just he and I, and we'd talk, and I'd draw. And I'd do everything. I'd run errands, everything. But the thing, also, that was nice about him, sometimes he'd go out on a job and say, "Hey, come on, Bob. You want to go along with me and we'll look around and stuff?" Well, sometimes he didn't have as much work for me, so there was another architect, Theo Pletsch, who did a lot of homes, too, out in Santa Anita Oaks. That was a very nice residential area. You've got to remember, you could build a nice house for $3.50 a square foot.

HENDERSON:

That's low. What's the price right now? It's about $70, $80, $100 a square foot?

KENNARD:

I would say a comparable house to the $3.50 would have to be $60, $70 a foot. If the client had $5 a foot, you had a beautiful house. Well, what happened, Chambers, when he was slow, would ask Theo Pletsch if he wanted to use me. So it got so that I was flitting back and forth between Curtis Chambers's and Theo Pletsch's offices. And Theo Pletsch was completely

different than Curtis Chambers. He was a very fast-talking guy, very committed to architecture, loved architecture, and did a lot of very nice homes in the Oaks. I worked on houses there that had all oak paneling and walnut paneling. And today those houses in San Marino—this was all in San Marino and Santa Anita Oaks—I'll bet you those houses are worth $600,000 or $700,000, maybe a million bucks. I mean, they were beautiful homes. Pletsch did period houses a lot, sort of English Tudor and stuff, kind of like Paul Williams did.

HENDERSON:

And Chambers wasn't doing that?

KENNARD:

No. Chambers did more California Ranch-type houses. They were kind of nice houses, though. They were nice houses. So I worked there until the war broke out. But after Pearl Harbor, the architects were out. There was just no work. I don't know what happened, whether Pletsch went in the service, but Chambers, I think, went into the service, and he worked in the [Army] Corps [of Engineers] or something. I'm pretty sure he went into the service. But they closed their offices. If Pletsch didn't close his offices, he didn't have any work. Nobody was building houses. So I was out of a job. I couldn't afford to go to school. I was going to probably be picked up in the draft any day. So I told my mother, "Well, why don't I get a job in the post office?" My dad [James L. Kennard], having been through the Depression, felt that the security of a government job was the best way to go. My mother was very much against me just settling for the post office, but I did go into the post office for a while, and I was a substitute carrier. [laughter] And I never will forget, it cost me $30 to buy my uniform.

HENDERSON:

Goodness. They made you buy your uniform?

KENNARD:

Yeah, I had to buy a uniform. And I got in there, and I worked down here at terminal annex.

HENDERSON:

Downtown?

KENNARD:

Yes, downtown. And I got this job at terminal annex. But the post office was so prejudiced that, as a substitute carrier, if they needed somebody, they very seldom picked a black. I can't remember who the postmaster general was, but it was changed a lot when another one came in. So I didn't get much work, but when I did work and help out—the guy that taught me the route, you wouldn't believe it! I mean, it's just the most fortunate thing. Here was my mother pushing me not to get stuck in the post office, and they put me with, of all persons, Clyde Grimes [Jr.j's father [Clyde Grimes Sr.], who was a postman. You know who Clyde Grimes is?

HENDERSON:

No. Who is Clyde Grimes?

KENNARD:

All the black architects knew Clyde Grimes here in L.A.

HENDERSON:

Wait. That Clyde Grimes?

KENNARD:

That Clyde Grimes.

HENDERSON:

But Clyde Grimes's father.

KENNARD:

His father. Clyde Grimes's father was in the post office. Clyde and Leonard Grimes's father was at the post office, and he had the downtown route, and they assigned me to him to learn his route so when he took off I could take the route. As you know, Leonard and Clyde—

HENDERSON:

I know Leonard more than Clyde Grimes.

KENNARD:

You know Leonard? Both of them are very well educated, and that's due to their father, who pushed them to education. And all the time I was in there, he just kept telling me, "I don't care," he said, "don't get stuck in the post office. It was fine for me in my era. You young people could do better. Your mother's right. Once you get stuck in here you'll never get out." I told Clyde this a lot of times—my mother on one side and Clyde's father on the other side telling me not to stay in the post office. Well, I didn't have any job, so I still stayed as a substitute, but finally the die was cast. I got called into the service, and, of course, I went into the army. And I don't know whether you want to go through the whole army thing.

HENDERSON:

Yes, I kind of do, because a lot of my interviewees always discuss their army experiences, and it's—

KENNARD:

Anyway, that was the end of the architecture for a while and Curtis Chambers, who comes back into the picture later.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

And Pletsch comes back. But it shows you what adults, the influence they have as role models to young people. Because if Clyde's father said to me, "Oh, you stay in the post office. It's a wonderful thing. It's very secure," you know, those words have a lot of impression on you. And I think that it's a tribute to Clyde's mother and father that Clyde became an architect and went to [University of California] Berkeley. Leonard moved very high up in government, you know. I've always respected the family for that just for kind of giving me another push. But anyway, I went into the service. I got called i and—

HENDERSON:

And where did you report?

KENNARD:

It was all segregated. I reported to Fort MacArthur right here just as a staging area. I went to Fort MacArthur, but my first assignment was in Fort Knox, Kentucky. HENDERSON; Excuse me one second. I don't know exactly where Fort MacArthur is. Is that the one in Palos Verdes

KENNARD:

Fort MacArthur is right down here at San Pedro.

HENDERSON:

San Pedro where? Near that lighthouse?

KENNARD:

Yes, right. San Pedro, California.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay. I think I know which one. It's still there.

KENNARD:

Yeah, the barracks are still there.

HENDERSON:

Okay. So you had been sent to Fort Knox?

KENNARD:

Yeah. And it's interesting, because Fort MacArthur is a part of my architectural experience much later, you know. You never know how things go back. But it's funny how things come around. Like most blacks, we were put in supply-type divisions, so I was put in the 3896 Quartermaster Corps, which was a supply company. It was a quartermaster supply in which we handled petroleum supply that gassed up all the big tanks. So we handled all the gasoline supplies for the big armored tanks—all completely black unit with all white officers. I went to Fort Knox, Kentucky. I went on September 2, 1942. It was a new company of a cadre of about maybe sixteen or eighteen noncommissioned officers. We were getting mobilized for the war, so there wasn't an entire company. But we all came in, a hundred or so came in, and then there were

noncommissioned officers in place—all black, but all white officers. I could type. I was probably one of the few people who could use a typewriter. So as soon as they found that out—they asked who could type, and I said I could type—- they put me in the office to help as a company clerk. Everything was mobilizing. In two weeks I was promoted to corporal. [laughter] In about a month I was a sergeant. They just moved you up fast. The reason why that happened is the commanding officer was a guy not much older than I was. I was one of the youngest in the service. When I went in, I was twenty-one. I was going to be twenty-two that month. I was twenty-one years old, and everybody else—I think there was only maybe one or two younger than I. Everybody else was ages from that age all the way up to thirty-eight. They took them up to thirty-eight. The commanding officer's name was William Iliffe.

HENDERSON:

That's a strange name.

KENNARD:

He was the son of, I believe, a Methodist minister in the Midwest. A very nice person, very bright, very intelligent, and had some college like I did. There were only about three of us that really had a college background. There was a guy who had studied architecture at the University of Washington, and there was a guy from Atlanta who had studied accounting, a couple of years of accounting—Jerry [Jerome P.] Jones—and myself. So he needed somebody that could write and do the paperwork stuff. I got in and I got close to him. I went into a lot of training, but I always did the company office work. So I moved up really fast, because one of the things was that he could relate to me a lot. He could kind of speak on my level. A lot of the guys didn't have much education. Most of them were from the South, although they came from California, but they hadn't been out of the South very long. Some of the blacks were even illiterate. One guy I finally taught how to write a little bit. So the cadre was not very heavy, and people who could kind of move with this guy—so he finally made me a sergeant, and I was a squad leader. [laughter] But in a training mission, in a night training mission, I got injured in an accident. It was a night training mission, and the second lieutenant—not Iliffe, the second lieutenant—was driving the car. I was in the front, there were a couple of guys

in the back, and we were going out on a night training mission in the dark, going over rough terrain. Well, this little old second lieutenant didn't know anything. He hit a ditch, and instead of just driving into the ditch, which he should have done, he made the turn left. Of course, the car turned over and I was pinned over. And Sergeant Butler—he was a motor sergeant who was a very bright guy—he hurriedly stopped all the trucks behind us. Otherwise I'd have been killed, because we'd have been just crushed. But he had the presence of mind to go back and wave a white handkerchief. Nobody could see anything; it was pitch dark. But what that did, that put me in the hospital, even though all I did was break my leg and dislocate my collarbone. If I was home, I could have just gone on home, but nobody can take care of you there, so you're in the hospital, which was a very fortunate thing for me, because it was cold. Colder than hell. In the meantime, we had moved from Fort Knox to Fort Riley. So this happened in Fort Riley.

HENDERSON:

Fort Riley, Kansas.

KENNARD:

Yeah, next to Junction City. We used to go to Junction City a lot and party. And that meant I never went through basic training, because all the basic training was going on while I was in the hospital.

HENDERSON:

[laughter] Basic training is stupid, anyway.

KENNARD:

That's right. So we had all these guys who were sergeants who had been in the company for quite a while. While I was in the hospital they made me a first sergeant. Remember, I had only been in three months. Iliffe came to me and he said, "I want to promote you to first sergeant." I said, "I know nothing about it. I haven't gone through basic training. I don't know anything." You know, I was a babe in the woods. I didn't know anything. All these guys were older than me. And he said, "Well, I know I can trust you, and I know you understand the regulations, and you'll just learn it." So when I got out of the hospital, here I'm the first sergeant. I'm the ranking noncommissioned officer

three months in the army! Well, that caused a lot of stir for the guys who had been noncommissioned officers before. There were about thirteen of them that just did not like me at all. And I'm a young kid. They gave me hell. They gave me a lot of it. There were some older guys in there, and there was one guy, his name—the reason why I know all these names is because every day I took the roll call, so those names are indelibly meshed in my memory. His name was Aldridge Caver, and he was from the Oakland Bay area. And Aldridge was about—to me he was an old man; he was about thirty-seven. And he taught me something I never forgot. He said, "These guys are resentful that you're in this league because you haven't been in the service very long." He said, "I can understand it." He said, "But I'm going to show you, I'm going to tell you, how to handle it. I'm going to take you under my wing, and I'm going to show you how to handle it." Now, Aldridge had had a club, a nightclub, up in Oakland. He knew the streets. He knew these kinds of guys. You know, I had lived a kind of sheltered life. [laughter] I didn't know all the tough stuff. And he told me something. He said, "Listen, there are about thirteen of them. Some of them you're going to win over to your side, and the ones you don't win over you're going to get rid of. And the way you get rid of them is—." The army was just mobilizing up for this big war effort, and they'd want key people to start another company. So they'd ask us, "Do you have any sergeants or anything that you want to send out?" So he said, "When they ask for that, those guys that you cannot control—."

HENDERSON:

Send them out.

KENNARD:

"—you tell Iliffe." And Iliffe, who was a very sheltered white boy from the Midwest, was intimidated by some of these rough cats, anyway, so he didn't have a problem. So Iliffe and I—you know, after Caver told me what to do, I'd say, "Get rid of this guy, get rid of this guy" or "We keep this baby," and I'd promote other people. I mean, I was really setting the whole company up, because I said, "Hell, when I go overseas, I've got to have some people behind me." So some of them I won over and some of them we got rid of, and we went on. It was very interesting.

HENDERSON:

Oh, oh. Wait, wait. When you were about to go overseas, what city did you leave from?

KENNARD:

We stayed in Fort Riley. I have the dates of all of this if you need it.

HENDERSON:

That's not crucial, the particular date.

KENNARD:

No, it's not. Yeah. We went overseas in '43. First we were in Fort Riley, and it wasn't bad. It was kind of nice, because we used to go to Lawrence, Kansas, a lot on the weekend, where the University of Kansas is, and there are always a lot of young ladies there, and very pretty young women. So we had a good time. And there were some guys I ran with, the sergeants and everything, we had a good time. We got into it. Then we went on maneuvers, and we went to the Louisiana and Texas area. You know. Camp Polk, Louisiana, and around there. That was tough. Man, it was terrible down there. And my father told me, "You go South," he said, "you'll never live, because," he said, "those people are not going to take your lip." And I had some very serious problems in the South. I've had two people, whites, draw guns on me.

HENDERSON:

While you were in the army in the South?

KENNARD:

In the army in the South.

HENDERSON:

Goodne s s.

KENNARD:

If you want an anecdote—

HENDERSON:

Hold on just one moment.

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HENDERSON:

Okay, you were about to say this anecdote.

KENNARD:

When we were in the South, we were on maneuvers. See, most of the people in our company—98 percent of them—were originally from the South, but they had left the South and they'd come to Washington, Oregon, and California. So when they were ready to go back to the South, they were prepared. I had no idea. One time we were out on a maneuver. One of our officers was named Lieutenant Berkowitz. He was a little pudgy—and we stopped—I don't know if you know the South very well.

HENDERSON:

I grew up in Texas.

KENNARD:

Oh, you did? Okay. Well, this was a little country road, and all of a sudden we're going along and we stop at this little post office and store.

HENDERSON:

Everything all in one little shack.

KENNARD:

All in one little shack, yeah. So we stopped. And the guys wanted to buy cigarettes and they wanted to buy gum and everything. So we were all milling around this place, and I and another guy went over to take a drink out of the fountain. You know, I'm forgetting that—it was prejudiced in Monrovia, but this is different. This big honky white cat comes out, and he said, "Nigger, you can't drink at that fountain."

HENDERSON:

[laughter] Oh, my goodness.

KENNARD:

So I was pissed. So I said, "What the fuck are you talking about?" You know. So he comes out, and when he steps back he pulls out a revolver. And most of my guys were over here; I was there. He comes out, he says, "All you niggers get out of here." He had this gun. Well, he was not quite facing me, and there was a gum machine, and I started to pick it up and hurl it at the son of a bitch, because he couldn't have seen it. But there was one guy with me, who stopped me, because if I'd have done that, he could have shot one of our guys. So we went out. We all walked out. The guys went back. Wes, you wouldn't believe the number of our guys that had guns—I mean their own revolvers.

HENDERSON:

Yes, I believe it.

KENNARD:

They had them. I didn't, though. I didn't even realize it. One guy had two. He said, "Sarge, here. You have one." We didn't have ammunition, see. We had rifles, but they were just fake, nothing in them. Well, Berkowitz wasn't around, so we said, "We're going to scare this son of a bitch." So we just surrounded the place. And, boy, the shades came down, and, you know, he was scared because all these black cats out there—but we weren't going to do anything but scare him. [laughter] And when Berkowitz heard about it, he was so nervous. He said, "Oh, God." Because he thought he'd be demoted for letting us do that. We said, "No, we were just scaring the guy." But he was scared to death, too, because he was from New York somewhere, and he had never handled black folks from the South before. And then I have some other anecdotes later in the service that are very interesting about the South. But that was about it. Then we went to Camp Kilmer to go overseas.

HENDERSON:

Camp Kilmer. Now, where is that?

KENNARD:

That's in New Jersey.

HENDERSON:

So you left from New York? The port of New York?

KENNARD:

Yes. There's another thing I need to tell you about, and then we'll cover it. When we were on maneuvers there was not much to do. You know, at night it was dark, and you're just by the lantern and everything. So the guys would play cards a lot, play poker. There was a guy named Babyface Harris.

HENDERSON:

[laughter] These names.

KENNARD:

You know, every black had a nickname, "Highbutt" or whatever. [laughter] And Babyface was a guy also thirty-six, thirty-seven years old. I think they looked on me as their kind of son. They wanted to kind of protect me. You know, I'm real young, I'm trying to run this tough company, and they just kind of looked after me. So I used to get in the poker games. I couldn't play poker. I was losing all the time. So Babyface finally came to me. He said, "Sarge," he said, "let me tell you something. Don't get in the poker game, because you can't win." And he used to play what they call Three Card Molly. You know it?

HENDERSON:

I don't know that.

KENNARD:

You know the shell game?

HENDERSON:

Yes.

KENNARD:

Okay. Well, it's just like the shell game, but it's—it's a sleight-of-hand trick. You put three cards out.

HENDERSON:

Right.

KENNARD:

And two of them are red, and one of them is black.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

And you shuffle, and you bet. "I bet you five dollars you can't tell me which is black, Sarge. Pick the cards." So you're looking at me real fast—right?—and you bet me five dollars again. So you said it's this one. Okay, if it's not black, you lost your five bucks. They either do it with a shell game like a half of a walnut and there's a little peanut under it, or they do it with cards. Babyface did it with cards. What he did, he'd get you sucked into it, and then eventually there wouldn't be a black card there. [laughter] So he said, "Sarge, don't get in a poker game with me." He cheated at poker. He said, "I've spent more time learning card games and crooked cards than most people spend getting a law degree."

HENDERSON:

Goodness.

KENNARD:

He said, "You can't beat me." So on maneuvers, he said, "Do me a favor, Sarge." He said, "Would you position me out—" He wanted to go out where we gassed up these big tanks, because while the soldiers came in to gas up their tanks, while they were waiting he'd get them in a game, all these white boys.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay. And take their money. [laughter]

KENNARD:

Also, we had an officer named Armstrong, Lieutenant Armstrong, and Armstrong thought he could beat him, too, and he was just cleaning out Armstrong something awful. So he took me aside. He said, "Now, look. Don't get in my game, because you're not going to win." He said, "But I'll tell you what I'll do." He said, "Would you—" As he got the money, he would get a postal money order to himself for $300, because he didn't want anybody to

steal the money from him. So he would go to the post office, and he'd get himself a postal money order. I'll tell you, for the whole time of maneuvers, there wasn't a week that he didn't give me $400 or $500, and he said, "You put it in the safe for me. Will you keep it?" I mean, he was making a couple of grand a month.

HENDERSON:

Goodness.

KENNARD:

Yeah. So in order for him to have me keep his money for him in the company safe—he didn't want me to be taken, too, see. So he said, "Don't get in the game." So I stopped playing the game. If I played, I just did it for fun. Babyface had a record. He had some criminal record. The word was out that he had gotten in a fight on Central Avenue here somewhere and killed a guy or something. He was a tough cat. They called him Babyface because he had a real kind of cute face, and he was kind of a pudgy cat, but he was a tough son of a bitch. One time—there was a guy named Parnell in the company—I think his name was Sam Parnell—and they got in an altercation. I think Sam had done something to Babyface, and Babyface was going to get him. And I remember one night—you know, you go into town and you sit on the truck. Babyface had a—we had these gasoline cans, you know, with the nozzles. You know how the nozzle—?

HENDERSON:

It has a sort of a little flexible curve to it.

KENNARD:

Curve. And where you screw it down, he picked up the spout end, and he sat on the edge. It was dark. So Parnell's climbing up into the truck—and Parnell had stolen from him or cheated him or something—and as Parnell jumped in that truck, he just cracked poor Parnell's head. It didn't kill him; it just cut him all up. Everybody was afraid of Babyface, so nobody would ever say who did it, you know. I mean, somebody just hit him in the dark. [laughter] So Babyface—I don't know whether I should put this in oral history, because I hope the guy's not living now, because he was really tough. There was a thing called Section

Eight in the army, and that's habits and traits of character unbecoming to the service. So he came to me one day, and he said, "Sarge, I'm not going overseas." We were getting ready to go overseas. He said, "I'm not going to fight any white man's war, so I'm not going to go." And he said, "But I want to tell you, you've been real good to me, really nice," and he said, "but I'm going to raise hell, and you're going to see I'm going to get out." So I didn't know how he was going to do it. So he started—so the white officers—by that time we had another commanding officer [Captain Dodd]. What was his first name? I don't remember. But he was a guy that had been on Wall Street and kind of a high-executive type of guy but was very nervous around black folks. Kind of a wimpish kind of guy. A big guy, but he was not comfortable. He had this black company, and he wasn't sure how to handle it. So we got orders to go. So Babyface started putting out the word. He said, "Shoot, they give me live ammunition, they'd better never get in front of me." He said, "They'd better stay in back of me all the time, because I'd just as soon shoot one of those cats as shoot a German." He made it a point that the commanding officer would hear that. So one time we were talking about who was going overseas and who was not. So the commanding officer told me—he was a captain—he said, "Bob, what do you think about Babyface?" He said, "You know, this guy's kind of crazy." He said, "You think we ought to Section Eight him?" And I said, "Well, you might have to do that." And sure enough, old Babyface got pushed out of the service on a Section Eight. And I saw him one other time in my life. Years later—this is jumping ahead—I was standing on the corner of Cimarron [Street] and Jefferson [Boulevard] with my books getting ready to take a bus to 'SC. I was staying with my sister [Anna Kennard-Hunt] there. I stayed overnight with her a lot. I had my books. I was going to 'SC, and up rides this big black Cadillac. [laughter] There was a driver and Babyface and this gorgeous woman, black woman, in there. And I heard somebody say, "Sarge!" And I looked over, and there was Babyface. Now, this was way after the war. You know, he was into everything. He said, "Come on, Sarge, come on over," and he said, "I want to talk to you." And we went over. They had a house near there, and it was very beautiful. He said, "Look, you're going to school?" He said, "You need some money?" He said, "If you need some help getting through school, you call on me anytime."

HENDERSON:

Really?

KENNARD:

Yeah. He said, "Anytime you want, you call on me. You need money to get books or anything, you call on me." And I said, "Babyface, that's really nice of you, but, you know—." I mean, he was in the rackets. I mean—

HENDERSON:

Something illegal.

KENNARD:

Oh, yeah. Yeah, he was living so high. And I never saw him again. I don't know whether he got killed or not, but he never went overseas. [laughter]

HENDERSON:

Well, before we end, let me ask you this question. As you were leaving from Camp Kilmer, going overseas, was there anything unusual about the leaving? People just boarded ships? I guess it was ships. You were heading to Europe. No panic? No—?

KENNARD:

No. You know, we were going to go on the *Queen Mary*.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

Yes, we went over on the *Queen Mary*. They went over in five and a half days. It was packed and jammed. In fact, I was taking some people down to the *Queen Mary* the other day. Have you ever been on the *Queen Mary*?

HENDERSON:

No, I've never been.

KENNARD:

Well, it shows how the military was packed in there. I think there were bunks five high. The only thing—they told us three days before we went. And Jerry

[Jerome P.] Jones, the guy from Atlanta whom I started running around with—he and I kind of got to be buddies—we went into New York every night.

HENDERSON:

[laughter] Okay.

KENNARD:

And we stayed there until the last train left at five o'clock in the morning, just to get time—we stayed up all night. We stayed up all night, because there wasn't much to do during the day. You could almost sleep during the day. You were just waiting around. And we said, "We may as well enjoy ourselves." So we went to the Stage Door Canteen, and we just would cat around New York, because we didn't know whether we were going to be alive. There's a devil-may-care attitude, because you're young and you just party all the time, drink a lot and just party. And we'd get back on the train in the morning just in time for reveille. [laughter] I was in Atlanta the other day, not too long ago, and I looked in the book—and it was late at night—and I saw Jerome P. Jones there. I wanted to call him up, but I had to leave early the next morning.

HENDERSON:

Very interesting. Okay. I've got one other question. Back in high school* when you had heard of Paul Williams, did you ever meet him at that time?

KENNARD:

I didn't meet him until Elbert Hudson—you know, Karen [HudsonJ's father—Karen's father and I are very close friends. We've known each other since we were eight years old.

HENDERSON:

Right.

KENNARD:

When he started dating Marilyn [Williams] Hudson, you know, Karen's mother, that's when I met Paul. I went to see him once to get a job. Theo Pletsch used to work for him.

HENDERSON:

Oh.

KENNARD:

See, Theo Pletsch had worked for him. He said, "Why don't you, when you come out, go see Paul Williams." That was when I came out of the service. And I went to see Paul Williams, but he didn't have anything for me.

HENDERSON:

Okay. But you didn't see Paul Williams before you went into the service?

KENNARD:

No. No, I didn't. No, I didn't see him until later.

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HENDERSON:

You were saying you were glad you got in the service.

KENNARD:

Yeah, I was. In retrospect, I was glad I was in the service, because when you're raised in a small town by a very close family unit, you are not able to see what's happening in the world about you and about how other people live. And by being in the service, the economic level, the social level, the political level, everybody was together in one place. So you were thrown together with them in a very close living relationship. The thing I learned the most was that education cannot be equated with character. I think a lot of us, when we're young, we look to educated people, that they have a lot of integrity, they have a lot of character. I found in the service that some people who had nothing in their life—I mean, many of these young people had come from sharecropper families. We had one fellow, Saul Heard. I never will forget his name, because he was illiterate. I was determined to teach Saul how to write his name so that he could sign his check, and I was finally able to teach him. I wanted to teach him how to read and write, but he was in his early thirties, and the motivation was gone. But a nicer person you would never meet. He had just such great moral character. [tape recorder off] But that was one of the big values of being in the service. I mean, you get to know people on a very personal basis,

stripped of money, class, intelligence, everything. I mean, you just get to know them basically.

HENDERSON:

Everyone's in a uniform, and that's it.

KENNARD:

Everyone's in uniform. It's the great leveler, especially in a service where the draft is—you know, about ten million men were under arms, so they had everybody there: the rich, the poor, and everything.

HENDERSON:

Okay. In terms of sequence, we had stopped just before you were going overseas. That is, you were in New York, and you were with Jerome—

KENNARD:

Jerome [P.] Jones.

HENDERSON:

—Jones. I think you had gone into New York several nights and—

KENNARD:

Yeah, well, we were at Camp Kilmer, which was the staging area for overseas travel, one of the staging areas, and Jerry Jones and I were kind of buddies. He was from Atlanta, Georgia. He was an accounting major. So we'd leave at six o'clock every evening, catch the train, go into New York, spend all night long there, getting back just in time for reveille. We didn't have much to do during the day, so you could nap and sleep around, because you were just waiting to be shipped out. And one of our first stops in the early evening after we had dinner, we'd go to the Stage Door Canteen, where all the girls were. That was kind of a hangout for the GI's.

HENDERSON:

And that was in Manhattan?

KENNARD:

Yeah, that was right in there. I'm pretty sure it was in Manhattan. You know, New York is—. [laughter] For an old country boy, I couldn't tell Manhattan from any other—. [laughter] But we had a good time. And we figured you're going overseas, you don't know what's going to happen, you might as well enjoy yourself. So we shipped out on the Queen Mary. It was the fastest route over there, five and a half days. We landed in Glasgow, Scotland, and then took a train to the southern part of England. I should really bring a list of the places I was, because I have it all on a list. Having been the company clerk and first sergeant, I know where I was at each time, and I kept the dates I was there and how long I was there.

HENDERSON:

Golly, that's interesting that you would keep all of that.

KENNARD:

Well, see, I kept the records of the company, so it was very easy for me just to write it down and keep a copy.

HENDERSON:

Now, you were in the Quartermaster Corps?

KENNARD:

I was in the Quartermaster Corps. We were in a petroleum supply depot. We handled all the fuel for the tanks and whatnot. The headquarters company finally moved from Devonshire to a town called Ampfield. Ampfield was the village, Romsey was the incorporated city, and Hampshire was kind of like the county. You know, in England.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

So it was Ampfield, Romsey, Hampshire. And at that time we had 120 men and 3 officers.And all the headquarters company, for which I was first sergeant, stayed in Ampfield, Romsey, and we were billeted in an old manor house there. It was very nice. And then our troops were sent out through England.

We had contingents of groups of people that were sent out to man various petroleum depots throughout England.

HENDERSON:

Oh, oh, okay.

KENNARD:

See, we were in maneuvers most of the time getting ready for the invasion of France.

HENDERSON:

Oh, so this was pre D day [June 6, 1944].

KENNARD:

Oh, this is pre D day. This was pre D day. And that was quite nice duty for me. We stayed there for the better part of eighteen months. As a first sergeant, I had my own room, I had a radio, I had music. I read a great deal, because there was nothing to do. So I probably read more books in that period of my life than ever.

HENDERSON:

Where were you getting the books from? You would just buy them?

KENNARD:

Well, my family sent me books, and I belonged to the Book of the Month Club and other book clubs and stuff like that.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

I still have a lot of the books. And a very interesting thing happened to me in Ampfield. It was a very small little village with very thatched houses and everything. And I had a lot of time on my hands because most of my troops were gone, so I sketched a lot. I had had two years of architecture, so I did a lot of sketches, some of which I still have. I'd go out in the village and sketch and stuff like that in the afternoon. It's very pretty country. England is

beautiful country. I hadn't been there very long— In the evening, the only thing to do was to go to the pub, the local pub. And at the pub, which mostly men frequented—although some women went to the pub—they played darts, and you talked, and you drank ale or stout.

HENDERSON:

This is with the local English people?

KENNARD:

With the local English people and with our own soldiers, too. And one day I was talking with an architect in my company named Ed Young. He was from Seattle. A black architect. Of course, all of our troops were black. And he was pretty well read, too. So we got to talking, and I mentioned that I had just finished reading Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason*. There was an Englishman just sitting a couple of seats from me, a very distinguished-looking guy, and he broke into the conversation. He said, "I'm an heir of Thomas Paine"—you know, I don't know how long before that. Way back. I never questioned the validity of it at all. But I got to talking to him. His name was Ted Simpson, and I got to know him very well. And through him I got to know a lot about the village. He invited me into his home. His wife's name was Till [Simpson]. So I would call them Ted and Till. He was a gardener by trade. But when I went to his house, he had just an incredible amount of books. They didn't have any children. I was about twenty-one, twenty-two, maybe. He had to be in his mid-forties. And we just hit it off. I spent a lot of time in their home. I'd have tea with them, tea at night, and we'd talk. I would go over to his house in the evening. Sometimes I could just sit in his library and read his books. He was very well read. The thing that was such a tragedy was here was this man that was extremely well read whose father and grandfather were gardeners, and I always was just shocked at the fact that here's this guy that's so well read who was still a gardener in three generations, which is symptomatic of the English class system. And I talked about it to him a lot. I said, "If you'd have been in the U.S., there's no telling where you'd have gone because of your education, just your ability to read so well and to understand the literature so well," because he was an extremely bright guy. I learned a lot from him. And we got to be very close friends. Naturally, he had relatives in the village, so I always

participated in the social life of the village. I went to the weddings, I went to the funerals. So it was kind of like being home.

HENDERSON:

Interesting. There was no friction racial-wise?

KENNARD:

No. He was a very decent man.

HENDERSON:

I mean, say, with the other people in the village.

KENNARD:

No. You know, way back in the villages I found nothing. I'm sure that they may have—but they hadn't been in contact with blacks. I was one of the few—there were only about eighteen of us at the headquarters, so there weren't many blacks. And a lot of the guys, they'd go other places. They'd go into the bigger cities like Romsey and whatnot. So I stayed around the village. I went into the other cities too sometimes, but it was nice for me to get to know the English countryside and the people. And when I came back to the U.S., I corresponded with him until he died. He sent me books, I sent him stuff. First Till died, and then he died later. I always hoped that I would have enough money to have him visit the U.S., but I was struggling through school when I got back, too. Finally, the letters just stopped and I lost track of him. I don't know what happened to him. After that, for about the last two months, we went to Chandler's Ford, which is just north of Southhampton. That was a staging area for the invasion. That was when [Dwight D.] Eisenhower was making the various feints to the—

HENDERSON:

To the Germans?

KENNARD:

To France.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

They never knew. Some mornings you'd get up and there'd be just' nothing but planes all over the place, and you'd think it was the invasion, but it was not. So Eisenhower kept doing this.

HENDERSON:

And even our own troops didn't know when it was—?

KENNARD:

Oh, no. None of us knew. We never knew. Finally, just before we went over—see, we were pretty well restricted to that area—they gave us a chance to go to London and travel. So one weekend I went. A bunch of us went to London, and we would cat around Piccadilly [Circus] and all that stuff. But I went there with a bunch of guys, and actually all we were doing was going from one bar to another to drink, you know, and chasing the girls. [laughter] And I said to myself, "Now, I may never get back to London, so from now on I'm going to start traveling alone." So for many, many weeks, on Friday night I would take the train to London—I'd just go alone—and I would get into a hotel. And before I went, I would get tickets to some of the plays and concerts and whatnot. The reason why is because all the great artists were in London. They had fled Germany and France, so you had some of the great artists. I saw John Gielgud at the Haymarket Theatre playing Hamlet. There were concerts at the Cambridge Theatre. So I would get a ticket for Friday night, Saturday night, Sunday matinee. I got all of those things in. I went to the Royal Albert Hall, I did all that stuff, because I said, "I may never get back again." When I had some time, I kind of traveled around, went hitchhiking around. And sometimes I could get a jeep.

HENDERSON:

You mean you officially got one out of the motor pool?

KENNARD:

Yeah, the officers would let me have a jeep, and I'd drive around England, because they knew I was studying architecture. So I have a lot of pictures of a lot of cathedrals, and I drove around a lot. And one time I was driving down the countryside, and I saw this soldier, an American white soldier hitchhiking,

so I picked him up. It was kind of fortuitous, because his name was Neal Daniels, and he was an architectural student at the University of Kansas before he went in. So we kind of hit it off. And whenever we could—he was in another company—we'd connect and we'd travel together, and it was kind of interesting. I kept in touch with him for many, many years after we got back and went back to school.

HENDERSON:

Great, great.

KENNARD:

We were finally alerted to go overseas, and we were supposed to go at D plus eight. See, it was D day—I can't remember when D day was.

HENDERSON:

It was June 6 [1944].

KENNARD:

Yes, June 6. We were all alerted, ready to go. See, what they did was they would alert three or four similar-type companies, knowing that only maybe one or two would go.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay. So you were D plus eight. That is, after D day, eight days later, you would go.

KENNARD:

Yeah, but we didn't know when we were going out.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay. Eight might not have even been days.

KENNARD:

No. No, they said, "You're ready to go, and you be ready to go at any time." So we were always packed and ready to go. We never knew when we were going to go. But right after the invasion, when [Franklin D.] Roosevelt made his famous speech that "under the Supreme Allied Command, Dwight D.

Eisenhower has invaded the Cherbourg Peninsula," we still thought we would go. They didn't pick us to go. They picked another company. The commanding officer was Captain Dodd, and I have no reason to believe this is true, but I've always felt that he had some way of keeping from going and kept our company from going. He would have been a lousy commander under pressure because he was just so scared. He didn't inspire the kind of courage needed. So I figure they either didn't let him go because they said, "We'd better keep this cat back," or he pulled some strings. I heard that he had been on Wall Street or something and had a pretty good job, so he may— But anyway, the company that went, it was a disaster. Out of 120 people, soldiers and 3 officers, they lost all officers and 90 people within a few days after they were there.

HENDERSON:

Ouch.

KENNARD:

Because, see, it was a very volatile—when you're handling petroleum, you know, one bomb can blow you up.

HENDERSON:

Goodness.

KENNARD:

So the word got back about the company that went instead of us. And to this day, I don't know. Well, maybe they didn't want blacks to kill Germans or something like that. That's always a possibility. And I don't know how many total black companies went on the initial invasion. Doctor [H. Claude] Hudson's son, Claude Hudson, who went in the service—I don't know whether I should say this or not—but anyway, he was very fair, so he passed and went in as white in the service.

HENDERSON:

Oh, he did?

KENNARD:

Yeah. Elbert [Hudson], my friend, refused to do that. Elbert would not do that. Elbert was more like his dad, but Claude was more like the mother, who was very much into white things. [laughter] They'll probably kill me. [laughter] But he went, and he was killed as an infantryman. He was an officer. He was killed at D day. So there weren't a lot of blacks sent over in combat duty. I've always heard, and I have felt pretty strongly, that they didn't want blacks to get used to killing white folks. See? And I'll tell you later what happened, why I still believe that, something that happened later in the service. But, anyway, we did go over.We finally did go over.

HENDERSON:

To France?

KENNARD:

To France. We were stationed in Le Havre, and they needed more officers. They knew that I had studied architecture, so they asked me if I'd like to go to OCS [officer candidate school], and I said, "No, I don't want to go to OCS." But they offered me what they called a field commission. And Jerry Jones, my friend, and I were both offered a field commission which sent us to Darmstadt, Germany, for training. He and I both went over there. We took the train and went with a lot of other soldiers. See, there was such a big movement to expand the service, they needed more officers. So we went over there. I asked for my commission in the Corps of Engineers. I didn't want to be in the Quartermaster Corps. So I got in the Corps of Engineers. And I think Jerome, his commission, I think it may have been in the Quartermaster, I don't know, but he got a second lieutenant's position. We went to Darmstadt. And I never will forget getting off the train in Darmstadt. The very first word I heard was "nigger."

HENDERSON:

Oh, my goodness. From who?

KENNARD:

I was coming off the train, I was walking with my bags and getting ready to be picked up, and I was walking by some southern, white soldiers that were sitting with some German*Fräuleins*, they called them. And the *Fräulein* is the

one—see, the soldiers told them what to say, and she hollered out, "Nigra, nigra." It was very appropriate, shall I say, that in Germany, in a fascist land, that the very first word I heard as I stepped on the German soil was a *Fräulein* prompted by southern white soldiers calling me a nigger. Anyway, we stayed in Darmstadt for about six or eight weeks. It had been leveled by the British RAF [Royal Air Force], Darmstadt was destroyed in two fifteen-minute raids—this is before we got there—as a retribution for the bombing of Coventry [England] by the Germans, and the place was a mess. I'm telling you, I never saw such devastation in my life. Where the buildings had collapsed, they were just on the street, and then they just built the road right up over the stuff. And it smelled terrible because there were so many dead bodies in the rubble. There were two places in Germany that were never touched by the bombs. One was Heidelberg. Heidelberg was beautiful and was completely untouched. And the other—when I went to Frankfurt, Germany, at the I.G. Farben industry, which was a beautiful industrial plant on the outskirts of Frankfurt, flowers were blooming. And, of course, that was the deal: Don't mess up the industries. They were very selective in their bombing. That's why I felt that the war was so political.

HENDERSON:

Oh, really?

KENNARD:

Anyway, we stayed in Darmstadt. It was very dull. We went to class all day. There was nothing to do at night, nothing. There was a song that—we had a little tiny 45 rpm record.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay. The tiny discs.

KENNARD:

The little ones. Yeah, the tiny discs.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

And I never will forget, the song was Margaret Whiting's "Moonlight in Vermont."

HENDERSON:

[laughter] Goodness!

KENNARD:

And Jerry was the only guy with me that I knew, so we spent a lot of time together. Sometimes we'd play cards at night, and we'd play that record over and over and over again, because there was nothing else. There were no other American songs or anything. And to this day, I mean, I know every word to the song. [laughter] And I just heard one just the other day, because I have a compact disc in my car, and it's Willy Nelson singing it.

HENDERSON:

Goodness.

KENNARD:

And it's very good. It's good.

HENDERSON:

Oh, it is? I would think that would be an unusual combination.

KENNARD:

It is, but it's beautiful. I guess it's because I like the song so much, and Willie Nelson—but Margaret Whiting, "Moonlight in Vermont." Every time I hear that song I think of Darmstadt, Germany, and the damned snow and the Germans and all that. Then I came back, and I was—

HENDERSON:

When you say "came back," where did you-—?

KENNARD:

I was assigned a company. I don't remember the name of it. No, wait a minute. When I first came over, I didn't go to Le Havre, I went to Cherbourg.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

I was at Cherbourg and Le Havre. I'd have to get the exact dates for you. But I was assigned this company. It was an all-black company. I was a second lieutenant. It was a Corps of Engineers company. We built roads and stuff like that. And then I went to Le Havre, and then I went to Cherbourg, and as an officer I had a real nice apartment in Cherbourg which kind of looked over the peninsula and everything. So I lived very good then. As an officer, you lived very good. And then we switched and went to Le Havre, and I had—some of our people were doing security police stuff. Le Havre was off limits. It was extremely dangerous for Americans. The French didn't like the Americans at all.

HENDERSON:

Really?

KENNARD:

Well, the Americans were very arrogant and treated their women real bad. I mean, it was really bad. See, the French people protect their women very much, and up until the girls are eighteen, nineteen, twenty, they're very well protected. They're never out without chaperones or anything. Even though there's a lot of freedom among older men and women, where a man will have a mistress and a woman will have a lover—that's very common in France—the family unit is very sacrosanct.

HENDERSON:

I didn't know that. Okay.

KENNARD:

It's not like in America. As a minister friend of mine [Stephen H. Fritchman] said, "In France and Europe, the relationships are simultaneous; in the United States, they're consecutive." [laughter] You know, you discard them.

HENDERSON:

You get married, you get divorced, you get married, get divorced.

KENNARD:

Just throw them out. It's a throwaway society not only in things but in relationships. In France it's a very tight family group, and the children, the girls, are very well protected. So American soldiers came over there, and they were very rude and obscene to a lot of the women walking down the street. They felt that there was undue American bombing in Le Havre, so there was a lot of hostility in Le Havre. They did not like Americans. They didn't like any of them, but they kind of liked black Americans a little better. I mean, I've always gotten that feeling, because they knew we were discriminated against, too. So Le Havre was off limits. There was a curfew. Like at ten o'clock at night no soldier could be on the streets; we had to be in. So certain officers took turns patrolling to see that American soldiers were not on the streets. And it was tough. I mean, I always carried a .45 [caliber pistol] with me. We were armed. And I remember one night I was out. I had my driver in a jeep, and I was patrolling the wharf. It was late. It was like eleven thirty or twelve o'clock. And I'm driving down on the wharf, and I—I had driven down to the end of the wharf because I heard that there was an American soldier, and we wanted to pick him up and bring him back, and some of our guys, too. So on the way coming back, I guess these French guys were waiting for us. So when we were coming back—you know, it's like a long pier. So I'm coming back, and here's these three or four guys standing, blocking the road. So we were kind of trapped. I mean, I had my driver, and I just had my .45. So there ain't no way in the world I'm going to be able to take them on. But they didn't know I was an officer. So I just stepped out. I put one foot out, and I just had my hand on the thing. Then I told the guys to get back in and just go right through them. If they're in the way, I'll hit them. But that's how dangerous it was in Le Havre. And this is from French people; it's not Germans, now. I mean, they were tough.

HENDERSON:

You know, my stereotype is that all the French love the Americans. When American soldiers marched through Paris, there were flowers everywhere and that kind of thing.

KENNARD:

Oh, yeah. That's not true. Well, anyway, while I was in Le Havre, we lived in a manor house. I moved from my regular apartment. We lived very well. Black army officers were still segregated, but we had German POWs [prisoners of war] serving us food and taking care of us. You get up in the morning as an officer, and you leave your clothes on the bed and your shoes there, and when you come back they're all clean. You have a car. You're served. There was one guy named Joseph who was a former SS [Schutzstaffel] who was in charge of all the German POWs, and he was a stone-cold trooper. When he walked into our dining room, he would click his heels to let you know he was in there, and when he left, he would turn and click his heels and go out. He was so disciplined. You could tell him to do anything, he would do it. He was so brainwashed. He couldn't understand Americans, how crazy we were. But he was a consummate soldier. I had a very good time in Le Havre, though, because it was the first time as an officer where you have a real nice place to stay, you have a car, there's a lot of women. And I never dealt too much with the local people, but there were black women in the Red Cross, so we got together and we'd have parties, and it was a lot of fun. I met a fellow, I don't know how. Oh, I know. There was a black woman who was a director of the Red Cross, Pat Patterson. She was dating a Frenchman, Roger Bordelique, nicest guy you ever met. And I got to know him really well. He was a journalist, former journalism student, who was in the French underground. They were dating together. And Pat said, "You know, we ought to go to Paris." And I had a car. So she had a friend that she set me up with. Roger lived in Rouen, so to drive from Le Havre to Paris, you'd stop in Rouen. Sometimes we'd stop and see his mother, and then we'd go on to Paris. We'd spend the weekend and we'd just see Paris. He knew Paris. Pat spoke French fairly well, but he just knew French fluently, so he knew where all the places were. He knew where all the black-market restaurants were. [laughter] Pat and I had the money, and the girl I went with was very wealthy. She was from the West Indies, from Jamaica, and she had a lot of money. So money was not an object. So we lived very high on the hog.

HENDERSON:

Oh, goodness. You all did Paris.

KENNARD:

We did Paris. I saw France. I mean, I went to Paris almost every weekend, because there was nothing to do. Friday night you leave and you go. So that's the good part of the army. Don't let people think that that's so wonderful, because that's about 5 percent of your whole experience. The other 95 percent is shit. [laughter] People come back and they glorify all the good times, but most of the time it was dullsville. So I actually stayed the rest of my period of time in the war—I was a year in France. I'd go to Belgium. We were in Belgium for a while. I won't tell you all of the little items, because there are so many places that Jerry Jones and I used to go. We'd go up to Belgium, and we'd travel all through France. We'd get together once in a while. So I saw a lot of it. That's why when my wife [Helen King Kennard] and I went to Africa I wanted to go back to Paris, because she had never been there. And she had never been to London. So I had seen so much of London and Paris, I wanted her just to see it.

HENDERSON:

Out of curiosity, was it very much changed from how you remembered it right after the war in London, Paris, all these places?

KENNARD:

Some 'places were the same. You know, the parks are the same, and the rivers, the Seine and whatnot, but it's built up a lot more. You know, that was a long time ago. But the tourist places, you know, the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre, they're all the same. Piccadilly, Hyde Park in London, they're all pretty much the same. It's not a whole lot different. But Roger Bordelique got to be a good friend of mine too, and we corresponded for many, many years after that. Some of the other people there I don't know what happened to, but he's the one who told me about the structure of the French family. When my friend from Jamaica left and Pat Patterson was reassigned, sometimes I'd go to [Paris] France just with Roger. He had some cousins that were young women close to my age—eighteen, nineteen—but they never would let me take them out alone, because he said they will not let them go out. He always had to be with me, because if they're eighteen or nineteen they're just not going to let them go, especially with an American soldier. And he said that the structure—you know, most people don't realize. They think the French are real loose, but with their children they're not at all. They're very, very—

HENDERSON:

They're protective.

KENNARD:

Very, very protective.

HENDERSON:

Okay. I know you told me you were in the Korean War, and that may be another whole story, a chapter in itself.

KENNARD:

Yeah, this kind of ends that. I mean, there are a lot of anecdotes in the war that I think are very interesting. One thing I think I should mention, because I mentioned that I was going to bring it up later, about the racial problem in the war: When we were in England, it was during the Battle of the Bulge.

HENDERSON:

Okay. I've forgotten that date, but I'll find it. [December 16, 1944-January 31, 1945 at Ardennes, Belgium]

KENNARD:

Yeah. I don't know. I'm going to bring that stuff back to you today so I can fill in the dates for you. But we were stationed in England, and a letter came down from a Lieutenant General [John C. H.] Lee, who was adjutant to General Dwight D. Eisenhower. The Americans were getting their ass kicked in the Battle of the Bulge, and, you know, they never wanted black American soldiers to fight on the front lines to kill Germans. I mean, there were very few black Americans fighting in the infantry in World War II. I mean, there were a few people from the Tuskegee Airmen. Very few. Not on the front lines. They served, but they weren't up there where they were going to take a potshot "at a German. So I was a first sergeant then. The deal came through, and it said—I almost remember it word for word—"To all colored servicemen: Now we will give you a chance to fight and die alongside your white comrades." And then it went on to talk about how they wanted you to volunteer for training and all that kind of stuff. So I called all my guys together—I was first sergeant—and I said, "Now, you can go if you want, but my suggestion is, when the going gets

tough, let the white boys figure it out. Let them fight it out." Soon after that—I was going to send the article to the*Pittsburgh Courier*, because I thought it was just so racist. But within a few days, a directive came from Eisenhower's command to destroy that memorandum. I guess it got so much flak. You know, all of a sudden the going gets tough, "You can get out there and kill yourself now." [laughter] I don't think any of our guys volunteered. And I went into the hospital for tonsillitis, a tonsillectomy, and I was there during the Battle of the Bulge, in the hospital. And you should have seen the people, those soldiers, coming through there. Man, they were wiped out. They were bringing those white soldiers in. They got caught in that pincer movement. Just several injured. And a lot of them lost their lives.

1.5. TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE ONE AUGUST 8, 1990

HENDERSON:

When we had ended the last session, you were still in Europe, or you were talking about coming back to the United States. This had been after the Battle of the Bulge. You had been in the hospital and seen casualties come in from the Battle of the Bulge. What I wasn't clear on was the process of how you got back to the U.S. and what date you were coming back.

KENNARD:

Oh, of course, I was in a long time after the Battle of the Bulge. I got out in June of 1946.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

Thirty months overseas.

HENDERSON:

And coming back from Europe, you didn't come back on the *Queen Mary* or anything significant?

KENNARD:

No, no. No, I came back on a ship, but it was a little small ship.

HENDERSON:

And you came back to where in the U.S.?

KENNARD:

We docked in New York and took the train to Camp Beale.

HENDERSON:

Where is that?

KENNARD:

I think it's up near Sacramento.

HENDERSON:

A question I have about when you were leaving the army is that, at the time of your separation, were you given any counseling? Or did people tell you about veterans benefits or say anything to you as you were leaving the array? Because I've talked to other veterans who said there was some sort of little ceremony they went through when they were mustered out.

KENNARD:

Yeah, there may be. I don't remember. I was so anxious to get out of there that I really don't remember, [laughter] I knew quite a bit about the GI Bill. So I came home in June of '46, and, of course, I went back to work right away for [H.] Curtis Chambers, the architect in Pasadena.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

It was the summer, and he gave me a job. And my mother [Marie Bryan Kennard] was pushing me to go back to university on the GI Bill. I was a little reluctant because I'd had so much trouble getting a job. You know, I'd never gotten a job before as a black architect, so I was kind of discouraged. But as I worked at Curtis Chambers's, he also encouraged me to go back, which I thought was very nice. So finally, around the end of August, I said, "Well—" They kind of talked me into going back. So I went over to 'SC [University of

Southern California] to see if I could get in. I had had two years at Pasadena City College in architecture, and, of course, that meant I had to go three more years at USC. But when I went over there, the September class was full, so I couldn't get in. I was walking through the quad at 'SC, and who did I run into but a fellow that I went to Pasadena City College with, an architect named Calvin [C.3 Straub.

HENDERSON:

Oh, yes. Yes, you've mentioned him.

KENNARD:

He had gotten out of the navy about a year before and he was teaching at USC. He was teaching design. I guess he had gotten out quite a bit before, because he had gone through school and gotten his degree and everything, so he probably didn't stay too long in the service. I said, "I can't get in because it's too late." So he said, "Bob, just a minute." He said, "Let me go and talk to the dean." The dean [of the Department of Architecture] was Arthur Gallion 'at the time. He went in to talk to the dean. Of course, Calvin and I were really top students at Pasadena City College, and we were good friends, so he must have talked the dean into it, telling him I was a good student. So finally the dean called me in, and he said, "Listen, I'll tell you what we're going to do. We're going to let you start. Cal Straub has talked highly about you, so we're going to let you start in the fall, September, but you've got to take sophomore design." See, I couldn't go into junior design. He said, "But if you make a top grade in the first semester, we will move you up to where you should be." Well, naturally, I busted my butt. The guy who was the professor of design was a guy named Clayton Baldwin—older fellow, nice guy, good instructor. I liked him a lot. I worked real hard. I got an A in class after that first semester, so that made me accelerate to where I was. That allowed me to graduate in '49. And I've always kind of credited Cal Straub with getting me out that year early just by getting me in, which was kind of nice. I never had him as an instructor, however. So I went through USC. My grades were pretty good; I had a pretty good grade point average. And I got into Scarab, which is a national honor fraternity.

HENDERSON:

I'm not familiar with that.

KENNARD:

Scarab. It's a national honor fraternity. You know, you have to have a certain grade point average. You don't have to have an A average like Phi Beta Kappa. See, in architecture, the equivalent of Phi Beta Kappa is Tau Sigma Delta.

HENDERSON:

Yes, I've heard of that.

KENNARD:

Yeah. Scarab is not quite that level, but you have to have about a three-point grade average.

HENDERSON:

Oh, at USC, the education that you were getting, did you notice it to be measurably different from what you were getting at Pasadena City College?

KENNARD:

Oh, yes. Measurably, yes. One of the things—Gallion was a very good dean. We gave him a bad time—you know how Young Turks are—but he had a group of very good professors. Garrett Eckbo was teaching landscape, Clayton Baldwin design, Harry Burge was professional practice. Another thing that he did, he invited a lot of lecturers, people not only in architecture but in other fields, to lecture the architects, which broadened the whole thing. One significant thing that happened to me that's worth mentioning is that at one time he invited a fellow named Frank Wilkinson. He was information officer for the city of Los Angeles housing authority. He spoke to the architects, and he talked about how architects need to look at social problems more. It's one thing to design things for very wealthy people in corporate America, but we ought to look at what's happening with the homeless and with poor people and with housing. And since he was information officer for the housing authority, he knew it very well. So he invited anybody in the class that wanted to—and it may have been the whole class, I don't know— He said, "Most of you don't know, but within the shadow of city hall, people are living in abject poverty." And he said, "I want to show you how they're living." So on a field trip he took us out, and it was true. Just east of Los Angeles, I mean, within the

shadow of the city hall, I remember he took us to one place where people were living in a garage with a dirt floor, and, I mean, there were like ten or twelve people living in that garage, families.

HENDERSON:

Goodness.

KENNARD:

It was really bad. And at that time they were trying to build housing developments. Those were the days of Nickerson Gardens, Hacienda Heights, and the whole thing. So they were providing this housing. I got to know Frank [Wilkinson] very well. I was very impressed with him. So the last summer before I graduated, I couldn't find a job. Frank Wilkinson was very much involved in the Citizens Housing Council [CHC], of which Monsignor [Thomas] O'Dwyer, the monsignor of the Catholic church, was the chairman. Bob [Robert E.] Alexander was, I believe, the president, an architect—and that's how I met Bob. I said, "Well, listen, I'm not doing a heck of a lot." My dad [James L. Kennard] was an invalid, and I was staying with him. He was in a wheelchair. But I had the mornings, and I thought, "Well, if you want me to, I'll just come down there and I'll work for free." I could type very well. So I worked for the executive director. The executive director was a woman named Shirley Addleson Siegel. She was a lawyer, probably one of the first woman lawyers I'd ever met. Just a really lovely woman. Just bright, very attractive. And I worked for herv Of course, I'd type letters for her. I was kind of her secretary, you know, just doing everything, filing and all that stuff. Because I figured, well, Frank Wilkinson had charged us up and said, "You ought to do something in the social area," so I said, "Well, I can—" So all summer long, every morning, I'd go down there, and I'd type for a half a day, and I'd work on odd jobs the rest of the day. Then, when I graduated, I went out to look for a job. I had met Helen [King Kennard] about a year before. We were engaged in May of '49. So when I got out, I wanted to get a job, because I wanted to get married, and I couldn't get married if I didn't have a job, right? Helen had graduated from the University of California at Berkeley. She had a degree in social work, and she was working with Aid to Dependent Children [ADC] for the county of Los Angeles. So she had a job, but I needed a job, too. So I made a list of ten architects I wanted to work for. One of them was

Richard [J.] Neutra. [laughter] So I went to Richard Neutra. I just went down the list. I just started calling on them.

HENDERSON:

How did you make up the list?

KENNARD:

Well, I just knew the architects. I made a list of—you know, Richard Neutra was on the list, [A.] Quincy Jones was on the list, Bob Alexander was on the list, you know, a lot of the architects that did Case Study houses at the time.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

Kind of the Bauhaus architects. But when I went to Neutra, he had this kind of European atelier situation where you work for nothing. [laughter] He said, "You can come and work for me, but I can't pay you." And I said, "Well, I want to get married. I've got to make some money." So he finally offered me $50 a month to work, but even in those days $50 a month couldn't cut it. So another person on my list was Bob Alexander, and the reason why I went to him next was because he was a very socially oriented architect. I had gotten to know him at the Citizens Housing Council, because he used to come in the office a lot. He saw me there, and I went into affairs and stuff, and so I got to know him. He's a very friendly guy. He was just doing some finishing touches on Baldwin Hills Village, and his office was right there on La Brea [Avenue]. He had a little office, four or five people. So I walked in there—in those days, you don't have an appointment; you just walk in.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

Yeah. [laughter] You probably should have; I just didn't know any better. So I walked in, and the secretary, whose name was Mary Carpenter, said, "Well, I'm sorry, but we don't have anything right now, and Mr. Alexander is busy." But it was a very small office, four or five people. When he heard my name, he

looked around—his door was open—and he said, "Don't pay any attention to her, Bob. Come on in."

HENDERSON:

Oh. [laughter]

KENNARD:

In a very joking way.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

Because he knew me from the Citizens Housing Council, and I guess he said anybody that would work for free for all summer couldn't be all bad. [laughter]

HENDERSON:

So volunteering does have its dividends.

KENNARD:

Yeah. I'd never dreamed that would happen. Anyway, this was in June or July. It was probably July.

HENDERSON:

July of '49?

KENNARD:

'Forty-nine, yes. So he said, "Let me see your work, la, la, la." So he said, "Well, we may have something for you." He said, "Give me a call back in a couple of days." And I remember almost distinctly it was either a Tuesday or a Wednesday. So I think Thursday or Friday I called him back, and he said, "Can you start on Monday?" You know, that was like nirvana. [laughter] What happened, I found out later, after I was there, that they had a young guy working for them, I guess, an intern, who wasn't working out too well, so they let him go and I got the job. [laughter] That was a very interesting job, because it was a small office,

HENDERSON:

Wait, wait, wait. Before we get into that too deeply, I want to ask you one thing else about your list. When you were looking for architects to go work with, you didn't think about talking to Paul [R.] Williams? Was he on the list?

KENNARD:

I had gone to Paul Williams a long time ago. I think he was on the list.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

I'm sure he was on the list. But I had gone to him some time earlier, and he didn't have anything for me? he said he wasn't hiring. But I was really into more contemporary design.

HENDERSON:

That was part of my question, because he did period houses.

KENNARD:

Yes. I was in more of the Case Study house-type guys or people like Bob Alexander, who was doing socially important, significant housing. Bob was doing a lot of housing and some school work and stuff like that. I did a lot of little things at first, but finally they were—Bob had just designed Baldwin Hills [Elementary] School, which was right across from the Village. It's still there. Disuke Nagano was his designer, a very talented designer. He and Bob had designed the school. Bob was very much involved in design. So they said, "Well, we'll make you job captain." They had finished the design, but the working drawings hadn't started. So they said, "You can help Disuke Nagano finish the design, and you can work on Baldwin Hills School as a job captain." Of course, I didn't know anything, and I said, "You know, I've never done a job this size before." They said, "Well, don't worry. We have a guy here, Bob [Robert] Pierce, who is just a very sharp production guy." Really nice guy. They said, "If you have any problems, you just ask Bob, and he'll help you through it." And he guided me through it. Of course, the building was right around the corner, too, and later on, when we finished the drawings, I went over there on

my lunch hour, and I could watch this job go up, which was exciting to me. I mean, here I am drawing it, and then the building's going up, and you just can't believe it. You know, you can find out all the mistakes you made, [laughter] But Bob Pierce—they had a couple of other people working for them, but the two key people were Bob Pierce and Dike Nagano. Bob Pierce more in production. Bob Pierce was a guy who—he smoked a pipe. He didn't talk much; he was a very quiet guy. I remember he said, "More people should smoke pipes. They won't talk so much." [laughter] We got to be very good friends. He loved to cook. He was a bachelor, and he was just a very good cook. So he invited us over to his house a lot. It was a very social office. Helen and I and Bob [Alexander] and his wife [Jeannie Alexander] would go out to dinner. It was very much like a family.

HENDERSON:

Sounds real nice.

KENNARD:

Mary was the secretary. We had a lot of good times. We worked from nine to six. Bob liked to drink beer, so at five o'clock—since we'd work from nine to six—he always had beer in the little refrigerator. So at five o'clock it was always okay if you just went and got a beer. I didn't drink a whole lot, but sometimes at five o'clock—the day was over, but it wasn't over for us. We still had till six o'clock. I guess he figured we couldn't get plastered till after the hour was over. [laughter] And I worked on several jobs. One of the very interesting jobs I worked on was a planning job in Madras, India, and I did some work under his direction and worked with a woman that he knew from India. He did a lot of early regional planning. While I was there he was offered a huge job. He was either the president or a member of the [Los Angeles] City Planning Commission.

HENDERSON:

I think he was just a member.

KENNARD:

He was a member. He was very close with Frank Wilkinson, they were good friends, because he had been on the Citizens Housing Council with Frank. Very

much involved in low- and moderate-income housing. He got this huge job. It was the largest redevelopment job ever commissioned in the United States.

HENDERSON:

That was what turned out to be Chavez Ravine?

KENNARD:

Chavez Ravine. But for some reason they would not give it to Bob alone. They wanted another architect, and I think they wanted a "name" architect. He hadn't been in practice that long, and he didn't have a lot of work to show, so they wanted him to joint venture. Well, by that time I had gotten my license, and, of course, he wanted to get me in it, because naturally he'd have more control if I was in it. Of course, they wouldn't buy me.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

So I think he talked to Quincy Jones, and he couldn't sell Quincy Jones. So that's how Neutra got into it, because Neutra was a big name. They teamed up on this job. As a result, they actually formed a partnership. It was Neutra and Alexander. The work, the beginning planning work, was going to be in Neutra's house. He had a studio there.

HENDERSON:

Yes, his famous house.

KENNARD:

Yes, his famous house on Silver Lake [Boulevard]. He had a garage—it was a very nice garage, and he used it as a kind of a study—and they set up this space in his garage. It was really a nice space, because it had windows in the door of the garage. They hired Si [Simon] Eisner, who was professor of planning at USC and had been my instructor, and they hired me to go over and work on it. For a while it was only Si Eisner and myself, and then finally they hired an architect named Hector Tate. The three of us worked on this job. It was very confidential. We couldn't talk about it because the real estate lobby was trying to kill it. They didn't want to have such nice housing for poor

people; you know, it would mess up the whole market. [laughter] It was unusual, because here I had tried to work for Neutra, and now I was able to work for him, but I was making a salary, some kind of decent salary.

HENDERSON:

Did you have a lot of interaction with Neutra on the project?

KENNARD:

Oh, yeah, a lot of it. Neutra was a tremendous designer. I learned so much from him. Very difficult to work for, just almost impossible to work for, but he was nice to me. But every morning at eight or eight thirty he would come in the office, and he would bring schemes and sketches. The whole site—it would have been just an incredible project because of the hillside of Chavez Ravine. He designed it in such a way that they had one bedroom, two bedrooms, three bedrooms, four bedrooms, and five bedrooms. But there were some buildings that were actually three stories. [sketching] There would be a road here.

HENDERSON:

On top of the hill?

KENNARD:

There*d be a road on top of the hill, and then he would have a three-story building. You'd walk into this level—

HENDERSON:

Okay, in the middle level.

KENNARD:

Yeah, and then you'd walk-down to this one. This could be a two-story townhouse.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

And then you'd walk up to this, and this could be two stories.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

So you had a situation in which you had a five- story building with no elevator that you could just walk in.

HENDERSON:

That's a nice sketch. That's a nice idea.

KENNARD:

Isn't that a nice idea?

HENDERSON:

That's using the hillside.

KENNARD:

That's using the hillside. You'd come in at the middle one, and you would walk up. So five stories and no elevator. I mean, just incredible. So what I did is he would give me some ideas, and then I'd work them out. And Hector Tate would work them out. I did two things. I worked on the master plan with Eisner. Eisner was doing the master plan. I would draw a lot of the master plan. I also worked on the buildings with Hector Tate, who was a licensed architect.

HENDERSON:

Oh, really?

KENNARD:

Oh, yeah. Sometimes he'd stay up half the night, and he'd sketch, and he'd be doing some schemes. I would leave at five, and I would leave my work for him.

HENDERSON:

Out for him to look at.

KENNARD:

He would take it and he would fool with it. It was really his studies that I had refined. Then he'd look at them again, and he'd see something different. But by eight thirty the next morning he would have sketches and little vignette* sketches and all kinds of stuff where he had been up half the night working. He was just a consummate architect. I remember one time—this is very interesting. To show you what—he taught me a lot, and he had a strict vernacular of design.

HENDERSON:

What do you mean by "strict vernacular"?

KENNARD:

Well, I mean, see, he was Bauhaus. He worked with [Walter] Gropius and [Ludwig] Mies van der Rohe, and he was strictly from the Bauhaus. So what the Bauhaus did was they took an idea and constantly refined it.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

If you'll notice, his work is very similar, but it's a constant refining of the thing.

HENDERSON:

Refining, okay.

KENNARD:

It's not as artsy as some of the architects now, where they just can do some very unusual things. Neutra's work had a simplicity and a singleness of purpose that was kind of strictly Bauhaus style. But there are two things he taught me. He said, "One thing—" He wrote a book called *Mystery and Realities of the Site*, and I'll tell you, it's a wonderful book. You should read it.

HENDERSON:

Mystery and Realities of the Site?

KENNARD:

Yes, right. I'm pretty sure that's the name of it. I loaned it to somebody and never got it back, like so many books. But he was very conscious of the relationship of the building to the site. The other thing that he was very perceptive about—when he walked into a room, and he designed the room, he'd always think about what you were going to see when you got into the room.

HENDERSON:

The first thing?

KENNARD:

First thing. You would never go into a room like this where there's a door over there. You'd never do it. Not in a Neutra house.

HENDERSON:

Oh.

KENNARD:

He'd never do that, because that's not a good thing to look at if the door's open. [sketching] I mean, if he was going to do it, he would do this, and then he'd put the door there, so you'd see something there. Also, Neutra liked surprises. When you walked in, he never liked to see that you saw the whole house in one shot, [sketching] I mean, you go here. If there was something happening down here, you'd just get a glimpse of it. Then you moved here and then you moved here. Have you seen his house on Silver Lake?

HENDERSON:

I haven't been in it in years.

KENNARD:

Well, you go in, you look out, and then all of a sudden you see this garden right in the middle. There's a garden all the way around. So everywhere you look, the relationship of the house to the garden is very significant, so that the house is a technological thing—

HENDERSON:

But set in this garden.

KENNARD:

—that relates to the outside. All of his houses are that way. They're very nice.

HENDERSON:

What I remember from his house at Silver Lake were these mirrors in places that would confuse me. It made the house seem a lot more open and airy and a lot—

KENNARD:

Oh, yes. He would take a mirror, and you would never see where the mirror stopped. The mirror would go up to the ceiling over here. There was no ridge in it. It made the house look huge and big. And if he had a cabinet like this—. [sketching]

HENDERSON:

You're wonderful to do all these drawings. [laughter]

KENNARD:

Seer he would do this. In many cases he would maybe take the window right down to the top like that.

HENDERSON:

With no [back]splash, no reveal, no nothing?

KENNARD:

Maybe he may have just a little wood [back] splash. He would do that a lot. It was very clean and neat. It was all like [Piet] Mondrian's painting.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

Mondrian was a Bauhaus painter. One time—I never will forget—I was designing a kitchen. [sketching] I'll draw the—the kitchen—uou know how a kitchen comes like this?

HENDERSON:

That's the usual kitchen. That's a "U" shape in your drawing, yes.

KENNARD:

I don't remember if that's that way, but I remember there was a refrigerator right here.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

The refrigerator's right there. And I know that right here there were some cabinets, and there was a door right there.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

From the service area or whatever. So I had the cabinets stop here when I handed him the picture. And he asked me, "When you come in here, what are you going to see?" And I said, "I'm going to see the side of this refrigerator, which isn't too bad." He said, "No, what you're going to see is the crack behind the refrigerator, which is going to be full of dirt and gunk." [laughter] [sketching] So what he did, actually, if he had the cabinet go like that, he would put a little short wall like that, and then the refrigerator would sit like that.

HENDERSON:

And hide the refrigerator?

KENNARD:

Yes.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

You'd see the front of the refrigerator, but you would not see that. There would be a little wall there.

HENDERSON:

My goodness.

KENNARD:

I mean, what it taught me is that when you're designing, look at what you're going to see when you come into the room. I never forgot that in design. I mean, it was a very critical thing to me.

HENDERSON:

That's a certain visual awareness that's very sensitive.

KENNARD:

It's a visual awareness, yes. I never worked on many of his houses, but I used to visit the houses. He had another person—John Fisher was working on a lot of his houses then. But I always visited the houses under construction to see them go up, and I learned a lot about—I mean, he did some beautiful homes. They were really fantastic homes. And they were all very sensitive to landscaping on the site. I mean, it was really a remarkable experience to work for him. I think he and Quincy Jones were two of the top architects in L.A. at that time. Quincy was a nice person, too, one of the few architects that would hire blacks in those days—Bob Alexander and Quincy. They were very good. Carey [K.] Jenkins [Sr.] worked for Quincy as a designer.

HENDERSON:

Oh, I didn't know that. Okay.

KENNARD:

Jim [James C.] Moore [III] worked for him as a designer in those days when few architects would hire blacks.

HENDERSON:

This was for Quincy Jones?

KENNARD:

Jim Moore, who was my director of design later on—you know Jim Moore?

HENDERSON:

I've met him through NOMA [National Organization of Minority Architects].

KENNARD:

Yes, right. He's a very talented designer. He worked for Quincy Jones. In those days not many architects would hire blacks, particularly in design. But Carey was a very good designer.

HENDERSON:

We're still talking about the early fifties?

KENNARD:

Yes, this was '49, '50—in the end of 1950, when I was at 'SC, I had a friend who was a lieutenant colonel in the reserves in the National Guard. His name was Wilbert Fisher. He's an old friend of mine from Pasadena. I was struggling through 'SC. I didn't have much money, right?

HENDERSON:

Right.

KENNARD:

So I had $75 a month that the GI Bill gave me, I'm living at home, my sister [Elizabeth Kennard King] is kind of helping me—she's working and helping me stay home and get through school. So Wilbert said to me—I'm at 'SC—he said—this was way back in '48, now. He said, "Why don't you join the National Guard? You can make some extra money. It's just one or two nights a week." I said, "Well, you know, I don't want to get back into the reserves because I don't want to go back in the army." He said, "Oh, Bob," he said, "there won't be another war for another twenty years." [laughter] I could kill him. So what happens?

HENDERSON:

Korea.

KENNARD:

I'm in the reserves. In comes the Korean War.

HENDERSON:

Golly.

KENNARD:

So sometime around September 1950 I'm in great shape. I'm working at Neutra and Alexander, I'm having a ball, just loving it. Helen and I had just rented an apartment from my brother-in-law [Carl King]. I had fixed it all up.

HENDERSON:

Oh, where was that apartment? What neighborhood?

KENNARD:

On Hillcrest Drive near Adams [Boulevard]. Hillcrest between Adams and Washington [Boulevard]. I had fixed it up like architects do, real cheap, with hemp rug on the floor and [Jorge] Hardoy [butterfly] chairs and painted it really nice. All summer long I had worked on that sucker, and then in September I got a notice that I had- to go into the service.

HENDERSON:

Ouch.

KENNARD:

So Bob Alexander did what he could to try to get me deferred because I was working on housing and so on, but I couldn't get deferred. So in '51 I went into the service. And that's a whole new story.

1.6. TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE TWO AUGUST 8, 1990

KENNARD:

I was a second lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers, so they sent me to Port Lee, Virginia, for training to get back into it. So I was in training—I can't remember how many weeks it was—and there I met an officer, a black officer, named Carey Redrick. He was from New York. We got to be pretty good buddies. He and I were both militant.

HENDERSON:

[laughter] What do you mean by militant?

KENNARD:

Well, we just didn't want—

HENDERSON:

You didn't want to be there.

KENNARD:

We didn't want to be there. For one thing, we had served in World War II. Secondly, we didn't like the segregation on the base.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

Because although we were officers, they had separate facilities for black officers and separate for whites, and naturally the white officers' quarters were very nice. So we decided that we were going to fight it. So at dinnertime or lunchtime or whatever, mainly dinnertime, we would go over to the white officers' dining room and we would get in line to go in. We very seldom went together; he'd go one night and I'd go another. And there was a reason why we did that. I'd go, I'd stand in line, and, of course—it was just like a regular restaurant. The hostess came up and she'd take your name, and you'd stand and you'd wait to be seated, see. But they would never seat you. They'd just keep taking people in front of you, even people that came after you. Well, fortunately all the cooks, waiters, waitresses were black, so I wasn't afraid to eat there, because I didn't want them to mess with my food, [laughter] So if they didn't take me, I would just walk in and sit somewhere. Well, naturally the waitresses and waiters were black. They'd come and serve me.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

See? But then sometimes, if there was no seat, I would come—they were all officers, white officers—I'd just come and sit down. I'd come up to a table, there would be two or three white officers, and I would say, "Is this seat taken?" Naturally it's not, so I'd sit down.

HENDERSON:

Wow.

KENNARD:

It was very embarrassing to them. [laughter] But a lot of people working there were "rah-ing" me on. They knew what we were doing. So every time there was any discrimination, we would challenge it. So finally, to show you how the service is—my point is they were violating the executive order of Harry [S.] Truman.

HENDERSON:

Harry Truman had issued that order at that time? Okay.

KENNARD:

It was unsegregated service, so it was a violation of the order. By the way, when I went down there, see, I said, "I'm not going to go—." When I first went in the service, I flew down there. When I came back to get my wife, I drove my car. I had a 1949 Oldsmobile, so it was a nice car—fast V-8 [engine]. I drove my car down there, and officers could have their car, so I always had a car, because I wasn't going to be back in the South again without a car.

HENDERSON:

[laughter] I forget, Virginia is South.

KENNARD:

You'd better believe it. So they realized I was kicking up a little bit of BS. So one day, [knocks on table] it was just like the damned gestapo. They called me in. They tapped me on the shoulder and they said, "The commandant wants to see you." So I go over to the commandant. When I walk in there, it's like a fucking court-martial. I mean, here's a lieutenant colonel, colonel, there's a woman taking—

HENDERSON:

Taking notes?

KENNARD:

Taking notes and everything. And at that time I was taking a lot of liberal papers. I think I subscribed to the *Daily Worker* and everything. It didn't matter to me. [laughter] You know, I didn't care if they kicked me out anyway. So they called me up and they said, "You seem to have problems here." And they were taping everything. [taps fingers to mimic typing]. Everything was being taped with a court reporter thing. So they said, "You seem to be having problems." And I said, "Yes, because you are in violation of the president's executive order. You have no right to segregate this camp. I'm an officer in the United States Army, and I'm not going to be segregated." So it was a very racist bunch of bastards. They said, "Well, what do you want to do?" I said, "Well, as long as I'm staying here in Fort Lee, I am not going to respect that order." Well, very shortly thereafter—and they called Redrick in, too, Carey Redrick. The next thing we knew, we were transferred. We were transferred to Camp Atterberry, Indiana, Carey and I both in the same company. He was a first lieutenant, so he was in charge of the company, and I was a second lieutenant. But it was a segregated company, all black. So I was really pissed at them. I started writing letters.

HENDERSON:

Oh, my goodness

KENNARD:

I started writing letters. You know, I could type, and I could just write some letters. We were sent to Southern Pines, North Carolina, on maneuvers. I still had my car. And one day I said to Carey Redrick, who was my commanding officer, "Would you give me a three-day pass?" See, they wouldn't give me any leave. And they couldn't send me overseas because I had thirty months overseas in World War II, and it went on points. But Carey Redrick had only had seven or eight months, so they shipped him out. He had orders to leave and he had to go to Korea. So I said, "Carey, before you leave, do me a favor." He was the commanding officer; he was my captain in charge. I said, "Would you give me a verbal order"—that's possible—"to give me three or four days?

I want to go to the Pentagon." I had been writing to the Council on Minority Affairs. I had called them, and I set up an appointment so I could meet them. And Carey said, "Yes, I'll be happy to do it." So I got in my car, and I drove up to Washington, D.C., and I went to the Council on Minority Affairs, and I told them. I said, "This is ridiculous. I'm going to bust it wide open in the papers. I mean, I had no reason to be in a segregated company. I mean, this is a violation. It's ridiculous." So they duly reported on it. Most of them were black. I don't know what happened, but about two or three weeks after that, I got a call from the commandant. It said, "Be at Fort Bragg at two o'clock on—" I remember it was a Saturday. "Be at Fort Bragg at two o'clock on Saturday. We want to talk to you." So I drove over to Fort Bragg. I go in there. They sit me down in this waiting room, they make me wait for about an hour, and then finally a guy comes in, and he takes me in just a little tiny interview room. It's like where you interview a prisoner. It's a little table, and he has a tape recorder, and he's sitting there. What happened, they had had me under surveillance, and I had been active in some organizations that they thought were subversive. One of them was the American Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born. David Hyun, who was an architect here—you've probably heard of him.

HENDERSON:

David—?

KENNARD:

David Hyun. He was a Korean architect here in L.A. He was a very liberal—he fled Korea before the Korean War, and they were trying to deport him. If they had deported him, he'd have been killed. It was tough. So a lot of us who were members of the American Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born were trying to keep him from being deported. One of these people was Frank Wilkinson and some of the people who were more liberal people. So that was one thing. Then they'd heard the letter that I wrote. I had written a letter, which I can give you a copy of, that I wrote to the inspector general complaining about discrimination in. the armed service. I still have a copy of the letter. And they said, "You wrote to the inspector general, you did this, you did that." They were interrogating me. The thing that was interesting: This racist son of a bitch forgot and said to me, "Was your mother white?" You

know, that was just a no-no for a black to have married a white woman. That was his implication. So I said, "What's that got to do with it?" Then he realized what he had said, so he said, "Just scratch that. I'll take that off the tape." If that was on the tape, it would have been very damaging, because what's that got to do with it?

HENDERSON:

Nothing at all.

KENNARD:

Nothing at all. So they interrogated me, and I came back, and about a week later I got orders to leave. It was a good assignment. I guess they said, "I'm going to shut this fool up." [laughter] They sent me to the engineers center, Fort Belvoir [Virginia], to be an instructor on construction principles and job management. See, I had gotten my license by then. I had gotten my license in '51, and this was about June of '51. So I got this job. What I was doing, being an architect, I was teaching construction principles, job management. You know, they had a lesson plan for me. And most of the people, they were majors and captains and first lieutenants and lieutenant colonels who were coming back into the corps, and we were bringing them up to speed on what had happened since World War II.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

So I was a teacher there. The interesting thing is that—in my section, which was an education section, the captain who was my commanding officer was a fellow named David Yarborough. He was the brother of Senator Ralph [W.] Yarborough of Texas.

HENDERSON:

Oh, yes. I've heard of Yarborough.

KENNARD:

They were liberal. They're very nice guys. David was a captain, I was a second lieutenant. I heard that I was under surveillance in the class all the time. There

was always a plant in my class to see that I was not being subversive. [laughter] One day, Captain Yarborough called me in, and he said, "There's a couple of people here to see you." And I knew it was the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation]. I mean, I just knew. You can tell. You know, they just smell like it. [laughter] So they come in—this is the funny thing. [laughter] It's so funny. They had been intercepting all my mail and everything, and I was taking the *Daily Worker*, which was a communist paper. I wasn't a member of the party, but I was taking all of this left-wing—

HENDERSON:

This left-wing stuff.

KENNARD:

Left-wing stuff. And they took me in a little room, and they started interrogating me. They were asking me about all my architect friends, some of my liberal architect friends back in L.A. Well, it turns out that there was one architect—what's his name? There were two architects. Wes Bonenberger and Al Boeke. Anyway, when I left I had been doing some little work on the side, some interior work. I was right in the middle of it. So I asked Bonenberger if he would finish the job for me. I made a list of all the furniture that I had wanted to order for this thing, and it had numbers: X, 6, Y, 4 and all this. [laughter] So he asked me, "Do you know Bonenberger?" I said, "Yeah, I know Bonenberger." They were trying to decipher this. They said they thought this was some kind of communist code. [laughter] I thought that was so funny. So I told them, ' "This is ridiculous." I said, "You're up here spending taxpayers' money dealing with this kind of stuff." I wouldn't answer any of the questions. I was very insolent, because I really wanted them to kick me out of the army, anyway.

HENDERSON:

Oh, my goodness.

KENNARD:

And I said, "You know, have you been down to Richmond, Virginia?" We were stationed at Belvoir then. I said, "Have you looked at the poverty and the stuff

that's happening here, and you're sitting here wasting this kind of money? I think that's absolutely ridiculous."

HENDERSON:

That took some guts.

KENNARD:

Well, I didn't care.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

See, actually, I was hoping they would just kick me out of the army. I mean, it couldn't have been better for me. My wife had gone back. She had gotten pregnant, and we were moving all around on maneuvers, so she couldn't do that. So I had sent her home to Tulare [California] to live with her mother [Grace D. King]. So here I had only been married about a year and a half, and I'm a bachelor again. I didn't like that. I was ticked off, you know. So it was really bad. But Belvoir was nice. If you had to be anywhere, Fort Belvoir near Washington, D.C., is nice. I had an aunt [Marguerite Bryan] there who was very nice to me. It's a pretty town.

HENDERSON:

I've got one question to ask before we quit. I read in Robert Alexander's oral history [*Architecture, Planning, and Social Responsibility*] that in his office in the early days there were a lot of Bobs. There were four or five or three or four Bobs. Do you remember that? Do you remember all the different Bobs?

KENNARD:

Yeah. Well, there was Bob Alexander, Bob Pierce, and Bob Kennard.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay. So it was three.

KENNARD:

There was Dick Creddick and Dike Nagano. I don't think there were any other Bobs. There may be one that was there after I left. I just got a note from Bob [Alexander] the other day. There was an article on village Green.

HENDERSON:

In the *L.A. Times*?

KENNARD:

Yes. And I ran into Elaine Jones, Quincy's wife, and she said, oh, she didn't see it. I said, "Well, I'll call him and I'll get a copy." So he sent me a little note and sent me a copy, and then I sent it over to Elaine. She wrote me a real nice letter. Do you know Elaine?

HENDERSON:

I've met her, but we haven't talked a lot.

KENNARD:

She's a really nice person. You'll like her a lot. There are a few more interesting things which I'll continue later.

1.7. TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE ONE AUGUST 22, 1990

HENDERSON:

I found this in the library. This is the book you had talked about, *Mystery and Realities of the Site* [by Richard J. Neutra].

KENNARD:

Yes.

HENDERSON:

And I didn't have time to look at all the text, but I was looking at some of these pictures, and especially this one, which had the counter which was like what you were describing in our last session.

KENNARD:

Yes.

HENDERSON:

And I see there is no backsplash, there's no reveal, there's no nothing.

KENNARD:

There's no backsplash, no nothing.

HENDERSON:

But it's well detailed.

KENNARD:

I'm sure it is. That's the way he did it.

HENDERSON:

You know, you can see the wall go right across.

KENNARD:

Yeah. He did that in many houses. This may be the house up in Mount Washington. I'm not sure, but it looks like that, because I remember that. I did one similar in my bedroom, but I did have a splash. I didn't like to have a window coming down to the cabinet.

HENDERSON:

All the way.

KENNARD:

They have a tendency to break.

HENDERSON:

Oh. Did you design your own home?

KENNARD:

Yes.

HENDERSON:

Okay. Eventually I want to take a look at that one. [laughter]

KENNARD:

Yes, I'll be glad to have you.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

It was my Neutra period, so it's similar to his stuff. But it's almost thirty years old now.

HENDERSON:

Okay. We had ended last time talking about your army experiences during the Korean War.

KENNARD:

Korean War, yes.

HENDERSON:

And you had been interrogated in a small little room.

KENNARD:

At Fort Bragg [North Carolina], yes.

HENDERSON:

No. Was it Fort Bragg? We had gone past that to [Fort] Belvoir [Virginia]. You were at the engineer's center at Fort Belvoir.

KENNARD:

Oh, yes, at Belvoir, when the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] interrogated me.

HENDERSON:

And asked about these furniture numbers. [laughter]

KENNARD:

Yes. I thought that was so funny. That's where we left off. Well, I don't know whether I told you, but out of every sorrowful or sad experience, there are always some good things that come out of it. And I don't know whether I told

you that there was a fellow in my company, he was an enlisted man—I think he was just a PFC [private first class]. He was in the teaching section at Belvoir. Now, I don't know whether in the last tape I told you about my friendship with Richard Sommers. Did I?

HENDERSON:

No. No, we did not get to that.

KENNARD:

Okay. It turns out that in the teaching division that I was in at Belvoir, there were only two people from California. There was myself—I was a second lieutenant—and then there was a young fellow who was slightly younger than I. He was in his late twenties. He had gotten into the [Army] Corps of Engineers, and he was also a teacher, because I think he had done some development before he came in. Since we were the only ones from California, we kind of started knocking around together.

HENDERSON:

And he was black also? Or he was white?

KENNARD:

He was Jewish.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

His name was Richard Sommers. We got to be quite friendly. He was married, and I was married, too, but because my wife was pregnant, she had gone home and was living with her mother to have our first child. His wife's name was Dee Dee Sommers. They were very nice to me. It turns out he was a pretty well-to-do guy. His father had made a lot of money in the film industry in Hong Kong. So he had a very nice apartment on the Potomac [River], and he had a boat and all the stuff.

HENDERSON:

That's luxurious.

KENNARD:

So they had invited me to dinner, and I got to be pretty friendly with them. So we talked about architecture a lot, and he told me, "When I get out, I want to build a house, and I'd like you to do- it for me." And I didn't think much of it; I didn't think that would ever happen. But we kind of stayed in touch. And when I got out, I tried to go back to Neutra and Alexander, where I worked, but since I was coming back—I had worked for [Robert E.] Alexander and I had worked for Neutra—Neutra didn't want to pay me what I was asking. So now that it was a partnership, both partners had to agree. I didn't want to just jump into any firm, so I got a temporary, ninety-day appointment in the city of L.A. [Los Angeles City Department of] Parks and Recreation. I was a draftsman working under an architect named Martin Fuller. Our offices at that time were in the second floor of the building overlooking the swimming pool in Griffith Park. You know where that is? At Los Feliz [Boulevard] and Riverside Drive.

HENDERSON:

I'm aware of where the streets meet, and there's a fountain there.

KENNARD:

There's a fountain.

HENDERSON:

But I don't know about the building.

KENNARD:

Right across the street there's a big Spanish building, and there's a swimming pool. You know, it's a public pool.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

And our offices were up above. I had a ninety-day appointment, and I started working there, and I was just so bored. [laughter] You know, we didn't do any of the good stuff. We just did all of the remodeling stuff. And we were never very busy. I just couldn't deal with it. I mean, it just seemed like the day went

so slow. And I probably shouldn't say this, but—we'd go out to lunch, Martin Fuller and I would go out to lunch, and we'd usually bring our lunch' most of the time, and we'd sit in the park up on the lawn. We'd eat lunch, and sometimes we'd take an hour and a half, two hours for lunch. Finally I went to Martin and I said, "I'm so bored." I said, "Can't you give me something to do of interest?" Well, there wasn't anything really of interest. I said, "Listen, I've got a ninety-day appointment, " so I said, "I thought I'd look for a job." So I began looking for another job. Well, some friends of mine worked for Daniel, Mann, Johnson, and Mendenhall [DMJM]. I was active in the Architectural Panel, and there was a young woman there, a Zelma [G.] Wilson—she was an architect who went to 'SC [University of Southern California]—and another architect named Walt [Walter W.] Beeson, who also went to 'SC. They knew me, and they knew I had done very well at 'SC.

HENDERSON:

Oh, when you say Architectural Panel—

KENNARD:

The Architectural Panel was a support group. It was a discussion group. A bunch of young architects would get together once a month and discuss architecture. Sometimes we'd have a lecture. We'd always bring in some prominent lecturer, Gregory Ain or Garrett Eckbo or somebody like that, and we'd do field trips and whatnot. It was just kind of a networking of architects that were interested in contemporary architecture.

HENDERSON:

Sounds exciting.

KENNARD:

It was very nice. It was very good. And we were liberal, and we took a lot of social positions in the architectural community. So they told me that there was an opening at DMJM. DMJM was growing. They had about eighty people, and they were growing really fast. But DMJM, although they had Asians on staff, they had never had a black architect. And the understanding I had—and I can't confirm it—was that the partnership was divided as to whether they wanted a black architect. But the fellow who was operations manager, who

was not a partner then, was Teff [Tevfik K.] Kutay. He was a Turkish architect and had gone to [University of California] Berkeley, a very, very bright guy. They thought he was amenable and that he would fight for me if he met me. So I had had a good record at Neutra and Alexander, I had been a good student at 'SC, so I was interviewed, and they hired me. So I was the first black architect ever to be hired by DMJM. But I had a ninety-day appointment with Parks and Recreation, so I couldn't leave till my ninety days were up.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

I had about forty-five days left. In the meantime, they also interviewed another black architect, a friend of mine who I studied for the state board with. His name is Rolland [H.] Cooper. Do you know Rolland?

HENDERSON:

No, I don't.

KENNARD:

Yeah, Rolland Cooper. Very nice guy, really neat guy. So Rolland was hired, and although I was the first hired, he came to work before I did* So when I did come, there were only two black architects. That was in 1952, and Rolland just retired this month.

HENDERSON:

Wow.

KENNARD:

And he moved up very high. They sent him all over the world, to Japan and France. He's been all over for them. In fact, I just called him the other day and congratulated him and said, "We need to have lunch and break bread and celebrate your retirement." He's still a consultant to DMJM. That's how they do; they keep them on as a consultant.

HENDERSON:

Which is pretty good. That's semi-retirement.

KENNARD:

Yes. So I started at DMJM. I worked in the design department under a guy named Tom Chino, and then I did some job captain work for Walter Beeson. I learned a lot there, and I moved up into management. What happened is that they were growing so big that they made me understudy to a very senior project manager named Visscher Boyd. He handled all the Central California work: Paso Robles, Atascadero, Arroyo Grande, Santa Maria, all those schools. So I used to go up with him, being his kind of understudy. It turned out that later on I actually was handling the stuff by myself, because they were so busy and growing they gave me the opportunity.

HENDERSON:

Didn't DMJM become one of the biggest firms in the world?

KENNARD:

They are. Right now I think they're the largest A and E [architecture and engineering] firm in the United States. I believe they are.

HENDERSON:

I would believe that.

KENNARD:

Yeah, I'm pretty sure.

HENDERSON:

They're somewhere in the top five.

KENNARD:

Yeah, they're very high. If they're not number one, they're close. The partner that I worked for was a guy named Art Mann, Arthur [E.] Mann.

HENDERSON:

Oh, Art Mann.

KENNARD:

Art Mann handled all the schools. He loved to design stuff like that. He was really very interesting, and he helped me a great deal. I never will forget the first time—I was handling a job for Manhattan Beach. Actually, Walt Beeson was handling it, but Walt was so busy that they turned the job over to me, and I was supposed to design and be kind of assistant project manager. And Walt and I wanted to do a lift-slab concrete school. Of course, they were state-aided jobs, and it was hard to make the budget. But I went down there with Walt Beeson, and we sold the district on doing this lift- slab, tilt-up concrete school. Well, when the partners found out about it, I heard that they had a big powwow, because they figured we'd never make the budget. And it was true; we didn't make it. But before that, I remember one time, one night, I had to go down and make the presentation to the school board, and it was the first presentation I'd ever made, and Art Mann was going with me. But although he was the principal, I had to make the big presentation. I was a nervous wreck. I never will forget, we went down, and we had dinner before. You know, I'm shaking and I'm nervous. But he told me something I never forgot which I thought was very nice. He said, "Bob, I know you're nervous." But he said, "Remember, all we ask of you is to do the best you can and treat it as if it was your office and it was your job." And he said, "And if it falls down, at least you did the best. Nobody will ever fault you for that." And it kind of calmed me down. I never forgot that. And I told my guys that a lot when they were the first ones going in, because it kind of relaxes you to know that you don't have to walk on water. But anyway, to make a long story short, on that job it went over budget, and we had to do a lot of changes on the job, and I worked a lot of overtime, which I didn't charge them for, because I figured I was responsible. I'd come on Saturday and work on it. During that time, like all architects, I was moonlighting, and one day I got a call from this fellow Dick Sommers. Dick said, "We have a lot on Coldwater Canyon [Drive] in Beverly Hills, and we're ready to build our house." So he said, "I want you to come and meet with Dee Dee and me about it." So I said, "Okay." Well, his wife wanted to do a traditional house, you know, a Georgian house or some English Tudor. Well, I didn't want to do that. For one thing, it was a hillside lot, and I didn't want them to do that. So I said, "I'll tell you what." I said, "I don't do that kind of architecture. I don't want to do that kind of architecture." I wasn't hungry because I had a job. My wife and I lived on Twenty-ninth Street on the hill just south—you know where Adams [Boulevard] and Edgehill [Drive] are? Adams

and Seventh Avenue? It's a hill. You know, Adams between Wilton [Place] and Crenshaw [Boulevard].

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay. Okay.

KENNARD:

And we had an apartment there. It was a very nice little apartment. It had a nice view. It was only a one- bedroom, but there was a big closet, and I had made the closet over into a little drafting station. It was such a small closet that I actually had to open the door and sit in the doorway to put the drafting table up.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

But I had had it set up so I could do little house remodels and stuff like that at night and on weekends, because we had one child at the time, just Gail [Kennard Madyun]. I had a good job. I liked the job a lot, so I wasn't too hungry to do that. So I said, "But I'll tell you what. If I can talk you into doing a contemporary house, then I'll do it." Well, there was a book—and you may have seen this book—written by somebody by the name of Nelson. I can't remember the first name [George]. And I used to have the book, but you know how books disappear. They get loaned and they never come back. It was called *Tomorrow's House*. And it took the house room by room and discussed how you design those rooms from the inside out.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

And I had already gotten a checklist from somewhere, and I still have the checklist. If you ever do a house, it's a fantastic checklist. It's a checklist of every room in the house and what people do in the room and other questions: "Do you have a dog? How many children do you have? How many animals do

you have? Do you like the dog in the house?" All the kinds of things that lead to a functional house.

HENDERSON:

It's like a prepackaged program.

KENNARD:

Yes, it is. When you interview the owner, you just kind of go down the list, you know.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

What is their life-style? Do they watch television? Do they entertain much? All those kinds of things. It gives you an idea of how the house fits. So I bought this book, and I gave them this book, and I said, "You know, when you do an English Tudor house, you're not developing it for your living." And I said, "If you do a contemporary house, it will be designed just around you." So Dee Dee finally agreed that we could design the house. So I did this real stark, contemporary house, [laughter] It was really Bauhaus, a 4,000-square-foot house in Beverly Hills on a hillside lot. It was the first house I think I did that was actually built.

HENDERSON:

And it's still up? Do you know?

KENNARD:

Yes, they're still living in it.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay. [laughter]

KENNARD:

It was built in about '58, 1958. I thought I was such a smartass that I did all the engineering for the house.

HENDERSON:

That's tricky.

KENNARD:

Because I had just come out of school, and I had all my books on engineering. And it was a house that required caissons and grade beams.

HENDERSON:

Especially on a hillside.

KENNARD:

Yes. So I got the house, I designed all the engineering for the house, I did the entire house, and I went to get a building permit. There were only three corrections, and they were very minor, and no corrections on the engineering, because I found out they didn't check it. You know, they figure if you're a professional, they don't check it. So then I got nervous. I said, "Here's this big house sitting on a hillside, I'm doing grade beams and caissons." I said, "I'd better have an engineer check it." Well, there was an engineer working for DMJM who did some moonlighting, too, named Steve Johnson. Very nice guy. I said, "Steve, I want to pay you just to look at the engineering and see if it's okay." Well, he looked at it, and he said it was pretty good. There was just one grade beam that was a little overstressed, and he corrected that. But it was a critical one, because there was a cantilever, and the whole house sat on this grade beam. So it was probably pretty good that he checked it. - But that opened me up to doing residences, because then, when I was promoting another residence, I could take them to see this house, or I could have them call Dick and Dee Dee Sommers, and they were a reference. They said they liked working with me, etc. So that's when I first started doing houses. Later on, of course, T left DMJM and I went to Gruen [Associates], which is another story. Maybe I can tell you that next week.

HENDERSON:

Okay. Well, let me ask this question. In working at DMJM, did you have any problems with your politics? Did they even ask you about what your politics were? That is, I'm thinking of during the McCarthy era there was so much of

this red scare that I'm just curious, because I don't know how influential it was in the thinking of, say, people in terms of them not getting or getting jobs.

KENNARD:

Oh, yeah.

HENDERSON:

This wasn't hurting you?

KENNARD:

There was a problem with DMJM. It didn't affect me. It did affect a couple of other people who were actually laid off. I can't confirm this, but I have heard that DMJM had major connections with the federal government and the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] in overseas installations. The reason why I think that's probably true- So they were doing high-security kind of industrial stuff. And I think that they were looking at the people in the office and where they were. Two people there were fired. One was Ed Lind, E. Richard Lind, and the other was Zelma Wilson, my friend. And I believe that it was related to that, because both of these people were very liberal. Zelma Wilson was married to a screenwriter named Michael Wilson. Michael Wilson and Zelma and Helen and I were very close friends. We were very much into a lot of liberal stuff. I don't believe Michael Wilson was ever a communist, but he was a Marxist, and he acknowledged that. And he was not a member of the Hollywood Ten, but he was very supportive of the Hollywood Ten. He was an unfriendly witness in the House On-American Activities Committee [hearings] and was blacklisted along with the Hollywood Ten. He was an incredibly talented screenwriter. He had written*Friendly Persuasion*.

HENDERSON:

Oh, I didn't know that.

KENNARD:

Yeah. Which, ironically—Ronald [W.] Reagan, when he was in the [Screen] Actors Guild, was the one that pushed the blacklist. Ronald Reagan was one of the key people responsible for the blacklist. And it's ironic that a few years ago, the last year or two Ronald Reagan was president, he showed one of his favorite films, and it was *Friendly Peruasion*.

HENDERSON:

Oh.

KENNARD:

I think it was so ironic. I talked to Zelma about this. Here the guy that wrote it was a guy that suffered because of—*Friendly Peruasion*, if you haven't seen it, is a beautiful movie. Gary Cooper was in it. It's about the Quakers and their nonviolent attitude. They refused to fight in the war. It's a beautiful movie.

HENDERSON:

I have not seen it.

KENNARD:

Oh, you should. If you ever get a chance to see it, it's beautiful. He wrote *A Place in the Sun*, with Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift. He wrote *Lawrence of Arabia*.

HENDERSON:

Oh.

KENNARD:

Now, *Lawrence of Arabia* and *The Bridge on the River Kwai* were written by Michael Wilson when he was in Paris. You know, to show you the kind of hypocrisy that the blacklist was, the blacklisted writers still worked, they just couldn't work in this country. They all left the country, and they were still writing under assumed names.

HENDERSON:

[laughter] Golly!

KENNARD:

Because, see, the thing about it, it shows you money transcends politics. If somebody wanted to make money and they wanted a top screenwriter, they hired Mike Wilson. They were living outside of Paris. Zelma Wilson left with their children and went over there with him. He wrote *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. He never got credit for it, but he was actually the writer of *The Bridge on*

the River Kwai. He was a tremendously talented screenwriter. He wrote a wonderful thing that was kind of the darling movie of the progressive people called*Salt of the Earth*.

HENDERSON:

Oh, I've heard of that. I haven't seen it.

KENNARD:

Yeah, he wrote *Salt of the Earth* and produced it and everything. Zelma and I, we were close friends for many, many years.

HENDERSON:

I just happened to meet Zelma Wilson last year at a conference. She came across as a very vibrant, very alive, still a combative kind of person.

KENNARD:

Yeah, she's a very strong lady. I think she was the first woman architect, also, to be hired by Gruen.

HENDERSON:

Okay. She's now working in Santa Barbara.

KENNARD:

She has an office in Ojai.

HENDERSON:

Ojai, okay.

1.8. TAPE NUMBER: VI, SIDE ONE AUGUST 29, 1990

HENDERSON:

We should review where we left off the last time. You were still at DMJM [Daniel, Mann, Johnson, and Mendenhall].

KENNARD:

Right. During my time at DMJM, I did mostly school work. But the thrust of the firm was changing. I think I told you about the partners that were pulled out of

the office and that they were all promoting—Booz, Allen, and Hamilton had come in to do a management study of them. So Art [Arthur E.] Mann, who was my partner in charge, was really out marketing. All the partners were pushed to marketing in order for them to grow. And in retrospect I see, having been in the practice now, how important it was to do that. Architects go into architecture because of design, and they're not very good at business, and they're not very good at marketing. So with the competition that's happening in architecture, a lot of very talented architects really have a difficult time making it, because they concentrate on design to the neglect of all the other ingredients that go to make up a very good office.

HENDERSON:

Unless you get a partner who can do that.

KENNARD:

Yes. But in this case, DMJM had eighty people, so all four partners, really, were instructed to hit the street.

HENDERSON:

Goodness. And what year was this?

KENNARD:

Well, it was probably around '53. I'm not too sure. But what it did to me, because I was involved in the design of our projects a lot, I remember the one thing that was the catalyst for me deciding to make a change.

HENDERSON:

And by "change" you mean leave DMJM.

KENNARD:

Leave there and maybe look for some other experience. I was working under the director of design, Tom Chino, who was a very good designer, and I was designing a little elementary school up in Atascadero [California]. The school was really a fun little school. I had made it in such a way that it was like a tent.

HENDERSON:

Oh.

KENNARD:

In other words, the structure was columns that pierce the roof, and then the ceiling was hung just like a large—well, like a catenary [arch], really.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

So that there were no bearing walls except for the shear areas.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

It was a real fun, kind of circus-looking elementary school. I had a lot of fun with it, and I was really enthused about it, and the client liked it.

HENDERSON:

It would have been ideal for open classes and team teaching.

KENNARD:

Yes, real open, and you can move all the class—everything was hung by this catenary.

HENDERSON:

Right.

KENNARD:

Anyway, I went on vacation right after I had kind of designed the schematics of it—it was just the schematic—and when I came back, I found out that the partners and I think Doug Russell, who was an administrative partner who had been brought in by Booz, Allen, and Hamilton, said, "No, we are not going to a whole new design again. You'll design this school like a lot of the other schools we had." In other words, do more a cookie-cutter kind of thing where they could make money. I was devastated by it, because I'm an architect, and I wanted to do something fancy and especially spend DMJM's money.

[laughter] In retrospect now, I understand where they were coming from, but in those days I was pretty well bent out of shape by it. So I said, "Well, maybe I ought to leave." I had been there almost two and a half, three years then—about two years and three months—and I said, "Well, I won't leave until I finish the jobs I'm on, " because I never believed in leaving a firm in the middle of jobs. I was offered a position at Gruen [and Associates], at Victor [D.] Gruen's, because they had been doing a lot of shopping centers, and they were looking for somebody that had some school experience, because they wanted to try to diversify. They were so much into shopping centers. So I was offered this job at a fair amount of raise, but I didn't go because of the money. I wanted to work with Rudy Baumfeld, who was chief of design over there. They had some really interesting people. Gruen was the marketing guy, a very talented guy. Edgardo Contini was the structural engineer. It was a great, great group of people. But before I had told DMJM that I was leaving, Mann came and told me, "We've got a really interesting job for you to do here." He said, "We want you to be project manager." It was a headquarters for Moore business forms. So I had mixed feelings, because here I was getting ready to work on a job that was not a "school, but I had already accepted the position at Gruen.

HENDERSON:

And had you let Mann know about all that?

KENNARD:

When he came up and told me that they were going to assign me to Moore business forms and that they wanted me to come to a staff meeting or something about it, I had to call him aside and tell him. I said, "It's better for you not to assign me because I am leaving the firm."

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

And I didn't want him to start introducing me to the client and everything like that and then find out I'm gone. It doesn't look too good. So I had to warn him.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

So they understood. So I went to Gruen's and tried to get them some school work, promoting some school work. In the meantime, since they didn't have a school, I was helping out in their shopping center division as a job captain—not as a project manager, but I was helping the project managers put the drawings together.

HENDERSON:

Right.

KENNARD:

But I did several shopping centers with them. We finally got a school. We got a school for the L.A. [Los Angeles Unified] School District, Osceola Street [Elementary] School. Ben [Benjamin H.] Southland, who was a partner, was the partner in charge of it. Rudy Baumfeld did more interior work, so it turns out that I really didn't get a chance to work with Rudy. I was really working mainly with Ben Southland, who designed the schools. I kind of worked under him. Actually, I had less responsibility in management and design at Gruen's than I had had at DMJM. But I was out promoting schools quite a bit, and I was talking to school districts and everything. The thing that turned me off— I stayed at Gruen for about two and a half years, and somewhere before I left, after about two years, they had a lead on a job in Torrance [California]. And I knew schools better than anybody, so naturally I was out there trying to promote the work. Well, Torrance, maybe not so much now, but then it was a pretty racist community.

HENDERSON:

Oh, really?

KENNARD:

Yeah. Victor Gruen was pretty sensitive to this, so my assistant—I can't remember his name, but he was a white architect that I had gone to school with—was under me, but Gruen called me in one day and said he thought it would be better, if I'm architect A and he's architect B, that architect B did the lead on this thing, because they didn't want to mess up with the problem of

me being a black person. I was upset about that, because I went to Gruen's because I thought they were more enlightened than that. Maybe he had a point, but I'm not too sure that—after all, it was not a minority firm they were hiring; they were hiring a white firm. But because Gruen was Jewish, I think he was more sensitive to the prejudice that existed out there, because he had problems getting started himself. There were a lot of jobs he couldn't get, too. So, I mean, I kind of understood that a little bit, but it did bother me. We didn't even get the job, anyway. Gruen didn't get the job. But I stayed there. And the office got very slow, and they were laying off a lot of. people. I remember three weeks before Christmas they dropped about forty people.

HENDERSON:

Ouch!

KENNARD:

I mean, it was a lot. So I stayed there. I didn't have a lot to do, but they kept me, because I was handling some work for them, and I worked hard, and I guess they figured it was okay. But finally, in May or June of 1957, I decided that I wanted to leave.

HENDERSON:

And you were doing this without any direct job prospects?

KENNARD:

Well, I had some house remodels; I had a few houses that I was remodeling. But I also had a wife [Helen King Kennard]. I had three children. The youngest had just been born in January.

HENDERSON:

Do you mind if I get all your children's names and when they were born so I can kind of keep them straight in my mind?

KENNARD:

Oh, yeah. I had three children. See, we were married in '49.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

My oldest daughter, Gail [Kennard Madyun], was born in 1951; Lydia [Kennard], my second daughter, was born in 1954; and in January of '57, my son, Bill [William Kennard], was born. So you're talking April or May when I'm thinking about going out. I've got three little kids. They were about two and a half years apart. They were all small. My wife, no way she could work with those kids. So I said, "Well, maybe I ought to just get another job." I was not too happy there. See, what happened there is that I never could move up to where I wanted to move.

HENDERSON:

Aha. That was the glass ceiling.

KENNARD:

Yeah, it was a ceiling I wanted to get in to be either project manager or an associate-type person. I had no dream of being on my own. I just wanted to move up to have myself a very good, secure, responsible position. Although, I think—now, this is just strictly based on intelligence gathering that I did at the company, [laughter]

HENDERSON:

This is not company policy.

KENNARD:

Well, " it's not. I got the feeling that I was not going to move any farther, although there were people that were for me—I think guys like Rolf Sklarek.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

At that time he hadn't married Norma [Merrick Sklarek]. But I think he liked me. He was director of construction. I think Rudy and I got along very good. I think Herman Guttman—because I made money for the project—and [Edgardo] Contini all were fine. But Ben Southland was the block. I heard this from a number of people who indicated to me that Southland blocked me.

And part of the reason is because I kind of resented when I was promoting school work and writing letters that Ben just had to rewrite every letter. He kind of controlled everything. He was a heavy drinker. I mean, I never saw a guy who could drink so much in my life. He'd go out at lunch and have three martinis. It was just incredible. At that time I couldn't have one martini, and I still can't drink at lunch. But anyway, he was not one of my favorite people. And it was indicated to me by friends of mine who were high up that every time my name came up for a move, Southland would [hits fist on table] clobber it. So I figured I wasn't going anywhere at Gruen's. So I said to myself, "I've got to leave." So I said, "Where am I going to go?" I had worked for Richard [J.] Neutra, Bob [Robert E.] Alexander, DMJM', Gruen. Where else are you going to go? I mean, you've gone to some of the better offices. And at that time, the market was not that good. So I had a friend who had worked at DMJM—and I mentioned him before—Ed [E. Richard] Lind, who had been fired from DMJM because of security things.

HENDERSON:

He was like a blacklisted person?

KENNARD:

Well, he was blacklisted at DMJM. I mean, he was not really a communist, but anybody who was even the least liberal was bad. So they knocked out Zelma [G.] Wilson and they knocked out Ed Lind. Well, Ed and I we got to know each other, we were good friends. He and his wife went to the Unitarian Church, which was the center of all, quote, "liberal" thought at the time, very socially oriented, supporting the American [Committee for the] Protection of the Foreign Born and against the [Joseph R.] McCarthy thing. Ed Lind and his wife went there, and I'd see him a lot. So we were talking, and I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "Well, I'm just doing a little bit of stuff on the side." And I said, "Why don't we get together?" I didn't want to be a partner with him, and he didn't want to be a partner. I said, "Why don't we just share offices? At least we won't have all that expense." [laughter] So—

HENDERSON:

Wait. Why do you laugh? [laughter]

KENNARD:

I laugh because he lived on Lucile [Avenue] up in the Silver Lake district. And Ed Lind was a fantastic architect, I mean, as far as knowing how to put a job together. I mean, he had run DMJM's Far East operation in Japan. He was just a fantastic guy. He was older than I was and a very senior guy. I said, "This is a good guy to be in the same office with." He wanted to be in an office near his house.

HENDERSON:

[laughter] Okay.

KENNARD:

In fact, he had already some space. It was like a little—have you seen these little real estate offices? You know, they're all—

HENDERSON:

Like in mini-malls?

KENNARD:

Well, no, no.

HENDERSON:

I guess mini-malls weren't around then.

KENNARD:

No, this was just a little shack. Years ago the real estate office used to have just a little tiny two- or three-room building that sat on a lot, and usually a vacant lot, and they were—

HENDERSON:

Like a sales office.

KENNARD:

It was a sales office, yeah. Well, evidently the real estate people were going out of business, so Ed Lind was renting this place for $45 a month. It was like a three-room little place with one big room, I think a little bathroom, and another little storage room. So he said, "Why don't you come by and we can go together." At the time, Helen and I had bought a house on South Curson

[Avenue] near Washington [Boulevard]. I lived over there, but I drove; I'd drive back and forth. And if Helen needed the car—because I only had a Ford station wagon—she would take me to work and then pick me up, because she needed the car during the day. I didn't need the car, because I didn't have any clients hardly, and when I did need the car, we'd work it out.

HENDERSON:

Yes.

KENNARD:

So I said, "Okay, we'll share this space," which meant I paid $22.50 a month and he paid $22.50 a month. We each had our own phone, and that's all we needed. We had all our equipment for drafting and everything. So I'm doing little house remodels and stuff. Well, what I did is I had $2,000 saved, which in those days was a fair amount of money. Let's see, in 1957—it's probably worth $8,000 or $9,000 now. But anyway, I had $2,000 saved, and I was making a little money off of house remodels. Well, that went along until about September or October, and I'm making just enough to get by, but I'm cutting heavy into my $2,000.

HENDERSON:

Okay. [laughter]

KENNARD:

[laughter] So finally, Ed Lind, he can't make it anymore. He said, "I just can't." Ed was not a good promoter. He was a wonderful guy, but he just didn't market very well. He didn't know. None of us knew how to market very well. But I was very active in the Democratic Party.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

I had been president of the West Adams Democratic Club. [laughter]

HENDERSON:

You were bringing in clients because you had contacts?

KENNARD:

Well, I hadn't any at that time.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

But I was delegate from the CDC, California Democratic Council, to the Sixty-First Assembly District. So I moved around. I was very active in the Unitarian Church, so I got to know a lot of people. I even ran for county central committee.

HENDERSON:

Of the Democratic Party?

KENNARD:

And I campaigned with a fellow named Ralph Richardson, who eventually became a member of the Los Angeles Unified School District Board [of Education]. He won, I lost. The bad news is that I lost. The good news was that it ended my political career. [laughter] But I had had that movement around there, and I was involved in a lot of liberal causes and stuff, and I was out putting leaflets out. We were involved in the American Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born because David Hyun, an architect, was going to be deported, and we were fighting to keep him from that. And I was in the Architectural Panel with Zelma Wilson and all these people. So I knew a lot of people and I always moved around a lot. But still, that didn't help, because by October Ed Lind decided to move, to leave, and go back, get a job. So he got a job. He went to work for Robert Trask Cox running his office for him. Well, now, what did that do to me? That left me with the full rent, right? My rent went up 100 percent right then.

HENDERSON:

Yeah.

KENNARD:

So I told Helen, I said, "I can't make it. I'm going to have to get a job." I mean, the money's just not coming. I'm almost broke. My $2,000 is practically gone. I remember it was so bad that I finally—at one time somebody owed me some money and they hadn't paid me and everything, so I went to my mother and I borrowed money for some groceries for the kids. [laughter] So my mother loaned me some money for the groceries. I needed $40 or $50 or something like that to get groceries. [laughter] An aside thing that's very interesting: Norman Cohen, who now has the firm of Cohen and Conmore, he was an electrical engineer. Whenever I had electrical work, I hired him. I had helped him get the Osceola Street School with Marx Ayres when I was at Gruen. We were friends. His brother was a very successful builder named Irv [Irving] Daniels, who owned Security Builders. And Norman said, "Bob, my brother's getting ready to do a little medical building"—I think it was a medical building—"in Hawthorne or Torrance or somewhere like that." It was about a $350,000 job. You know, that's like a big job.

HENDERSON:

It is, yeah.

KENNARD:

So he said, "I want you to meet him and let him come by." Well, what happened, instead of me going to them and talking to them, they came by my office. They said they wanted to come by the office. Well, when they saw my office—[laughter] I mean, it looked like it was about ready to go under. It was just a little house. In fact, it was so bad, Wes, that the building was kind of tilted. It was kind of not even, because if you dropped your pencil on the floor, it would roll over to the corner. [laughter]

HENDERSON:

Oh, my goodness.

KENNARD:

It was bad. So we didn't get the job, and Norm Cohen, he said, "Well, they went by your office." Irv and his partner went by, and they just felt that I wasn't strong enough to handle the job, and they were right. I mean, I was devastated. So I told Helen, I told my wife, I said, "Look, I'm going to have to

go back to work, so why don't we just take a vacation, a week?" My sister [Elizabeth Kennard King] and brother-in-law [Carl King]— See, my sister married my wife's brother.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

Brother and sister married brother and sister.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

So my brother-in-law and my sister had a trailer. You know, they'd pull the trailer. They always liked trailers. So I asked them, I said, "Could I borrow your trailer for a week?" I couldn't afford to go stay in a hotel. All I'd need is the gas, and we eat— Anyway, it didn't cost me anything. So I said, "Could I borrow your trailer? Because I'm going to have to give up my business after three, four months." [laughter] And they said, "Oh, yeah. Fine." - So I took my station wagon, I rented a hitch, and we went up to the Grand Canyon.

HENDERSON:

Oh, great.

KENNARD:

We had never been there. We went to the Grand Canyon. I was there a week, and it was nice. It was fun with the kids and everything. I put the word out that I was looking for a job. So I came back—now, I had an answering service, and the answering service was on for a week. When I came back, there wasn't one call. [laughter] Not one call!

HENDERSON:

Oh!

KENNARD:

So you can see how bad things were. So a fellow that I had worked with at Gruen, John Garritson, he and I remained friends, and we'd have lunch every once in a while. I always brought my lunch, and I think he brought his, too, at the time. Everybody brown-bagged it. So I told him, I said, "John, I need a job. Is there anyplace you know?" He said, "Well, we have a job here." He was the job captain there. He said, "I've got a big job that I have to get out." He said, "If you want to come—." He worked for Koebig and Koebig. They were a big engineering firm. He said, "If you want to come here, you can work here." He said, "As a matter of fact, if you want to keep your office open, you can work here in the evening."

HENDERSON:

That's a good offer.

KENNARD:

So I said, "Boy, that may not be a bad deal." So what I did, I made a deal with John that I would work from five to midnight. I'd work a seven-hour thing, and then on Saturday I'd pick up the hours or something like that. But I think most of the time I just worked from five P.M. to twelve P.M. I worked a thirty-five-hour week. Leonard Rohr was a black mechanical engineer, and he was chief mechanical engineer at Koebig and Koebig, which was very unusual. I thought that was very interesting. I don't know whether he was chief, but he was mechanical engineer. He became chief later. He worked there, and later on he became head guy. So I'm living on Curson, my wife needs the car, so I said, "I'd better look for a little office near my house." If you know where Benito's office is now, Benito—

HENDERSON:

Benito Sinclair?

KENNARD:

Yes.

HENDERSON:

I don't know exactly where his office is.

KENNARD:

Well, on Washington [Boulevard], right where Benito's office used to be is a big plumbing yard, and then there were three little stores that Ed [Edward H.] Fickett had designed.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay. I've heard of Ed Fickett.

KENNARD:

Yes. They were real simple little stores but not badly designed. There was a restaurant in one, there was another business in another, and there was one vacant. And the woman that owned it, they were Armenians, and they owned an apartment house in back. So I went there, and I said, "How much will it cost me to rent this space?" It was a much better space than up there. And she said, "Well, I can rent it to you for $55 a month." It was still more than the $45, but it was nice space, and it was clear space. It had a little front office and then all space, just an open space. So I said, "Do you mind if I build drafting tables and everything like that?" She said, "No, you can do that." So I rented it for $55 a month, and I lived right around the corner, so I didn't need the car. I just used the car when I needed it. The program I had is that in the morning I would get in very early and I would draw till noon. I'd put the answering machine on and I never picked up the calls, because that gave me six hours, because I'd get in real early. I'd get in at about seven o'clock, sometimes six o'clock, and I'd draw on my remodeling jobs until about noon or one o'clock. I'd go home for lunch, see the kids, and then, in the afternoon, I'd return my calls and I'd do all my running around. On the weekend, I was building drafting tables out of plywood, and I began fixing up the place. So I'm making it, but I'm still struggling. Finally—I was doing a house, remodeling a house. I had been remodeling a house for a year or two for a fellow named Irv [Irving B.] Zeiger in Westchester. I was doing this remodel for him. But Irv had an aerospace company. His brother actually owned it, but his brother had died, and he took over the company. But his business was going up pretty good; he was beginning to make quite a bit of money. I knew him from a lot of liberal organizations. One day I was down there, and he said, "Bob," he said, "I don't think I want to remodel the house." He said, "I'm going to wait and maybe just build a new house. Maybe you'll do it for me." But November's coming, I'm still hanging on, and finally, about the end of November, it was like nirvana. I

got three houses. I got a referral from a friend of mine. This guy wanted to build a house in Pasadena, and that house was $20,000. He had $20,000 to spend on a house. In 1957, that's a fair amount of money. It was a hillside lot. I got a house from Ed and Ruth. Saylan, who had a lot up in Laurel Canyon, and they wanted to spend $40,000. And Irv Zeiger, within the space of thirty days, said, "Bob, I think we're going to build our house," and he wanted to spend about $60,000.

HENDERSON:

Goodness.

KENNARD:

Well, here I had $120,000 worth of work, and with a fee of 10 percent, I could make about $12,000. Plus, I always had a lot of little house remodels. So the job ended at Koebig and Koebig, but I had enough work to keep me busy. And I continued on like that with my little remodels. Remember Teff [Tevfik K.] Kutay?

HENDERSON:

Yes. He was an engineer.

KENNARD:

No, he was operations manager at DMJM.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

He had designed a house for some people in Cheviot Hills named Larry and Diane Barr. They wanted to remodel the house. And, of course, he had a big job at DMJM, he didn't want to do it then, so he referred me to Larry and Diane Barr. I was remodeling this house, and they were going to spend $20, 000 on this house,

HENDERSON:

On remodeling?

KENNARD:

On a remodel. It was a three-room addition, two-story, three-room addition, very nicely done, beautiful looking. They were going to build a big master bedroom and a couple of children's rooms at the back of the house. And Larry Barr said, "Now, listen, I know architects never can stay within the budget." But he said, "We've got $20,000 to do this, and I don't want it to go over that, because that's all I've got." So we did this house. They were nice people to work for, and I'm working on my other houses, and all of a sudden we got it finished, and we bid it—I'm nervous as a bat—and the bid came in—I remember this like it was yesterday. The low bid was $19,646. [laughter]

HENDERSON:

Right on the money.

KENNARD:

It left a little money on the table. Anyway, they were very happy with the house. We built the house, they really loved the house, and we got to be good friends with them, my wife and I. You did that with most house people. They had me come to the house, you know, and you got to be very friendly.

HENDERSON:

Sure.

KENNARD:

This was 1957. About 1958, Larry Barr came to me, and he said, "Bob, I want to build a youth camp in the Malibu mountains" out near Agoura and around there, up near Lake Sherwood." He said, "I want to find some land. I'd like you to come with me and see if you can help me pick it out and see what you can do." And he said, "And I'd like you to be the architect." So this was going to be a big job—I mean, a whole new private school, everything, swimming pool, etc. So this was in the summer of '58, I think, and he said, "But I've got to have it open and running by the summer of '59."

HENDERSON:

That's kind of tight.

KENNARD:

Very tight. Now, there were some buildings already on the site that they could use, so we had to do some remodeling of them. He wanted to build a big seventy- five-foot AAU [Amateur Athletic Union] pool. We had to do a lot of the grading. We did a lot of stuff just to get him started. And there was an old Quonset hut there that people lived in that we remodeled the kitchen in and everything. I said, "Well, I don't know how much the fee will be, because I don't know how much work is going to be done." So he said, "Well, I want you to come and work for me on a salary." And I said, "Well, I don't really want to do that. I don't want to give up my practice. I have other work to do." I was alone, I didn't have anybody working for me, but I just wanted to be independent. So he said, "Well, because I don't want to get into a whole lot of money at this time and I don't know how much it's going to cost—." I said, "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll work, and I'll get it all done and get you in by June of '59, but instead of you paying me, like, 10 to 15 percent now, you pay for the consultant's work and give me $2,000 a month. And even though I finish in June of '59, you can keep running the $2,000 for the next year or two or whatever it is " Because I figured if I had $2,000 a month for the next two or three years, my cash flow would be in good shape. I knew that I'd have income coming in. And that's what he did. We worked for him for years. In fact, he just sold it a few years ago.

HENDERSON:

What was the name of that camp?

KENNARD:

It was Hidden Trails [Youth] Camp. To show you how he trusted me, he bought 125 acres—his attorney was Godfrey Isaacs. He's a very well-known attorney now; most people know him. It turns out that Barr had a lot of money. He had a lot of money that he had inherited. And this whole 125 acres—most of it was mountain; only about a third of it's worth anything. The guy was selling it for $100,000. It was way out in Agoura, in the boondocks. So I told him, I said, "Larry, what you should do is don't build it way back in the mountains. Build it up near where the highway's going, because someday this thing is going to be worth a lot of money, and by that time you probably will be retired and you won't want to deal with a youth camp." So he did. He bought it near there. We found a spot. We had to bring water in. There were no utilities. Over the years

we put sewer, water, electricity, everything in. So I had a client that lasted for about fifteen or twenty years. Eventually we just worked on an hourly [basis] with him. But Godfrey Isaacs was going to represent him, and the owner, a guy named Johnson, wanted to close escrow by the end of the year, and it was like October. So Barr said, "If Bob likes the property"—they were going on a vacation to Palm Springs—"buy it for no more than $100,000." I don't know how I found out, but I found out that this guy had to sell by the end of the year because of tax purposes. He didn't have a lot of time, and not many people had $100,000 cash like Larry Barr. So I told Godfrey, I said, "Offer him $85,000." And Godfry said, "Well, I'm not too sure about that." He said, "Boy, if he loses, you know—." I said, "Well, there's other property around. We'll find it." He got it for $85, 000. I mean, I made $15,000 for Barr immediately. [laughter] So they loved me. I mean, I was one of their friends for life. [laughter]

1.9. TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE ONE OCTOBER 3, 1990

HENDERSON:

We're ready to get started with Willowbrook School. That's where we had left off the last time.

KENNARD:

Right. Well, it was like '58 or '59, and the Willowbrook School District, which of course is now the Compton [Unified] School District—

HENDERSON:

Oh.

KENNARD:

It was a separate district of the town, and then it was combined with Compton.

HENDERSON:

Oh, I didn't know that.

KENNARD:

Anyway, originally, Carey [K. j Jenkins [Sr.] was the architect with Duckett and Jenkins [Architects]—that was his partner—and he had done the original school, and they were talking about expanding several other schools. There were three others. But Carey had left the practice and had gone and taken a job, a very high position, with the state in the office of the state architect.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

So we were invited to go for the job. We went down to talk to the superintendent, who was a guy named Paul Lawrence. I hope that's right. He was the superintendent. So I went down. His secretary was Martha Brown [Hicks].

HENDERSON:

You remember all these names? [laughter]

KENNARD:

Well, she's still a good friend of mine.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

Martha Brown was his secretary, a very friendly, nice lady. And then I walked into Paul Lawrence, and he said to me, "I know you. You were my instructor at the engineer's center at Fort Belvoir during the Korean War."

HENDERSON:

Oh! [laughter]

KENNARD:

What happened, when I got called back in the Korean War, they assigned me to the engineer's center. Did I tell you the whole story of the Korean War?

HENDERSON:

Yes, you did.

KENNARD:

With all the discrimination and everything?

HENDERSON:

Yes, you did.

KENNARD:

My job was I taught a course in production principles and job management, and I taught it to incoming high-ranking engineer officers. I was a second lieutenant, the lowest thing in the world. Nothing is lower than a second lieutenant. But I was teaching these classes to all these reserve officers that were coming back on duty. And Paul Lawrence, who was black, he was a major or a lieutenant colonel. They were a variety of officers anywhere from first lieutenant all the way up to colonels. They were taking these refresher courses. And when he said it, I kind of remembered him, because there were very few blacks in the class at that time that were high-ranking officers. So naturally we kind of hit it off really good. We had a lot in common. He said, "Where did you go? What did you do?" La, la, la. So I think that helped us get the job. [laughter] I'm just saying how little things affect your career. So we got this job, and it was my first really big public job. The construction cost, now it doesn't sound like much, but it was $350, 000, which at an 8 percent fee was a pretty good job for a one- or two-man office.

HENDERSON:

And this was in '56, '57?

KENNARD:

No, this was about '58, '59.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

I had" opened my own office. I got to know Martha Brown very well. She was his secretary. Naturally, I had to go through her a lot, and she was a very

friendly type of person. So we did that job, and it was a pretty successful job. And then Martha left and went to Compton. She was a very aggressive, motivated young woman. She was married and had two or three children. And she was instrumental in getting us several planning jobs in Compton. She introduced me to people when she went to Compton. We showed them our work, and we got quite a few jobs. We did a lot of planning work in Compton in the Rosecrans neighborhood, NDP [neighborhood development program] and we did the Compton CBD [central business district]. I say this because Martha went on to be with the Santa Monica Community Redevelopment Agency, and then from there she became executive director of skid row development, and we have done work for her at skid row. Funny thing: I just had lunch with her a couple of weeks ago, and we were laughing about how, when we went to lunch in Compton—we used to go, and she'd name the restaurant. And lunch would be like three dollars, because we were both so broke, we didn't have it. Of course, now we go and we were wining and dining at the Biltmore [Hotel], etc. She said she was telling Bill Hill, she said, "Boy, those were some" struggling days." She said, "Three dollars was a lot for lunch for both of us." [laughter] We had a hard time making it at the time. I would pay or she would pay or we'd split the bill or something. But it was fun. The point I'm making is how architecture is people- oriented. There are a lot of good architects, and because it's so socially people-oriented, you get jobs because of the people that see you and like you and want to work with you. You may not even be the best architect, but it's a relationship that helps. And all these things that—we did work for Paul Lawrence and Dick [Richard] Sommers and—Larry Barr and Martha Brown Hicks and clients that lasted through a good part of our professional life, where we're still doing work up until a few years ago. In fact, we're still working with Irv [Irving] Zeiger. So it's amazing how you keep those people. So then, because of the Hidden Trails [Youth Camp] job, I was able to hire my first person, who was an architect by the name of Sheldon [B.] Caris. He was my first employee I ever had, who's still in practice, by the way. He left some time ago and opened his own office. My second employee was Ernest [H.] Elwood.

HENDERSON:

I've heard that name.

KENNARD:

Yeah. He was a very senior guy, a very bright guy. He ran my office. My third employee—we began getting busy. We got Telecomputing Corporation's Chatsworth plant with T.Y. Lin [an engineering firm], and we got Temple Akiba, a temple that we got through Irv [Irving B.] Zeiger, actually.

HENDERSON:

Let's see. Temple Akiba. Is that in Culver City?

KENNARD:

Culver City. And Art [Arthur H.] Silvers, whom I had met when he was a student at 'SC [University of Southern California], had been working at Albert C. Martin [and Associates], and he wanted to change. He didn't feel like he was getting the full respect for his talent, so he joined the firm. And I think the fourth person was a young kid from [Los Angeles] Trade Technical High School], who was a junior guy, Ray Kimuro. And we hired a young woman who happened to be my secretary when I was at Gruen [and Associates], who left Gruen, Margaret Sato. So we had an office of about four technical people, myself, and Margaret Sato. I had a nice little office, you know. It was over there on Washington [Boulevard]. You know, I had left because Ed [E. Richard] Lind had opened his own office. We began building the business. We were very busy. I had a lot of work, had houses, a lot of variety of work. We were going pretty good, and I thought it was nirvana. We were making good money. And I started building a house in 1960.

HENDERSON:

This was your personal house?

KENNARD:

Yes, my personal house, which was pretty good. My wife [Helen King Kennard] was not working; she had stopped working. But business was pretty good. The overhead was very low. My rent finally went up to $85 a month. [laughter] But we worked a lot. A Telecomputing Corporation check had overtime and everything, so everybody was doing really good. But all of a sudden, at the end of '64, the bottom just started dropping out. You know what happened? We weren't marketing and just were counting on things coming to us. Finally I just had to start dropping people. I didn't have any work. And by '65, everybody

was gone. I was holding them as long as I could, but I just couldn't hold them any longer. I think Ernest Elwood was my last employee that I kept. All of them went to other offices. Ernest went to Bob [Robert E.] Alexander's office, where he stayed for many, many years. And I don't know where Art went. And during 1965 I was holding on and biting fingernails. I went home in the early part of '65 and told my wife, I said, "I'm not going to make it. I just can't hold the office together. We aren't making any money." And she said—"Well, let's see." This was in '65, so my oldest daughter [Gail Kennard Maydun] was thirteen. Lydia [Kennard] was eleven. Billy [William E. Kennard] was about eight. But they were all in school. So I said, "Why don't I just give it up and go get a job." My wife said, "Well, I'll tell you what. Why don't you hold on for this year. I'll go back to work. I'll get a job." Because she was a teacher, so you could get a job real easy. So she got a job at Bell Avenue School in Compton. That year I think I made $10,000 the entire year, gross. Gross. So naturally it was Helen's job that fed the children. She kind of took care of it; she worked. And then in early '65 there was a big job coming up. We weren't partners or anything, but we heard of this job. He heard of it, and we talked about it. It was Southwest College. Art was very active in CORE [Congress of Racial Equality], and he knew a lot of people in the South Central [Los Angeles] area, and I had been pretty active in the West Adams Democratic [Club], so we knew the people. So we said, "Let's go for the job." The community wanted to hire black architects, so we said, "Why don't we form a partnership?" Actually, it was Kennard, Silvers, and Williams, KSW—John [D.] Williams. I don't know that I can say this. We may want to cut this out later, you know, because I don't want to say anything bad about anyone. But we formed this thing, Kennard, Silvers, and Williams, and we started pushing this job. And at the time, Georgiana Hardy was a member of the school board, was very liberal, and she and the community wanted us to be the architects.

HENDERSON:

This is the L.A. school board?

KENNARD:

L.A. [Los Angeles Unified] School District. It was a $15 million job, big job. Now, I had done a lot of schools, but only for other firms, and the only school I had done on my own was Willowbrook. But the community insisted they

wanted a black architect to do the job. We mounted a campaign. Doug [Douglas] Honnold was the favorite. Honnold and Rex was the favorite of the district. They wanted to give it to Honnold and Rex. So Honnold and Rex called us, because I knew Doug Honnold. He called us and asked us would we go on a joint venture. In retrospect, I probably should have gone, because we'd have had the job. But we were young, smart-assed architects. We wanted it alone. So we mounted this huge campaign. Doug Honnold saw that we couldn't go with him, so he went and got Carey Jenkins. He and Carey Jenkins joined together. And there was a guy named Jim Jones on the board, a black member of the board, who was very tight with Carey. And there-was a. guy named Smoot. I don't know his first name [Charles R.], but he was a Mormon. Georgiana [Hardy] fought like crazy for us. We finally" lost. There were seven board members, and it took seven votes for us to lose.

HENDERSON:

Goodness.

KENNARD:

Well, what we did, when we saw that we were losing, we couldn't get it, I went to DMJM [Daniel, Mann, Johnson, and Mendenhall] and I went to Art [Arthur E.] Mann, who was my partner in charge of a job I did. I said, "Art, we'd like you to come with us. It could be any kind of deal you want. You've done a lot of schools. But we'd like a joint venture. We think you would be prime and would be associated—" We just didn't want to lose. We saw we were losing, so we were reaching for something. So I remember, I looked at Art Mann, and he said, "How big a job is this?" And they were a pretty big firm; they probably had over a hundred and some odd people there. He said, "How big a job?" I said, "Fifteen million." I never will forget, he said, "That's a respectable job." [laughter] "Respectable," I said, "shit, to me that's more than respectable!" [laughter] So they declined. They didn't want to go in with us. And they figured I don't have it anyway. They probably got the grapevine on it. So I remember Smoot, who I thought was a pretty racist guy, I mean, I guess because of the fact that he was a Mormon—. [laughter] And I never will forget. He said, "You can't come in here and think you can get a job." He said, "You've got to crawl before you walk."

HENDERSON:

Wow.

KENNARD:

Those are his very words, you see. And I felt like kicking his ass. "Crawl before you walk." So, to make a long story short, we lost the job. But Georgiana Hardy put up such a fight—not many blacks had gotten schools—that they told us later, "Don't worry, you're going to get a job. You won't get that job, but you're going to get one. Well, Kennard, Silvers, and Williams, we had stationery and everything. We didn't have any employees* We had work. My wife was supporting me, and I think that John had a little office going by himself, and I don't know what Art was doing. He may have been working somewhere. But when Williams moved into our office and started coming over—Art was there a lot. I was out hustling work. Art got a lot of calls about John Williams's people trying to collect money from him and everything else. It looked like he was in some financial trouble. I don't know how well you know John.

HENDERSON:

I don't know him very well.

KENNARD:

Yeah, I mean, John is not known for fiscal responsibility. Nice guy, good architect, really good architect, good designer, and the nicest guy you ever met, but behind it all, I found out later that he didn't pay his consultants. He's had that problem all the time. So I said, "We'd better get away from this, because we don't want to get any liability." So that's how we became Kennard and Silvers.

HENDERSON:

Oh.

KENNARD:

We said, "John, we just think you'd better just stay in your own practice." We may want to cut that out later, because he's still practicing, and I don't want to hurt him. We're still friends. So we were fooling around, hustling work, and finally, one day Virgil Vala, who was head of the building branch of the L.A. school district, called and said, "We have an elementary school that we'd like

you to do, but we need to come out and visit your office and just check your office out." Well, it was just Art and I, that's all. So we said, "Oh, my God." So we called Bob [Robert] Marks, who's our structural engineer, and Ben [Benito] Sinclair was working for Bob at the time. So we said, "Send somebody over to sit in our office." And we called all the people that we were going to use as consultants: Leonard Rohr—do you know Leonard Rohr?

HENDERSON:

You had told me about him.

KENNARD:

Leonard Rohr, yes. He's a black mechanical engineer. We were going to use Leonard. I said, "Leonard, can you send one or two people over just to sit there, to look like we've got some people? And bring some drawings to be working on." I'll tell you how I learned that trick. And I didn't have a secretary. Well, we all knew that Vala, who was an older guy—he was kind of a short, chunky kind of guy, a kind of friendly guy—we knew, because I had a friend there, that he kind of liked to flirt with young girls. [laughter] So my niece [Barbara Hunt Procello], who was either in college or just starting college at UCLA, she was very attractive. So I asked her, I said, "Barbara, if you're not too busy, could you come over and just play secretary?" She's very cute, very nice personality. So we were ready for them. [laughter] Vala comes in here, and I think Harry Saunders came, and maybe one or two other people. They came in. Of course, Valla stopped and chitchatted with Barbara a while. So they said, "Well, we have this school. It's the Hyde Park Elementary School. We'd like you to do it." So they walked around. We said, "We're working on this, we're working on that." There's just a lot of big drawings all over the place. [laughter] And they said, "Well, we'll get back to you." So naturally, we waited by the phone. They called us back and they wanted us on the job. Well, it was a $600, 000 job, elementary school. I felt pretty good about that. And Art and I formed a partnership, Kennard and Silvers. This was '66. The time could not be more fortuitous. For one thing, Art was an excellent designer. Both of us were designing, but I said, "Okay, why don't you design and let me get out in the street and hustle. I'll handle the business and marketing stuff. You take care of design." We had done Temple Akiba, so that job was going pretty good, and it was getting done. So we started hustling. Well, in 1966, the Watts riots

happened, and, of course, the cities were a mess. I had a friend, Ulysses Montgomery. He was an engineer who I knew had worked at DMJM in structural engineering. He was up in the [San Francisco] Bay Area working for, or as a consultant to, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. Justin Herman was a redevelopment director up there, and a guy named Bill Keller was the senior project manager for the Hunters Point area.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay. I've heard of the name Hunters Point.

KENNARD:

So these people at Hunters Point said, "We want some black architects to do the work." They had hired Aaron Green, who was a protege of Frank Lloyd Wright's, to master-plan Hunters Point. And they had hired Marquis and Stoller—good firms—and some other firms, but they said, "Listen, we want some black firms." The community said "We want some black firms." So they said, "Well, we don't know any black firms." Well, Ulysses Montgomery, who knew me, he said, "Oh, there are a lot of black firms in L.A." So he called Harold [L.] Williams, John Williams, ourselves, and Ulysses said, "Get your butt up here, because there's a lot of work." So we put Art on a plane, and he went up there. Well, Art is a very good—you know, he's good-looking, a good talker, a good marketing man. So we got a job up there. Before you know it, we've got jobs in Oakland. Our company just started going like hell. There was planning all over the place and everything. From '66 to '72 we went from two people to thirty-five. We opened an office in San Francisco in 1968. We were in San Francisco for a couple of years, then we moved to Oakland. Well, in about a year, Art was going through some personal problems, so he said, "I just cannot take the trip back and forth up there." He had a drinking problem and he was having other problems, so he said, "I just can't take this trip every week anymore." He said, "Can we switch and I'll stay in L.A. and maybe you go back and forth?" So I started the trek. I started the trek in about '68. We didn't open a formal office, but we rented an apartment on Cathedral Hill where we could work out of, and we could stay over there all night. It was a real nice apartment on Cathedral Hill. You know that circular residential tower across from the cathedral?

HENDERSON:

I'm vaguely familiar.

KENNARD:

It's straight across from the big Catholic church, Saint Mary's [Cathedral]. So I started making the trek, and I stayed overnight in the apartment, and I'd leave clothes there. We just built the business. We built a hell of a business. We had about twenty- five people in L.A. We had about ten people in Oakland. We just built it up until about '72. We started building it in '68. Ron [Ronald J.] Delahousie came to us, Jeff [Jeffrey M.] Gault came. We opened a whole planning division; Jeff Gault was head of planning, and he was a very good marketer. We just began getting work all over the state of California—in fact, from Washington, D.C., Atlanta [Georgia], everywhere. We had work in Mexico, resort stuff. We were just in heaven trying to start all this work. It was tough, my work, but we organized it pretty fast. What we did is Art was head of design, Delahousie managed a lot of the projects, Jeff Gault managed all the planning. We had seven or eight people who were just planners. Some people that were graduates at the University of California [Los Angeles (UCLA)]—Ron Allum was one of the first graduates who came over and was one of our senior planners. He has his own business now. Nice guy. We did planning in Long Beach, San Luis Obispo, San Diego, all over the place. It was just incredible, because, see, there were a lot of federal dollars to change the face of California and the city, and it was just incredible. Some of it was in joint venture. We tied in with Booz, Allen, and Hamilton in development and DRA, Development Research Associates. We got transit stuff back in Washington, D.C., with T.Y. Lin and a civil engineer back there. We were on a roll. Then I made connections. I really marketed the Oakland area. We moved to Oakland in about '70, and I hit that town every week. Oakland's a very social town.

HENDERSON:

Oh, it is?

KENNARD:

Oh, very social. See, it's a very strong black community. The head of redevelopment was a guy named John Williams. He was probably one of the top redevelopment directors. He had the ability to deal with the business interests and the community. He was really sharp. And we hit it off well. We

got to be good friends. And my attorney was a guy, a black lawyer, named Don McCullum, very active in the Bay Area. Don kind of introduced me to all the powers that be and handled all the legal work and whatnot. I spent a lot of time with him. I mean, I'd go up there for either two days and a night or three days and two nights, and it was breakfast, lunch, and dinner with somebody. I was young, and I was full of vim and vigor. It's a very social town, so sometimes on the weekend there were things to go to. Well, I had the apartment, so sometimes my family would come on weekends and spend the weekend, and sometimes I'd spend—you know, NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] was very active, and I was involved in that. So in a while we were doing work in Oakland, Richmond, San Francisco, school work, housing—a lot of housing. I had a guy that ran my office up there named Ernie [Ernest W.] Cannon. He was a very good production guy. He ran the office. We brought some of the people up here that wanted to move up here. The firm was just going like a bat out of hell. In fact, we were as big then as we are now. It was hard organizing it. We had to bring people in fast. We got some good people, though, when I look back in retrospect, people who stayed with us a long time. In about '70, Art began to get restless. He had some personal problems that were difficult. You know, when you're under pressure of a business and you're moving fast—you know, we were working sixty, seventy hours a week, eighty hours a week sometimes. I mean, we were running up and down the road. I'd get up in San Francisco—I'd get up at five [A.M.], and I'd be in San Francisco in a meeting at eight thirty.

HENDERSON:

Oh."

KENNARD:

I'd get on a plane at seven.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

I would get in there, I would schedule meetings at eight thirty and I'd go all day, and I'd have a lunch meeting and dinner and then party at night.

[laughter] John Williams and I spent a lot of evenings together, and Don McCullum, because they worked a lot of hours, too. We used to go to the Mirabeau, a restaurant and bar there, which is really a nice place. We spent a lot of time there. I had the pulse of the community, and I knew where the power was, so we got a lot of work. The big breakthrough was there was a huge job in West Oakland, 366 units of housing. And the architect that was selected was a guy named [A.] Carl Koch, a very reputable architect out of Boston.

HENDERSON:

In fact, I think I've heard that name.

KENNARD:

Now, the nonprofit organization that did this was called MORH Housing [Inc.] It stood for More Oakland Residential Housing. There were nine people on the board—three from Kaiser Engineers and six from the community. I think they got Carl Koch because he had done a lot of housing that was kind of—what do you call it? Like Forest Dillon.

HENDERSON:

You don't mean low-income?

KENNARD:

Well, 'yes, it was low-income housing, but it was component housing.

HENDERSON:

Oh. Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

Modular.

HENDERSON:

Modular, okay.

KENNARD:

Modular. He had done a lot of that. Good work. So they said, "Well, we want a black architect." And there was one woman who was a powerhouse. Her

name was Dolores Rubin, and the family was very active in the West Oakland community to try to keep the quality of West Oakland. West Oakland had a lot of nice old houses like the West Adams district, and they didn't want to tear all that stuff down. But this area was already leveled for it. Some other architects in San Francisco had done some work there. I think Sandy and Babcock had done some work there. But Dolores Rubin said, "Listen, we want a black architect. We're right here in West Oakland, and we want to give our own people a chance." So they said, "Well, we don't know anybody." So John Williams told me about it, introduced me to Dolores. Dolores Rubin's sister [Lillian Rubin] was a member of the redevelopment company, so they were a powerful little family. I never will forget the first day I met Dolores Rubin. We were told to come into a meeting to meet Carl Koch. They were in town, they were in Oakland. John Williams's office, the redevelopment agency, all the people from Kaiser, they were going to introduce us to them. And I never will forget—Dolores was a feisty little lady. We were being interviewed, because they wanted us to joint venture with Koch. And we're talking about a big job. At that time it was a $10 million job, and in 1969, '70, that was a big job. Three twelve-story buildings they were talking about.

HENDERSON:

Goodness.

KENNARD:

The big stuff. So I must have said something that she didn't like, and she just blasted me. She just jumped me like crazy. I went back and I thought for sure we had lost it. But I found out that's just the way she was. So I really started spending some time, and I marketed the hell out of that job. So finally, the redevelopment agency and Kaiser and all, we had to take a trip back to Boston. We wanted to visit some of Koch's work. Well, Dolores knew the community, so I spent a lot of time with her. Let's face it, you're out there, you have breakfast, lunch, and dinner, you're staying at a hotel in Boston, so I had a lot of time. We were trying to say, "Listen, we want at least 50 percent of the deal." The community said, "Don't worry." Art was there, too. "You and Art go over to Koch's office, and you try to "work out the deal." Well, they were tough. Boston's a racist town.

HENDERSON:

[laughter] It is.

KENNARD:

They were awful. They came in, and they said, "Well, here's how we're going to do it. We're going to do all the designing and we're going to do all the working drawings, and we would like you to be the representative on the construction, because you have an office there and you're there and you can do that." Well, that's 20 percent of the deal, and that's the hardest part of it. So we went back; we didn't say anything. So Art and I, we were very good together. I mean, it's just a tragedy that he couldn't sustain his being effective in the firm, because we understood the dynamics of it, and we played the game really well together. He's a real bright guy. So we said, "Okay, you go in—." And whenever we went in with any group, we'd say, "Okay, you be the nice guy, I'll be the [villain]."

HENDERSON:

That's good strategy.

KENNARD:

So on this one, Art was doing the design, and he wanted to do the job, and he said, "Well, it's a great job." He was really nice, and I'm getting to be a son of a bitch. So I said, "We don't like the deal, and we don't think it's a fair deal. This is in a minority community. There are nine members on the board." The key person from Kaiser Engineers was a guy named Don Duffy. Dolores had him pretty well on our side. So she worked on him to bring the Kaiser people along. There was another guy, a lawyer named Helfinger, who was really a nice guy. These were white guys. Helfinger was a lawyer who was one of the nicest guys I ever met. I think they had eleven children or something. They just loved kids, and they raised all these kids. They were really nice kids. Anyway, we knew we had a pretty good deal.

1.10. TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE TWO OCTOBER 3, 1990

KENNARD:

So we went in there, and we said, "We've got to have 50 percent." Well, they were just ridiculous.

HENDERSON:

You're talking to the board?

KENNARD:

I'm talking about the architects.

HENDERSON:

You're talking to the architects, okay.

KENNARD:

They said, "Go work out a deal." So we said, "When we go back there, we've got to do more than the construction administration. You know, we've done housing, we're architects, we have good people." So we know that the board's not going to go with less than 50-50. Well, he was a pretty well-known architect, you know. He was kind of like—he wasn't as famous as Cesar Pelli, but he was pretty famous and pretty conservative, too. So they were just recalcitrant. They said, "Well, we can't do it for less than 75 percent." I think they were just terribly greedy. So that night I talked to Dolores. She said, "We'll just take the whole job away from them. You'll see."

HENDERSON:

She was that powerful.

KENNARD:

We went back there, and we got the whole thing. We did it all, and we did it all on time. It's a nice job. Art was in charge of design. It's really nice. We did three twelve-story buildings with all the single and one-bedroom units in the towers, and all the others were 126 townhouses for the big families that were three, four, and five bedrooms. We built them out of high- strength concrete block. HUD [Department of Housing and Urban Development] said, "You'll never be able to meet our cost unless you do it in wood." I said, "Hell, you can't do a high rise with only wood." We did it like an erector set. We designed it so no blocks were ever cut. We designed it so every kitchen of 366 units and every bath was exactly the same.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

So all the plumbing was prefabricated off the site, the whole place".

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

The floors were Spancrete. So it went up just like an erector set. You did the block, you had no cutting of blocks. Under no condition were we going to cut these blocks.

HENDERSON:

That will save you money.

KENNARD:

It saved money. And we built that deal for like $18 or $19 a square foot.

HENDERSON:

Oh, lord, that is incredibly cheap.

KENNARD:

I mean, HUD just couldn't believe it. It's standing today. It looks good, too.

HENDERSON:

Well, how did you stiffen it for earthquake [code compliance]?

KENNARD:

T. Y. Lin was the structural engineer and Felix Kulka was the project engineer. They had given us one of our first big jobs, Telecomputing Corporation. Felix was a good friend of mine. He did the engineering on my house, and I designed his house when he was down here. So I told him, I said, "If I ever move up to the Bay Area, you're going to be my engineer, " because we were real good friends. They did the engineering job. We built that sucker. Then, it was so successful that John Williams said, "Listen, we're working on another high-rise building for Episcopal Homes Foundation, and we really don't like the

architect that "designed it. He just doesn't understand how to design this thing. Would you guys like to have the job?" I said, "Oh, yes."

HENDERSON:

This is the job up in the Bay Area?

KENNARD:

John Williams was director of the development agency.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

So we did another twelve-story, Oak Center Towers. It's still up. Our project designer was George Barnes. We worked until 1978 when things started getting bad in Oakland. '78 is when we closed the office. I'll tell you about the change in ownership maybe next time.

1.11. TAPE NUMBER: VIII, SIDE ONE OCTOBER 17, 1990

HENDERSON:

Okay, we were discussing white architects that employed black architects.

KENNARD:

Well, I think you have to go back to the time when I got out of Pasadena City College. I don't know whether I went through that. Did I talk about that at one time?

HENDERSON:

Yes, you did. You talked about getting out of Pasadena City College and working for [H.] Curtis Chambers.

KENNARD:

And writing letters, etc.

HENDERSON:

Well, you didn't go into all that.

KENNARD:

How I couldn't get a job? Nobody would hire me. Did I tell you?

HENDERSON:

You told me you worked for Chambers.

KENNARD:

Curtis Chambers. I think I told you about how I had a problem getting a job.

HENDERSON:

Yes.

KENNARD:

Yeah. Well, just to put a point of reference, when I got out in '40—and I had won some awards—I wrote about thirteen letters, and all of them answered me, and seven of them offered me to come in—I think I told you this.

HENDERSON:

Yes.

KENNARD:

But when I got there and they saw I was black, some of them didn't even ask me to sit down. So, as a point of reference, that is the kind of climate that black architects were in. Yes, there was Hilyard Robinson in Washington, D.C., and there was, I think, the fellow [John] Lewis [Wilson Jr.] in New York. Old-timers. There was Jimmie [James H.] Garrott, there was Paul [R.] Williams, of course. But the bulk of offices had an unwritten policy against hiring blacks, and that probably extended to most minorities, but blacks were the last to be hired. I think I did tell you about when I was in the Citizens Housing Council and I met Bob [Robert E.] Alexander and how he hired me.

HENDERSON:

Yes" you did.

KENNARD:

But it was through Bob that I met Reginald Johnson. Bob Alexander, as you know, did the Baldwin Hills Village with Clarence Stein. I think Johnson was one of the architects.

HENDERSON:

I believe he was.

KENNARD:

Johnson had been doing a lot of very expensive homes in Hancock Park and Santa Barbara, but I think that he just got a little tired of it—I may have mentioned this to you—doing just plushy houses. He really wanted to get into—

HENDERSON:

Social things?

KENNARD:

—social architecture. And it was then that I realized that he was just a very progressive guy and that Paul Williams had worked for him.

HENDERSON:

In fact, I believe you told me many of Paul Williams's clients had been referred to him by Reginald.

KENNARD:

Yes. That's what I heard. I mean, I can't confirm that, but I was told that that happened. And that was pretty commonplace. When you worked in an office and the office was getting big, if they knew there was a house to do, they would refer it to you. It was also through Bob Alexander that I met [A.] Quincy Jones. That's when I learned that Carey [K.] Jenkins [Sr.] had been a designer for Quincy Jones.

HENDERSON:

Oh, " you didn't know Carey Jenkins before knowing him through Quincy Jones?

KENNARD:

No, I knew of him. I had met him, but I didn't know much about his background. He graduated a year or so before me at 'SC [University of Southern California].

HENDERSON:

Oh, he did?

KENNARD:

Yes. And he was very good. He was a very talented designer; he was a very good artist. I always admired him. And then I had heard he had gone into business with Vernon Duckett, but I didn't know him personally. And I heard that he had worked or he was working for Quincy Jones as a designer, and that surprised me, because Quincy, Reginald, and Bob Alexander were very good architects, very well thought of. So it was kind of encouraging to hear that Jones had hired him, and not just as a draftsman but as a designer. And Jim [James C.] Moore [III], who is now a licensed architect and was formerly my director of design, also had worked for Quincy. He came here [Kennard Design Group] and he was director of design here, and he's on his own now. But it was a real difficult time. I think in one tape I talked to you about how I was the first black architect to be hired at DMJM [Daniel, Mann, Johnson, and Mendenhall].

HENDERSON:

Right.

KENNARD:

But gradually, as the people that came out of the McCarthy era, some of the liberal architects, as they moved into offices in the fifties—and because they were white, they got fairly good jobs—many of them, I've got to give them credit for helping to break it up. People like Ed [E. Richard] Lind and Zelma [G.] Wilson and Teff [Tevfik K.] Kutay, some of the architects who were not name architects but just had some feeling for social understanding. When you know somebody, you could be very prejudiced against them, and you say, "Well, no black person can be an architect." All of a sudden you meet somebody—

HENDERSON:

And that stereotype explodes.

KENNARD:

It explodes, because you say—I never will forget, when I was working for Martin Puller, the architect that was in charge of the [Los Angeles City Department of] Parks and Recreation—remember when I told you that I worked there?

HENDERSON:

Oh, yes, yes, yes, at Griffith Park.

KENNARD:

Yes, Griffith Park. I was saying we had long lunches and everything, and sometimes I would bring a book and read because I didn't want to just chitchat all of them. And I never will forget, there was a young architect, white, from New York or from somewhere in the East—I don't remember—and we were lying on the lawn, and I was reading. Have you ever been reading and you just realize somebody's just looking at you?

HENDERSON:

Yes. Creepy feeling. [laughter]

KENNARD:

Yes. And all of a sudden—I can't remember the guy's name, but he was a pretty nice guy. I looked up, and he was just staring at me. I said, "What's the matter?" So he said, "You know, " he said, "you're the first black person I have ever met"—I can't remember what he said exactly, but he said—"that has had an education and that would be reading—" I never will forget, I was reading *Newsweek* or *Time* magazine or something like that. He said, "That would be reading a magazine like that." I thought that was so strange, because I said, "Where has this son of a bitch been? Where has he been?" [laughter] He may not have been from New York; he was probably from some other place. But I thought it was so strange. I said, "How can anybody be so ignorant about people," you know. Because he said, "You know, yyou're black," and he said—In other words, "I didn't know blacks could read," right? [laughter] And if they did read, they wouldn't be reading *Time* magazine!

HENDERSON:

[laughter] Okay. And the architects that you were mentioning, like Quincy Jones and Bob Alexander, all of them weren't exactly doing this in a conscious way, but it was an unconscious desire to improve social conditions?

KENNARD:

Well, " I've got to make the observation that even in this racist society there's just a lot of decent people out there.

HENDERSON:

Yes, yes.

KENNARD:

And the decency runs the gamut of every race, religion, sex, creed, everything. And you find them in very unusual places. Because all of us have stereotypes about other races, and if there's one thing that's true, you just cannot have a stereotype about how somebody looks or—we have some friends that are dear friends of my wife [Helen King Kennard] and I, and we've known them since 1956 or '57.

HENDERSON:

Goodness.

KENNARD:

And when I first saw them and met them in a social situation, which was not really interracial, I looked at them, and they looked like just a couple of rednecks. They were typical of the people that were so prejudiced with me in Monrovia. I saw them and got to talking to them, and I found out—to show you how crazy it is—they were the nicest liberal people with the least prejudice that I have ever met. They are still our dear friends over a period of thirty-three years.

HENDERSON:

Thirty-four years.

KENNARD:

The media has had a lot to do with stereotypes. Zelma [G.] Wilson, the architect I told you about, who was married to Mike [Michael] Wilson—Mike

told me something that I never will forget. He was a very brilliant screenwriter. But I never will forget, he said, "When you go to a movie, you are not only entertained, but you are also educated, because they're sending messages that are for good or bad." Take Walt Disney. Walt Disney stereotyped blacks for years.

HENDERSON:

If he showed any at all.

KENNARD:

When he did show them at all, they were stereotyped. "Our Gang" comedy, which was not Walt Disney, but "Our Gang" comedy, where they had the little black guy with the—

HENDERSON:

Buckwheat.

KENNARD:

Buckwheat. And Stepin Fetchit. I don't fault Stepin Fetchit for making a living. The guy had to make a living. But the media took it, and what is it? It sends a message. I don't know about you, but when we were young and television came in—And I wasn't that young, either; I was in my twenties. But when I was married and my kids were growing up and a black face came on television, we hollered through the house to come look at the set. "There's a black person on the television."

HENDERSON:

Yeah, I think my family had similar reactions to that.

KENNARD:

All right. Now, remember, if children, all they see is white people on television, and they never see any blacks or Latinos or other races than white, and when they do see them the blacks are maids or whatever—There's nothing wrong with being a maid or a janitor. My father [James L. Kennard] was a janitor. There's nothing wrong with it, but you've got to balance it. You've got to show—

HENDERSON:

Show the full range.

KENNARD:

There's only one actor, years ago, that started to change the thing, and that's Lew Ayres. Lew Ayres was the actor that did *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Remember that?

HENDERSON:

I remember the movie.

KENNARD:

Yeah. Lew Ayres was a very sensitive guy. I don't know if he had a lot to do with the movie, but he sure did it. It was a movie against war. But I remember, later on, when he had a program, sometimes he had blacks just walk on stage. They may not even have had any lines. I remember there was a black doctor on a Lew Ayres television [show}. You don't realize what that does to people when all of a sudden they're not just the doorman, they're not the janitor, they're not the chauffeur, they're not the maid. You see a black person portrayed as a doctor. He doesn't have to have any lines in it, but the message gets through.

HENDERSON:

That is significant.

KENNARD:

Yes. So that's why now they just push the media. I mean, they've still got a long way to go. I mean, they're even discriminating against women in the media. I mean, women don't have authoritative, good roles in the media. There's still discrimination against blacks and Mexicans and everything in the media, but it is a lot better than it was. But to get back to the point, if I didn't believe that there just was a lot of decent people out there, you might as well give up. [laughter] You might as well give up. Because I look back at, like I mentioned, my art teacher [Edna Chess] in Monrovia who just took an interest in me, who didn't have to do it. She didn't have to do it. An English teacher [Mrs. Coblentz] who said, "Listen—" They'd never had a black in any other

plays in my high school, but she just pushed me. She said, "I want you to be in this. I want you to be in this." And she gave me a very good role, and I recited stuff from Mark Twain, and I was very good but nervous as hell. She said, "I think you deserve it. You're good. I want you to do it." See, I know that she took a lot of flak from other teachers. I heard later there were a lot of teachers and parents who did not want to have a black involved. When you did a play and you were the only black—plays are very social things. You know, after the play you go out and you have ice cream or something like that.

HENDERSON:

That's true.

KENNARD:

So you get very much involved. It's why I never belonged to a church. The only church I ever belonged to was the Unitarian Church, because the Unitarian Church was not religious in this sense. They were more into social justice, and it was a very interracial church. But my mother [Marie Bryan Kennard], who was an atheist—I don't know whether I told you this story. Stop me if I'm repeating it. My mother was an atheist, my father was Episcopalian. My father wanted me to go to the church in Monrovia. Well, there was only one Episcopalian church, and that was Saint Luke's Episcopal Church, and it was in a white area. And there were only a few blacks. You know, there are not many black Episcopalians.

HENDERSON:

That's true.

KENNARD:

My father lived in Massachusetts and Philadelphia, so he came from the North, so he was Episcopalian. But I got very active in the church, because I went there, and I got in the choir. And from about eight or nine, ten years old, I sang in the choir.

HENDERSON:

You haven't told me this.

KENNARD:

I haven't told you this? So I sang in the choir. This is in Monrovia. I sang in the choir. And I took turns—if you know the Episcopal Church, you carry the flag and you carry the cross, etc. But the choir was made up of both young boys and young girls, and I was the only black in the choir. Well, that was okay. I was eight, I was nine, I was ten, I was eleven. I got to about twelve, and they started planning things for the choir. We'd go to a little party Saturday night, or they'd say, "Let's take the choir and go to the show, and then we'll go out and have some ice cream." Well, you start getting twelve or thirteen, you know, you start looking at the other girls, right? So the minister in charge of the church was a canon. You know, there's a reverend and then there's a canon.

HENDERSON:

Oh, I didn't know that. Okay.

KENNARD:

Yes, in the Episcopal, it's like the Catholic Church. His name was Canon Smith, the Reverend Canon Smith. He came one day, and he said he wanted to talk to my mother and father. He was a nice guy. He said, "I have a real problem." He said, "There are a lot of complaints from the parents about Bobby being in the choir." Of course, my mother being from Charleston [South Carolina], she knew right away what was happening. So he said, "But I don't agree with it. I do not want you to take him out of the choir, " and he stood his ground pretty much on that matter. But remember, the parishioners give a lot of money, and finally he had to capitulate.

HENDERSON:

Oh.

KENNARD:

And right after that, he left the church. Now, I have never known whether—he told my mother he just could not be in a church where you're preaching brotherhood and then you're not practicing it. I always thought that he left the church because of that. And he came to the church right up here near the park at Silver Lake. You know the lake at Silver Lake, at Echo Park?

HENDERSON:

I know Silver Lake.

KENNARD:

There's a church, it's an Episcopal church, there. I think it's still there. He came in, and he was pastor of that church.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay. I'm not familiar with that church.

KENNARD:

I can't remember the name of it. I pass by it. It's a little tiny church, a very nice, pretty little church. So I never knew whether he was fired because he didn't agree with it or whether he left because he didn't agree with it. But anyway, I was out of the choir. So I said to myself—I'm fourteen years old—I said, "Now, if this is what happens in a church, which is supposed to be brotherly love, there's no place for me." And my mother said, "Well, that's why I'm an atheist."

HENDERSON:

[laughter] You know, to me it is surprising that your mother was an atheist. Not that I'm questioning her religious values, but blacks, especially in the South, are supposed to be so religious.

KENNARD:

No, she never was. From Charleston—she was not. She was a fighting lady. But my dad wasn't fire and brimstone religion. I never went back into the church again until I joined the Unitarian Church, and the only reason why I joined the Unitarian Church is because a very good friend of mine that I graduated from the [University of Southern California] school of architecture with, Tom Ballinger—Tom and his wife Ellen [Ballinger] and Helen and I got married on the same day.

HENDERSON:

Oh.

KENNARD:

His wedding was in the afternoon, like two or three o'clock, and our wedding was at six o'clock, so all of our friends, all the architects that knew us, went to his wedding and then came to our wedding. Well, Tom, he hadn't been married very long, maybe six or seven years, and Ellen died. And Tom was always a kind of a liberal guy. He's one of the few white guys I know at 'SC that had a real understanding of the civil rights struggle. In fact, he told me—and I'm talking about this is in 1948.

HENDERSON:

Goodness.

KENNARD:

He told me, "The only way blacks are ever going to get their civil rights in this country is not through the left-wing movement or the liberal white movement." He said, "It's going to be through blacks themselves." And he said, "I will predict it will be through the black church." I mean, I said, "You know, for a white guy to say that—." I was just shocked, you know. And I thought about it a lot when Martin Luther King [Jr.] came along, because that's what happened.

HENDERSON:

Yes, you're right.

KENNARD:

Because the black church is the center of it. I don't know how he knew it, because he wasn't even from the South. But his wife died very young. He hadn't been married more than seven or eight years. I went to the service, and the minister that preached the service was [Reverend] Steve [Stephen H.] Fritchman of the First Unitarian Church. This was in the early fifties; it was about '55, '56, something like that. And I was so impressed. He didn't talk about the hereafter and all that bullshit and Jesus and all that. He talked about what you do here on earth to make it a better life. And I told Helen, I said, "You know what—?" Because my wife was raised as an ME, African Methodist Episcopal, in Tulare [California], but she got kind of disillusioned with the church, too. So I said, "We ought to go visit this church. This is really something." Well, I got very active in the church. I just found my home,

because everybody was in there. You know, Paul Robeson would visit the church, and, I mean, all the top black civil rights leaders would come to the church, and the Jewish community and the Mexican and the Asian. It was a polyglot. I even served on the board, and I was chairman of the finance committee. I did everything. I was really into

HENDERSON:

And which church was this?

KENNARD:

First Unitarian Church, Eighth [Street] and Vermont [Avenue], famous church. It was in the forefront in the fight against the loyalty oath. Steve Fritchman was an unfriendly witness. I mean, he was really something. We got to know him real well. He was a dear friend, and he was up to our house a lot, and, I mean, just a wonderful relationship. I did a lot for the church. A lot of stuff I did pro bono. But he finally retired, and I told him, I said, "Steve, when you retire, I'm leaving. When you go, I'm going." Because I said, "I know I'll never find anybody like you again." And I did. But we still kept being friends until he died. But when he retired and then died, I may have been back once or twice. I think my niece [Barbara Procello] got married there. I'm not against religion. Whatever makes anybody happy and makes them be a better person I don't have a problem with. In my family, you name it, I've got it.

HENDERSON:

[laughter] In terms of religion?

KENNARD:

Oh, yes. My brother-in-law [William King] is a priest.

HENDERSON:

Catholic priest?

KENNARD:

Catholic priest. And when I was dating his sister, he was at Dominguez [Hills Memorial] Seminary. He's about seven years younger than I am, so he was twenty-two. He used to think I was a real communist pinko. [laughter] He was just telling me how I should join the church and everything. So finally, when I

married my wife, I said, "Bill, let me tell you something. I'm going to respect you as my brother-in-law, but I'll tell you, let's make a pact. I will not try to get you out of the Catholic Church if you don't try to get me in. So let's not discuss it anymore." You know, he and I are the closest of friends. We are so close. He's just the nicest guy. But you know what? He left the church. He left the church about six or seven years ago. He got disillusioned with the church. I've always wanted to say to him, "Well, you got out before I got in." [laughter]

HENDERSON:

We've gotten on a very good tangent. I've enjoyed all these topics. We have not discussed what your firm was doing in '78—

KENNARD:

Oh, yes. [laughter]

HENDERSON:

—which is the time when it was about to go through some changes.

KENNARD:

That was '78, yes.

HENDERSON:

I don't know if you want to take that up. I have two questions that will start us in a different direction. You had your partners Gault and Delahousie. What are their full names?

KENNARD:

Okay, it's Ronald Delahousie and Jeffrey Gault. Yes, I think maybe we ought to get into '78 later.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

That was a horrendous time. [laughter] That will give you a lesson in the practice of architecture.

HENDERSON:

Let me ask this question—back to Carey Jenkins. At the time when you were finding out about him and how he worked for [A.] Quincy Jones, how aware were you of other black architects at the time in Los Angeles? I mean, you were aware of yourself and Carey Jenkins, but how many other people were you aware of at that time?

KENNARD:

I met Carey Jenkins, I had met John [D.] Williams and Harold [L.] Williams—I knew them—and Art [Arthur H.] Silvers, who was younger than all of us. When you get in business for yourself, that's when you begin to realize who's out there, because you want to know who's out there, who's the competition, and you get to talking. I mean, Carey and I used to sit and talk a lot about the practice of architecture and how tough it was. Carey was very nice to me, because when I went to Willowbrook and he had given up his practice and he was working for the state—he had done Willowbrook with Duckett and Jenkins—he said, "Listen, Bob, I can't do it now because I'm working for somebody else, but I'll help you get the job." Which I thought was very nice. We became competitors later on, but we were always pretty friendly competitors. I mean, we'd still go out and have a drink together and talk about architecture. Carey had a lot of hostility. He was really very bitter about the role of the black architect.

HENDERSON:

Oh. Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

Yeah. See, Carey had a lot of ego, and he really wanted to be the biggest black architect in the United States.

HENDERSON:

Wow.

KENNARD:

He didn't say it, but he wanted to be, because he offered to merge with us.

HENDERSON:

No, I don't think you told me that.

KENNARD:

Yes, well, Art and I were very busy, and we had around thirty-five people, offices in Oakland and offices here, and Carey was really busy. Carey had offices in Atlanta, Washington, D.C., Saint Louis, and he was really busy. He had people running the offices, but he didn't have people of the strength of Art and me.

HENDERSON:

Middle management, associates—

KENNARD:

Middle management, could market. And he came to us once. He came to our office, and he said, "I have a suggestion. We can be the biggest black architects in the United States." He said, "We just merge our firms." And business-wise, it was a hell of an offer. He said, "I don't care what the name of it is as long as all our names are in it." He said, "I'll throw my whole firm in," and his firm was bigger than ours.

HENDERSON:

Really?

KENNARD:

Yes. We'd throw all the work together and we'd split it three ways. That's a pretty good offer.

HENDERSON:

That certainly is.

KENNARD:

Because, although Art and I had 50 percent of ours, he had practically all of his, so he was taking a big reduction. We had a lot of meetings about it, but we chose not to do it. We just didn't feel that, having talked to his partners, Vernon Duckett and [Edward C.] Barker, we just didn't think we'd ever get along and make it. I may have been wrong, and it could have been a real good deal. I think it may have worked, but Art particularly, and me to some extent,

thought we'd better back out. We had a pretty good thing going. Art and I were very good friends, and he said, "Well, we'd better just stick to the way it is." As it was, Art left two years later. He was gone.

HENDERSON:

I guess part of my question about what you were knowing of other black architects was, was there any thought to having an organization at that time in, say, the sixties, early sixties? Some sort of group of what you guys were doing at that time?

KENNARD:

No, I think that—you know, after the sixties—after the Watts riots—most of the black architects were pretty busy, because the whole city broke loose. You know, John Williams and Harold Williams were all up in San Francisco, so everybody was pretty busy. Harold, when we did the Van Nuys State Office Building, he really wanted to merge with us, but at that time I had pretty well had it with partners. I don't think that I would do it again now, I mean, unless I had them coming up from within the office. Actually, I did that before. I never just merged with another firm. I've had people Who worked for me that became partners. In fact, all my partners came up through the firm.

HENDERSON:

That includes Gault and Delahousie?

KENNARD:

Yes.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

Delahousie, Gault, Silvers, Shirley Nakamoto-Downs all worked for me in heavy capacities, and then I offered them a partnership, and they bought into the partnership. But, see, I doubt whether I would have a partner that I would just bring in from somewhere, because I think you have to know a lot about them. There's so much to know aside from just their technical ability. And even then, when people came up to me I didn't know them that well. See,

there's a lot of difference between being a senior, top employee and being a partner. As Harry [S] Truman said, the buck stops there. And a lot of people—and I don't say this with any gladness, or I don't say it with the certainty it sounds like—but I see very few people, now that I've been in so long, who come through architecture, in my business, that are partnership material. I mean, really, there are very few. The best partner was my first one, Art. And even then, because of his emotional inability to deal with the stress, it turned out that he was not good. But as far as intellect, willingness to work, integrity, competence, talent, Art was undoubtedly the most superior of all. Now, all these other people had a lot of things going for them, but the one that I think I could have made it the most with still would be Art if he didn't have just personal problems. You know, the stress of life today, you cannot be in a business with this stress and then go home and not have a pretty serene environment. You just can't do it. You've got to have a wife that's behind you—which he did—but you also have to be calm in your own way. You can't have stress here and stress at home. Something's going to have to give. So if you don't have a pretty comfortable personal life and a healthful life—I mean, you cannot drink and smoke pot and think you're going to function. You've got to look alive and be ready to meet it. It's just a matter of what you want. If you don't want to do that, then you shouldn't be in business. You know, as they say, if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen. You can't do it. So I see very few people that can do it. And I see them here. I can look at them and tell those that could be a partner and all that. I mean, I can just see their work habits, their attitudes. I've got one kid here who hasn't even got a degree, and I'll bet you, as far as all the capabilities of being a partner, he's one of the best, because he's so involved in what he does. He's so interested, he's such a team player, he's such a giving kind of guy. He'll just work his butt off. And I got him right out of high school. It's just amazing. And he's going to grow. This kid will be with this office probably forever, because you move him, you keep moving him up, up, up. And we make him go to school. He can't afford to stop going to school, but I'll bet you— Joe [Joseph] Barcelona said, "You come here with only high school, you've got to go to school. You've got to go to night school. You've got to go, and you've got to tell me what you're taking all the time." I don't think architects realize business is tough, you know. It's really tough. If I'd have known what it was when I started, then I probably wouldn't have gone into it.

HENDERSON:

Interesting.

KENNARD:

I'd have been so scared. It's like marriage. You don't know what you're getting into when you get married.

HENDERSON:

You sure don't. I mean, if you knew the future, you'd be afraid of doing anything.

KENNARD:

I used to tell my mother and dad about this stuff. Oh, they'd just laugh at me. She said, "You haven't even eaten your white bread and butter. You don't know anything." [laughter] And my dad said, "Well, if he knew it, he wouldn't get married." [laughter] You think you know, but you don't know. No, I would never have gone through it again. Never. I don't think I'd want to go through it again, either.

1.12. TAPE NUMBER: IX, SIDE ONE JANUARY 1, 1991

HENDERSON:

My first question was about Shirley Downs.

KENNARD:

Okay. Shirley [Nakamoto-]Downs was a Japanese American. She was married to the son of a black architect, Tommy [Thomas] Downs. Did you know Tommy Downs?

HENDERSON:

No, I did not.

KENNARD:

Tommy Downs was an architect who was in my age group who, when I left DMJM [Daniel, Mann, Johnson, and Mendenhall], came and worked for DMJM. He worked for DMJM for a long time, and he moved up to a very high

position with DMJM, and we were very good friends. It's through Tommy that I met his daughter-in-law. She was married to Tommy's son, Rodney [Downs]. She was an administrative secretary person who worked for a black contractor whom you know, I know. He's still around. The name will come to me. I think his name is Williams. A relatively successful black contractor, very, very hard-working guy. But she heard about our firm—and I think she wanted to leave his firm, for reasons I do not know—so I guess Tommy referred her to us, because he said it would be a good place to work. He knew me pretty well. So Art [Arthur H. Silvers] and I—that was when it was Kennard and Silvers—interviewed her. She had a very good background. She had a business administration background.

HENDERSON:

Native of California, I guess?

KENNARD:

Native of California. Her family was from Sacramento. They were landscape contractors. In fact, her brother is a landscape architect, one of her brothers is. She joined us in the early seventies. It was probably maybe even the late sixties or early seventies. Yes, I think she joined us in the late sixties. It was just shortly after we had opened an office in the [San Francisco] Bay Area. We opened an office in the Bay Area of San Francisco in 1968, and Art [Arthur H. Silvers] was going back and forth for the first year. But then it got too much for him, and he was going through some personal problems, so I switched and I said, "Okay, I'll start making the trips, and he can be in the L.A. office." So Shirley turned out to be a fantastic person. She was extremely competent, worked hard. I mean, she would really work hard. Everybody liked her, she was excellent working with people, and she's extremely smart. We grew real fast after that. I mean, we went from about ten or fifteen people to about thirty-five people. We expanded. [Ronald J.] Delahousie joined the firm, Jeff [Jeffrey M.] Gault joined the firm to do the planning, so we had about twenty-two, twenty-four people in L.A., and then our office in Oakland built up to about ten people. So I was traveling a lot. But Shirley was very good. She practically ran the office for me. In '72, because from '69 to '72, Art was undecided on whether he wanted to leave the firm or stay in the firm—did I tell you about that?

HENDERSON:

We didn't go into that in detail. You said you had some major problems.

KENNARD:

Yeah, well, what happened. Art was having personal problems, and there would be times when the business was just too much for him. That's why he had a hard time dealing with the traveling up and down. You've got to have a pretty stable home life and your head pretty well together to be working those kinds of hours and getting on planes. You know, you'd have to leave at seven, be up there, come back at night, sometimes stay all night, and it's a hard trip.

HENDERSON:

Well, let me ask this question. Did things evolve in the firm where you were doing the business and he was doing design? Or was it ever that clear-cut?

KENNARD:

We evolved that he was in charge of design and I was in charge of marketing and the business end of it. I moved out of the design. He always said, "Well, you really should design." I said, "Art, you can't design and run all over the map. You can't do both." Design is a very concentrated kind of thing. Art was a very good designer. He's extremely smart, has a good sense of judgment with people. Personally, he had personal problems. I mean, he was drinking a little heavily and it was tough. So for a period of time from the time he—he became a partner in '66, and up until about '69 or, say, '70, things were going. We were real busy. But as his marriage put more pressure on him, because he was having a problem with home personally, he would be depressed, and he would sometimes say, "I want to get out of the firm." He did that several times. I mean, he did it once, and he said, "I just can't take it anymore. I want to get out of the firm. This is not what I want to do with my life." It is a lot of pressure, a tremendous amount of pressure. So I said, "Well, all right. If you want to get out, I'll buy you out." Well, he'd think about it over the weekend, and then the next Monday he'd come and he'd say, "Well, no, I want to stay in. I like architecture." So finally, the second time he did it—and I was under a lot of pressure, so I said, "Look, you've got to be in or you've got to be out. I mean, I can't build a firm, I can't do all this stuff, and I'm running up and down

the coast—." And we had work in Washington, DC., Jeff was going to Mexico—we were busy. We had a lot of work all over, all over the U.S. and some in Mexico. We were running. Jeff was doing the planning, Ron Delahousie was running the production, Art was doing design, and I'm running all over trying to get work and see that we can make payroll. So it was tough. So then, finally, the second time—I never will forget—it was Friday night. A lot of times at evening we'd sit and talk, and he'd be very depressed, and he'd say, "Well, all right," he said, "I want to get out." Then, by Monday, he would talk about he didn't want to get out. So I finally told myself, I said, "The next time he wants out, I'm going to let him go." So finally, in '72, one day he was really down and depressed, and he said, "I want to get out." I said, "Okay. Let's call your attorney." We had an attorney that he had known for years who was our legal counsel for L.A. work. His name" was Dave [David B. A.] Finkel, who was a prominent lawyer, and now is recently councilman in Santa Monica. He and and Art were very good friends. I said, "Well, let's call him." We met Saturday. I never will forget, we went down to Santa Monica. We met at breakfast, and I said, "Art wants to get out. It's the third time he wants to get out. I think he needs to leave." It wasn't the best timing. It would have been better if he'd have gone out like in '70, because financially we were in much better shape. By '72, with all the moratorium on the housing, we weren't in very good shape. But he had moved into about 50 percent partnership. And I said, "Art, you know, I like you, you're great, but I've got to have the commitment." So he finally decided he wanted out, so we met and we drew up all the papers. I never will forget the night that Art and I were signing the papers. We were in the office on Washington Boulevard, and we were signing the papers. Art was in his office and I was in my office—and it wasn't bitter. But Art finally kind of came unglued. He realized that he really didn't want to leave. So he sent Dave Finkel back in to ask me. Dave was telling me, he said, "Bob, would you consider rescinding this and letting Art come back?" Now, remember, Dave went to kindergarten with Art. They knew each other better than I knew him. So I turned to Dave Finkel, and I said, "Dave, you know Art. You love Art. I love Art. I mean, he's fantastic. Would you be his partner?" I'm still waiting for the answer. I haven't gotten one yet. I don't know whether I should put that in the book, because if Art ever reads it, he'll probably be ticked off. [laughter] But Dave never did answer me. So we broke up. But I was in a bad bind, because here we had work, God, all over. Washington, D.C. We were at work in resorts

in Mexico. Jeff was going down there, I'm going up there. It was frenetic. So Jeff and Ron pushed for being a partner. I didn't mind it too much. Both of them were very good. Ron's a very good project manager, and Jeff was a good marketer. So I said okay. I said, "Listen, I can't run this damned thing by myself, and if you want a partnership, I will make it so you can buy into it as a partner." And we said, "We'll make it three-way, " and gradually they would buy into the company. They would get increased salaries but they would buy in. So that's how from Kennard and Silvers it went to Kennard, Delahousie, and Gault. That's the way you got the KDG.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

Shirley was with us at the time and running all the administrative stuff, and I had a young woman who was just a fantastic accountant person. Her name was Donna Van Buren. She just handled all the payroll for up north and everything. She was really good, a very competent person. So I had a real good structure. Jeff had a top guy, Ron Allum, who was one of the early graduates of the [UCLA] graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning and has been very successful since he left. He was running the plant. I mean, we had a really good team. We had a guy named Ward Preston who was an excellent designer. When he left the firm he went into set design. He won the Academy Award for *Towering Inferno*. I mean, we had really good people, and we were building a very good reputation. But architecture's a funny thing. Well, any business is. I mean, the thing is, there are not many people who have the stomach and the staying power to be an entrepreneur. I have learned that over the years. I can count the people on two hands, probably, and have fingers left over—maybe one hand—that have been in my office—I'll give them the benefit of the doubt—two hands—because some people have left and been entrepreneurs and been very successful. But I would say not more than a dozen people, and most of them have already gone and opened their own office, like Ernest [P.] Howard, Jim [James C.] Moore [III], Escudero-Fribourg [Associates], Adolpho Miralles. All those people worked for me and had their own office or they've gone into other businesses, like Bob Bell, who owns a lot of restaurants. So, I mean, you've got to have a balance in your life.

For one thing, your personal life has to be pretty well together. Secondly, you have to be able to take the ups and downs. So we were doing really well. We were a partnership, and we were making pretty good money for that time, the three partners. But as a partnership, all the money that comes in that's divided, you have to pay tax on it. Well, I think it was '78 when all of a sudden we got hit with a lot of tax, and our accountant said, "You've got to move into a corporation so you can shelter the taxes." But it was that very year that Ron Delahousie, who was just an excellent project manager, one of the best I've ever had in the firm, his wife and he broke up, and Ron kind of came unglued. So he told me one day, he said, "Look—" I don't know whether I should tell all this in this oral history or not.

HENDERSON:

It's up to you.

KENNARD:

It's personal stuff.

HENDERSON:

I've got lots of tape.

KENNARD:

Well, we'll have to see. We may have to edit it out.

HENDERSON:

Okay. No problem.

KENNARD:

All of a sudden he had to pay about $18,000 or $20,000 worth of income tax.

HENDERSON:

Damn. That is a lot.

KENNARD:

And he just went unglued. He said, "My wife Elaine [Delahousie]'s taking half my money," because she's separating, and he said, "KDG's taking the other half." He says, "I have to file for bankruptcy." I said, "Ron, the U.S. government

has no word in their dictionary that spells bankruptcy. If you've got a house, you've got a car, you will pay the tax, so forget it." So he said, "I want out." He said, "I don't want to be a partner." Well, having gone through this stuff with Art, I said, "Okay, when?" He said, "As soon as possible." I said, "In thirty days you're out. I'll buy you back out." So shortly thereafter, Gault, who had a friend whose father was extremely wealthy and was an older guy and had taken a liking to Jeff—and Jeff had been doing some development.

HENDERSON:

Jeff is Gault?

KENNARD:

Yes, Gault.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

Jeff wanted to break off and do some development. It was Gault, James, Plessett, a three-way partnership. And, you know, you can make a lot more money on the developing thing, especially when you've got an angle. So, to make a long story short, Jeff said, "Do you mind if I leave?" I said, "Listen, if you have an opportunity, leave." Well, all of a sudden it's 1978, Jeff's leaving, Ron wants to get out, and I've got all these people, and I'm trying to run this goddamned place. So one day Shirley and I were sitting down together. I said, "I don't have a problem with buying out one of these guys, but I don't want to buy them both out." So I said, "How would you like to buy one of them out, and you'll be my partner?" So she became a partner.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

The name was changed. We wanted to keep KDG because KDG was what everybody knew about. So I said, "How am I going to keep the initials KDG?" Then it all of a sudden dawned on me, "How about Kennard Design Group?"

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

And that's how we kept the name, but—

HENDERSON:

You kept the initials.

KENNARD:

We kept the initials. But Shirley also had marital problems.

HENDERSON:

Oh, no. Not Shirley! [laughter]

KENNARD:

Well, Shirley had been married once before, and she was having problems with Rodney [Downs] as if she wanted to leave, and, of course, now she was making the kind of money where she could afford to leave. Before, she could not leave when she was just a lowly administrator. But this way, now she's a partner, she's making good money, so she decided, hell, she's getting out. So she split. But when she separated from Rodney, she was then single, and we, a lot of us in the office, helped her move over to—one of my interior guys helped do her house. She moved into Park La Brea. She had a nice place. You know, we helped her furnish the thing and the company loaned her some money to get her furniture, etc. Well, Shirley's the type of person who cannot be single long. I mean, some women just can't. So it wasn't long before she wanted to be married again. And she was not well. During the time she was a partner, she was out about two years. She had real problems with her back. She'd had a lot of surgery on her back, so she was in constant pain. So she decided that she'd—she met this guy and she wanted to marry him, a nice guy, and he wanted her to stay home. So that was the end of her; she was gone.

HENDERSON:

Oh.

KENNARD:

So I bought her out.

HENDERSON:

And what year was that?

KENNARD:

That was '85. In '85, Shirley was gone. So it was then I happened to read a book—of course, after all these years, now I learn. But I read a book—I don't know whether you've ever read the book. It's by [Mark H.] McCormack. It's called *What They Didn't Teach You at Harvard Business School*.

HENDERSON:

I think I've heard of that. [laughter]

KENNARD:

Somebody gave me that book. It's an excellent book. This guy is the guy that started that big international sports franchise [International Management Group] in which he promoted people like Arnold Palmer. He put Arnold Palmer on the map. He took top athletes and ran their careers and their investments, and they would move in and make money and not just be broke. And I never will forget, I was reading it, and it said—he is single. He owns the company. And there's one page in there—it's a very succinct book. And one sentence says [slaps hand on table], "Don't have partners."

HENDERSON:

[laughter] Oh, my goodness.

KENNARD:

I said, "Now he tells me." I don't think you can make a blanket thing like that, but I think there is a lot to say about it. My wife [Helen King Kennard] always said, "You're the kiss of death." All four partners, in all the time they were there, they broke up their marriages. I said, "Listen, it's not my fault." But what I do think is if your marriage is a little shaky, then the pressure of business will sometimes push it over the brink.

HENDERSON:

Yes, yes.

KENNARD:

And one thing you've got to have, which I do have, is a wife whose family was in business, for one thing—but that's not absolutely necessary—but who understands the kind of flak you have to take to be in a business. I mean, her father had a restaurant, and they had developed housing, etc., and she knows that it's a roller coaster. Sometimes it's up and sometimes it's down, and you've got to ride the wave. Sometimes you don't get paid. You know, in 1985 I made nothing.

HENDERSON:

Ouch.

KENNARD:

No sales. And then sometimes you do well. I mean, there are a lot of times when you just can't get paid. I mean, you've got to pay people first. So you've got to take a lot of flak. Well, of course, now one of my daughters [Gail Kennard Madyun] is in the company. But I found out that I learned how to organize it that—see, some people in a business would never want to be a partner. So the people, I've found out, if they want to be a partner, and you're not ready to have them as a partner, it's best to encourage them and help them start their own practice, which I've done. I mean, I have encouraged a lot of people. Jim Moore, for instance. He always had a feeling that he just wanted to have a crack at this one thing in his life. And I said, "Jim, if you want to do it, do it now, as much as I hate to lose you, " because he's an excellent designer. He's called me a number of times, and he said, "Boy, now I know what you went through." Because when people are employees, they don't see your side of it. But Jim sees it now, you see. Escudero Fribourg [Associates], they see it now. They see how the grass is not as green on the other side of the street as it looks. I mean, you put in a lot of hours. I still put in a lot of hours.

HENDERSON:

Very interesting. Let me switch the conversation to go this way. I don't know if you recognize this brochure.

KENNARD:

Oh, yeah.

HENDERSON:

It's been kind of water damaged.

KENNARD:

Yeah, *The Three Worlds of Los Angeles* [United States Information Agency traveling architectural exhibit, 1974].

HENDERSON:

The Three Worlds of Los Angeles.

KENNARD:

Beata Inaya. Where'd you get that?

HENDERSON:

She gave that to me a couple of years back.

KENNARD:

Who? _

HENDERSON:

Beata?

KENNARD:

Oh, Beata? Yes, Beata Inaya did that.

HENDERSON:

And I was just going to ask you what you remember about that exposition and her and your work at that time. Tell me about that.

KENNARD:

Yes, I remember it. She took this around the country. We contributed to it. I remember. I have a copy of this.

HENDERSON:

Do you remember what the thinking was in going into the formation of it? Did she come to you?

KENNARD:

She came to us, yes.

HENDERSON:

She's from Russia, I believe.

KENNARD:

Russia, yes. She's from Russia. She was a pretty liberal lady, and she wanted to show the diversity of the United States abroad. It traveled all over the world.

HENDERSON:

The pictures of you and Art Silver in there, do you know what year those were taken?

KENNARD:

No. Isn't there a date on this thing?

HENDERSON:

She couldn't remember the date at the time.

KENNARD:

Well, it's got to be '74.

HENDERSON:

'Seventy-four? Okay.

KENNARD:

But I think Art had gone when it was put together in '70, '72, because Art was gone in '72. Most of this work that we did was before '72.

HENDERSON:

It seemed that part of the work, or at least the descriptions of the work, was in reaction to the Watts riots.

KENNARD:

Yes, right. See, the 102nd Street [Elementary] School, Central City Community Mental Health [Facility], Bank of America, all of it came out of the Watts riots. All the jobs we showed came out of that. Yeah, I saw Beata not too long ago. I ran into her. Well, when I spoke to the AIA [American Institute of Architects] on the three architects—you know that thing—she was in the audience.

HENDERSON:

Three architects?

KENNARD:

Well, Herb [Herbert N.] Nadel was chairman of a series of lectures in which they would invite three architects.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

And the night I was there—no, four architects. The idea was just for the four architects to talk about their practice and how they got started. I was there, Dave [David C.] Martin from Albert C. Martin [and Associates], [Edward C.] Friedrichs from Gensler [and Associates], and the fellow that ran the Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill office here.

HENDERSON:

[Richard C.] Keating.

KENNARD:

Keating, yes. Richard Keating. It was kind of funny, because David Martin was from a real large office, a very successful office, and Keating is very wealthy.

HENDERSON:

Oh, he is?

KENNARD:

Oh, yes. I believe his family's wealthy. And, of course, he was running the show at Skidmore. So you had David Martin and Keating. Friedrichs, I don't think he was very wealthy, but he was in a firm that has been very successful.

HENDERSON:

Right.

KENNARD:

They were all big firms doing a lot of work, and then there was little old me. [laughter] I mean, it was a whole different ballgame. Of course, right after that, Keating left Skidmore.

HENDERSON:

I heard that Skidmore closed its office here.

KENNARD:

I believe so.

HENDERSON:

Do you happen to know if he left and then they closed the office? Or they were going to close the office and he decided to stay and leave? I haven't heard what the gossip was.

KENNARD:

I think he probably realized—he got this second big job for Skidmore. He got it away from [Philip] Johnson, [John] Burgee [and Associates], who was supposed to do it. I think he probably wanted to leave, and Skidmore also was thinking of pulling away. I ran into him at the AIA convention, and Helen and I and he and his wife were talking, and I said, "I hear you're going out on your own." He said, "Yes, and I'm trying to decide whether it's a smart thing to do or not." And I said, "Well, Richard, just jump on out there and do it. I mean, get it out of your system at least." He said, "Well, I don't know." But he's in with a couple of other people. I haven't talked to him and found out how he's getting along, but I think he has good contacts. I think he's a guy who can move in a whole different milieu of work.

HENDERSON:

He's got star quality.

KENNARD:

Yes, that's right, who runs with the kind of people that hire a lot of good architects. And I think that's why he moved up in Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, because of the corporate thing. His father was an airline executive. And the reason why I thought he was pretty well off, he lived in a house that was designed by William Wilson Wurster.

HENDERSON:

Where did he grow up?

KENNARD:

In the Bay Area.

HENDERSON:

I didn't know that. Okay.

KENNARD:

He grew up in Orinda. And he was telling us at this dinner that his father was an airline executive and they lived in a house designed by William Wilson Wurster. Wurster was a fantastic architect, so you know he couldn't have been a poor boy.

HENDERSON:

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. [laughter]

KENNARD:

But Richard's a pretty nice guy. He's a very classy guy. [tape recorder off]

HENDERSON:

You were saying about how you and Art worked in terms of a design team. You went back and forth. Can you pick up on that?

KENNARD:

Well, Art was a very, very good designer, and he was so smart that he had an ability to deal with the client and listen very carefully to what they said and translate it. And he loved to design.

HENDERSON:

But, now, you and he went back and forth—

KENNARD:

Because I had designed, and I think he respected me as a designer, I didn't have a problem. He had a problem. He said, "How come you're not designing?" I said, "Well, I think both of us can't design, but I would like to always be in on the design." So we worked together many an evening. We'd sit down after everybody had gone and work out the design. He called on me, and he could take criticism of mine, because it was usually constructive criticism. We had a real good ability to work together on design. We respected each other's ability. And, of course, Art was honest, very honest, in his personal life. He may have had personal problems, but he was very honest in who he was, what he wanted to do, and that integrity spilled over. If he could have dealt with it in a personal way, his personal side of his life, he was the perfect partner. He really was. Because he had great stature, people liked him, except that his personal thing sometimes got caustic with people and he turned them off. But he was a charming guy. He was a very handsome, charming guy. And he was committed to social things. He was very committed to the civil rights movement. So we had that togetherness that was very good. It was a big disappointment to me. I met Art when he was still at fSC, and he visited me. I never will forget the first time I met him. He came and visited me at Gruen [Associates]. He was doing a paper, and he wanted to know about black architects. I was very impressed with him. And then, when he went to work for Albert C. Martin [and Associates] and I was in business, he came and visited me, and I offered him a job. So it was the beginning of a long relationship. We did some nice work with him. And we're still close friends; we still keep in touch. I just got a letter from him the other day.

HENDERSON:

Well, let me ask you this question. When you were working on design, were you working with a conscious philosophy? That is, at 'SC, did he pick up something about modernism there? Was that part of your conscious design? When you were working on a design, was there a conscious philosophy that you were designing in the midst of?

KENNARD:

Well, I think Art and I both shared one thing: We never went into a design with a preconceived idea of what it was going to look like. What we did is we looked at the program and we tried to design it based on the user and the program and the environment where it was, and as a result, most of the things that Art designed while he was here, they're very different.

HENDERSON:

Yes, yes.

KENNARD:

You wouldn't notice that they were designed by the same person. A lot of things, Central City Mental Health Clinic, 102nd Street School, it's different than Saint Mark's Lutheran Church.

HENDERSON:

We're looking at the pictures here.

KENNARD:

They're different. This is different, this is a little different. This was an industrial building; it had to be real clean. Central City Mental Health—they're all different.

HENDERSON:

You can't say that they're all cookie cutter and they're all the same unique solution.

KENNARD:

No. No, that's right.

HENDERSON:

But what I guess I'm getting to is that all of these buildings, to me, look modern. They're kind of a product of their times.

KENNARD:

Yeah, they're all contemporary.

HENDERSON:

Contemporary.

KENNARD:

They're very contemporary.

HENDERSON:

There's use of concrete—

KENNARD:

Richard [J.] Neutra, his philosophy was the Bauhaus, in which you took an idea and you refined it throughout your professional career.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

That's different than, say, the [Eero] Saarinen office, which I think is one of the greatest of offices. The Saarinen office and [E.] Kevin Roche and John [G.] Dinkeloo, who took over the office, and the architects that came out of the Saarinen office, like [Anthony J.H.] Lumsden and [Cesar] Pelli—but Saarinen, if you look at it, you can't tell that that was a Saarinen job. I mean, you look at a Neutra job, you know it's a Neutra job.

HENDERSON:

Right.

KENNARD:

You can see a [Frank] Gehry, you can almost tell it's Frank Gehry.

HENDERSON:

Yes.

KENNARD:

But you tell me if you can see that the Ford Foundation [Headquarters] Building or Dulles [International] Airport or the Oakland Museum or the chapel at Yale [University]— You'd never know that they were at the same firm, but they were all from the Saarinen office. Dulles airport is incredible.

HENDERSON:

Yes, yes.

KENNARD:

I mean, it looks like an airport.

HENDERSON:

It really does.

KENNARD:

It is fantastic.

HENDERSON:

And it looks almost timeless, too.

KENNARD:

The Oakland Museum-—• When I had an office up there, I spent so much time at the Oakland Museum, because I read that when Saarinen looked at the rate—- They took an aerial view of Oakland. This is what I've read. I don't know if it's true, but it seems right. Oakland's very urban, and they said, "There shouldn't be building there, there should be a park there." Have you ever seen the Oakland Museum?

HENDERSON:

I've seen pictures of it. It's covered—it's an underground building with plants and things on it.

KENNARD:

They built a building in a park, a park in a building. It is an incredible piece of urban design. I used to take my lunch and eat there because it was just such a gorgeous place. Tony Lumsden was the guy that worked on it. There are very few architects, I think, today—and Art was kind of like this. I mean, people will probably resent the fact that I'm putting him in the same league as Saarinen, but Art would take a building, study the owner's problems, and design it within the budget and with the site and owner in mind. So our work—especially when Art was here—does not show a cookie-cutter kind of design.

The churches we did, the houses we did, they don't reflect a particular style. You take a program, a problem, and you solve it. And that's what I think architecture should do. That's why I think the Saarinen office—if I had to name any one office that I admire the most, that's the office. And Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo, who carried it on, still have done some wonderful work. The John Deere [and Company] headquarters, there's just incredible architecture, even more so than Frank Lloyd Wright, although he was pretty good at that, too. I mean, he had quite a different variety, but not as much as the Saarinen office.

HENDERSON:

And even Neutra, at the end of his career, when he was going through some changes—that is, he used different materials, he was using woods—

KENNARD:

Well, he used different materials, but he still had the [Ludwig] Mies van der Rohe, [Walter] Gropius, Bauhaus philosophy.

HENDERSON:

A very set philosophy.

KENNARD:

A very set philosophy. A lot of it was modular like [Raphael S.] Soriano. I went through that period, and I liked it, and, I mean, there are places to use it. My house is very much like that. I mean, it's not as expensive as Neutra would build, but it's a very simple structure.

HENDERSON:

I want to see your house one day. I haven't been up there yet.

KENNARD:

Yes, I want you to come. One thing I learned about Neutra more than anything, he wrote a book called *Mystery and Realities of the Site*.

HENDERSON:

Yes, you've mentioned that.

KENNARD:

And I'll tell you, after the third time I designed my house The first two times, I couldn't afford what I wanted to do. So finally, when I did it, I did a complete rectangle, and the siting is what's great about the house. I mean, the house is simple. I know it has a lot to do with my experience with Neutra. But the siting is what makes the house. I think that's the big thing I did that works real well, because it was a tough hillside. Garrett Eckbo did the landscaping. And when I get in there, it's a place, it's a place where you are. It's a retreat. Art and I agreed with that kind of philosophy. We were tremendously compatible in how we approached architecture, and because we were both black, we had similar backgrounds. We understood how to deal in a majority situation.

HENDERSON:

Do you think that helped you with some of your black clients as well?

KENNARD:

Oh, there's no question about it, because we understood them. See, that's why I believe more young blacks should go into architecture, because the world is changing so fast. We are becoming a multicultural, multi-ethnic society. When you have been a minority, there is no question you have more sensitivity to other people and other races, and you're going to be a better architect. You don't come with any preconceived idea. And that's one of the reasons why I moved to Hollywood with my kids, because I wanted them to have that multicultural respect for other people. Hollywood High [School] had seventy nationalities. It's the world. And I'll tell you, people that don't understand are not going to survive.

1.13. TAPE NUMBER: X, SIDE ONE FEBRUARY 6, 1991

HENDERSON:

What I wanted to cover today were your favorite projects, some particular projects that I've looked at, and talk about those and how they were designed and what some of the factors were that went into them. You may want to start off with what you think was your favorite project or projects over a number of years.

KENNARD:

Well, I guess starting with the time when I did single-family residences, I had a couple of—we did a lot of residential work, but one of my favorites was one of the earliest, one I did for the Irving [B.] Zeiger residence. It was done in 1959. They're still in the house. They're still very good friends, I see them often, and they have kept the house up very nicely. It's beautifully kept. Garrett Eckbo was the landscape architect, so the siting is very nice. It's up in the Hollywood Hills in the Wonderland Park [Avenue] area. Wonderland Park—maybe before your time, there were several architects, Garrett Eckbo, [A.] Quincy Jones, Bob [Robert E.] Alexander, a bunch of very liberal architects, who were trying to develop what was called Mutual Housing Corporation.

HENDERSON:

I've heard of that.

KENNARD:

They were trying to develop in the west side of the city—I don't remember whether it was in Topanga [Canyon], but it was somewhere out far west—a planned community that was just planned from the beginning. Garrett Eckbo was the landscape architect on the siting and these very fine architects. There were a number of architects. Gregory Ain was involved.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

This was going to be an area which would also be multiracial. In those days, restrictive covenants were still in in most cases. Minorities couldn't buy anywhere. They never could get financing for it, so in desperation they all went to an area of Wonderland Park up in the Laurel Canyon area, and many of them just individually built homes. Garrett" Eckbo built a home, and I did two or three houses up there. One of them was for the Zeigers, which is a very nice house. It's a 4,000-square-foot house. It's just a huge gable. The site slopes, but the gable goes straight, so it's a very interesting house. I was involved not only in the house but the site, the interiors, etc. That's one house that I really liked. Another house that I'm very proud of was done for a woman

named Susan Hardyman. She was a widow living alone, and she built the house. Art [Arthur H.] Silvers was with me, and he was very involved in the design. We worked on it very closely together, had a lot of fun doing it. It's in Silver Lake, and it's on a curved street looking over the lake on a very steep hill, and the house curves with the street.

HENDERSON:

Oh.

KENNARD:

It's really a nice house. She loved the house, and she lived there till she died. Those are the houses I did. I've done a lot of other houses, but those are two, I think, of the nicest houses. They were great clients that had a real understanding of design and art. Some of the commercial work we've done—I'm pretty proud of MORH housing in the [San Francisco] Bay Area, More Oakland Residential Housing [Inc.] We did it for a community-based, nonprofit organization: 360 units, three towers, twelve "stories each, with 126 townhouses on ten acres. It was a master plan. I had a lot of fun doing that job. It was done with HUD [Department of Housing and Urban Development]. In those days, they had never done a HUD project in the Bay Area that wasn't wood, and we did it of high-strength block. T. y. Lin [engineering firm] was the structural engineer. It's a very good example of planned housing of three and four bedrooms, townhouses, with all the yards and everything for the big families, and then in the high rise there were single and one-bedroom, very few two- bedrooms. But all the family housing was in the three- and four-bedroom townhouses.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

We built that. That was a nice job. Oak Center Towers, another one, which is an elderly housing—

HENDERSON:

That one is pictured in your brochure.

KENNARD:

I like the [Charles R.] Drew [Postgraduate Medical] School [At Martin Luther King Jr. -Charles R. Drew Medical Center] master plan very much.

HENDERSON:

That's the medical school?

KENNARD:

We also did the Medical Education Building. Drake Dillard was very much involved in that. You know Drake, right?

HENDERSON:

Yes, I do. I didn't know he had worked for you.

KENNARD:

Yes. He was very much involved in that project. He did a nice job on that project. Central City Community Mental Health [Facility] center, I think that's a very nice project that we did for a nonprofit organization. It's reinforced concrete, 100,000 square feet, gymnasium, swimming pool, designed for preventing mental illness, so it had a lot of recreational facilities and administrative services. I like the garages at LAX [Los Angeles International Airport].

HENDERSON:

Oh, you do?

KENNARD:

Yes, I think they're kind of interesting. They're not just a simple garage. They're very well articulated. Hugh Browning was the project designer on that job with me.

HENDERSON:

A question about that garage: Just from my looking at it from the street, it has a sort of Greek ambience to it.

KENNARD:

Yes.

HENDERSON:

Was that intentional?

KENNARD:

Yes, we were trying to do something that was not just a plain old box, so we articulated the fascia very much.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

And there are some kinds of fun things. The scuppers have—have you noticed the scuppers?

HENDERSON:

I'll have to think about that.

KENNARD:

The scuppers are where the rainwater comes out.

HENDERSON:

Right.

KENNARD:

It's a smiling face. Did you never notice that?

HENDERSON:

I haven't noticed that one. I was looking at the columns as being something fluted.

KENNARD:

They're all fluted, yes.

HENDERSON:

I've got this picture here. Do you have a scupper on there?

KENNARD:

None of these. Not on this point. You'll have to see them on another elevation.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

One thing that's also nice about it is the articulation of the shadow on it. And you see how the beams are set? The beams sit on a little corbel.

HENDERSON:

Right, like a little corbel of—

KENNARD:

Yes. It's a good building, parking structures numbers 1, 3, and 4. Those were some of the key things. Another job that I think is really good is Scott United Methodist Church, which is across from the Gamble House [in Pasadena, California]. I don't know if you've seen that. It's right there.

HENDERSON:

I haven't seen that. Every time I go to. the Gamble House, I'm going there, you know.

KENNARD:

Jim [James C.] Moore [III] was with me at the time, he was director of design at that time, and that's a very nice building. Although I think Art was involved, too. Temple Akiba, I'm very pleased with Temple Akiba, which is based on a hexagon. It's a play on a hexagon. The sanctuary's a hexagon, and the whole building is built around that shape. I was very much involved in the design of that, trying for a different form.

HENDERSON:

That temple is on Sepulveda [Boulevard].

KENNARD:

Sepulveda, yes.

HENDERSON:

Culver City [California].

KENNARD:

Yes. Plan-wise it's nice inside, too. Those are some of the things. My own house I like, which I designed a third time so I could afford it. My own house, it's a very simple house. It's just 300 [feet] by 100 [feet]. See, the first two I built I couldn't afford. They were different—it was all crazy stuff, different heights and different levels and everything. But I couldn't afford it, so I finally went back to a very simple box.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

But what's good about it is the siting. Garrett Eckbo was the landscape architect, and I planted about forty or fifty trees, so now the landscaping is developed. That was a period of time when I was very influenced by [Richard J.] Neutra and his book, *Mystery and Realities of the Site*, that the site was more important than the house. It sits eighty feet back, so I have a lot of privacy. So that's pretty nice. I've enjoyed it.

HENDERSON:

I do need to get to see that.

KENNARD:

Yes, you ought to come up and see it sometime. Maybe we'll have a party.

HENDERSON:

Any more projects you can think of that you liked in particular?

KENNARD:

Oh, there's a lot of them, but I don't know how many you want to go into.

HENDERSON:

Well, some of the questions I had involved, maybe, some of the—

KENNARD:

Oh, I liked the City of Carson.

HENDERSON:

Aha. That's what I was going to ask you about.

KENNARD:

The Carson-Civic Center. We did that. That was a three-way joint venture. That was Bob Alexander, myself, and Frank Sata. It was a nice collaboration of three architects that got along very well together.

HENDERSON:

Who came up with the major design idea?

KENNARD:

Sata was really the lead designer on that.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

Well, Bob Alexander worked on the overall plan, the master plan. Sata was the lead designer. We were managing partners of the whole thing. In fact, the second job, it wasn't even a joint venture. We did it, but we still kept them in the deal. They still had a part of the deal. They were smaller offices at the time, and Bob Alexander didn't want to have a liability policy on it. So rather than have a joint venture, which our insurance didn't like, I was prime, but we still kept the team together and we all worked together. We're very happy with that job. Frank's a very, very good designer.

HENDERSON:

When I went into the courtyard, I think, at the Community Center [of the Carson Civic Center], it has a very nice, slightly oriental, sort of Polynesian feel to it.

KENNARD:

Yes, yes. He's very talented. In fact, we have a picture of the court in our office.

HENDERSON:

In the lobby.

KENNARD:

I'm very fond of that job.

HENDERSON:

What about the Van Nuys State Office Building?

KENNARD:

I like it. It's a departure. When Governor [Edmund G. "Jerry"] Brown Jr. was—he was more willing to do some interesting things. That was a joint venture of Harold [L.] Williams, myself, and Jim [James] Dodd. I was the design partner on the job, and Harold and Jim Dodd did contract documents and administration. So we were just involved with the design portion. It's an interesting job. I don't think it's one of my favorite jobs, because we never got to do some of the things we wanted to do as far as the space frame above. You know, we were supposed to cover it with glass.

HENDERSON:

Oh. Oh, okay. See, I see in the picture here that the space frame is up there. I'd always assumed that it was covered.

KENNARD:

Well, it was supposed to be covered with glass so that when you walk out in the middle you would have a cover, because all the circulation is on balconies there. Pietro Beluschi was a consulting design architect on it. Nice guy to work with, an [American Institute of Architects] gold medalist.

HENDERSON:

I've heard of Pietro. The reason I was exclaiming about that is that I've walked around it but never been inside, but I always assumed that the space frame had glass in it or plastic in it.

KENNARD:

-I don't think they've ever done it. Here's a nice building, Oak Center Towers. I like that building.

HENDERSON:

Yes, we're looking at the brochure now.

KENNARD:

Art was director of design, but the architect who designed this was George Barnes. He was an American Indian architect, very good.

HENDERSON:

Oh, really?

KENNARD:

Excellent, excellent architect, wonderful designer. I wonder what happened to him. I lost track of him. [tape recorder off] The school work we've done—we're doing one now that I'm really fond of.

HENDERSON:

Oh, which one is that?

KENNARD:

That's Jefferson High School, but it's in design. And also Los Angeles High School Number One, not the L.A. High School we did before. But we're doing the one on the Ambassador [Hotel] site.

HENDERSON:

Oh. Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

And I think that's going to be a really nice building, if I live to see it.

HENDERSON:

Well, we'll be optimistic.

KENNARD:

It will be a while.

HENDERSON:

What sort of design ideas are you thinking about for that, for the Ambassador site high school?

KENNARD:

Well, right now we're just in master planning of it. We've done four master planning schemes which we haven't even presented to the Los Angeles Unified School District board yet. The models are all in our storage room. We're not supposed to show them to anybody except staff because it's very controversial. We're waiting on a reuse study that's being done by the [Los Angeles] Conservancy. They have the site now, you know. They bought the site.

HENDERSON:

The conservancy bought it?

KENNARD:

No. The L.A. school district bought it.

HENDERSON:

Oh, the school district, okay. That's what I thought.

KENNARD:

They have the site. They took it by eminent domain. Well, they actually purchased it.

HENDERSON:

They took it from [Donald J.] Trump? They've legally taken it from Trump, okay?

KENNARD:

Well, Trump pulled his money out of it. But Trump still owns the six acres on Wilshire [Boulevard].

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

See, the six acres on Wilshire will be commercial. We're on the back seventeen acres.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

But that's going to be a real nice job. The fellow who's director of design now, Mahmoud Gharachedaghi, he's a very good designer. We work real well together. I've had some very good designers I was very compatible with, because my main thing in my office* aside from managing and getting work, I get involved in all the design work, and I go to all the meetings. On Jefferson Senior High and L.A. High School Number One, I went to all the design meetings. I go to all the meetings with the clients, because I came into architecture because I like design. I don't draw it per se, but even with Prank Sata and Bob Alexander, we were all very much involved in the design, although Frank Sata was the lead and he had a lot of the ideas about it. I certainly would not deny him that a lot of it was his input, but we had a lot to say about the form and everything, because that's what you're in architecture for. I don't want to be just only a businessman. I want to be involved in the design. But you can't do it. You can't. You don't have time to draw it. You can just put your input into it. So I've been pretty lucky. First, Art Silvers was a great designer and very nice to work with, and then came Dan [Daniel] Escudero, who has his own firm with Art [Arturo] Fribourg [Escudero Fribourg Associates]. A very nice person to do design work with. He was director of design, and then Jim Moore, and now I have Mahmoud. I mean, they were all people whom I found talented and very easy to work with.

HENDERSON:

That's a pretty good track record. Did they all come from USC [University of Southern California]? Did they all go to school at USC?

KENNARD:

Jim Moore and Dan Escudero came from USC, Art came from USC—yes, all of them came from USC. I never thought of that. Mahmoud came from USC. He got his undergraduate degree in Tehran, in Iran, but he did his master's at USC. Isn't that funny? I never made, that connection. [laughter]

HENDERSON:

It shows dominance of a school, but that's a local situation.

KENNARD:

Yes, that's something.

HENDERSON:

These days, since your office is well known in town, how do you think you get work these days? Is it mostly coming to you? Or do you still have to go out and get it?

KENNARD:

Well, a lot of it's repeat. I'd say 80 percent of our dollar volume is repeat, because right now, of the major jobs we have now, we have two high schools, a police headquarters [Seventy-seventh Street Police Station, Los Angeles], and the [Martin Luther King Jr.-Charles R. Drew Medical Center Diagnostic and Pediatric] Trauma Center are all repeat clients. You know, the L.A. school district we've worked with since 1966, the city of L.A. we've worked for since the late sixties. But the police headquarters, we answered an RFP [request for proposal], and we were selected to do a presentation.

HENDERSON:

So you didn't just walk into the job? You had to go and fight for it?

KENNARD:

No. L.A. High School and Jefferson, they just kind of gave to us because we're on the list and they rotate. I'd say a good 80 percent of our work is repeat. UCLA we've worked with since the late sixties, California State University

we've worked with for about fifteen years, Metro Rail rail transportation we've worked with since '72, so we have a lot of repeat work. But we are going for new work all the time. We're always trying to get—let me see what job we've gotten recently that wasn't a repeat. [tape recorder off] The First A.M.E. [African Methodist Episcopal] Church.

HENDERSON:

The one on Harvard [Avenue]?

KENNARD:

Yes.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

We just got a job there. We haven't signed the contract yet, but that's a new client.

HENDERSON:

And they're coming to you—I guess part of my question is that you're now so well known that people come to you?

KENNARD:

Yes, well, they talk to other architects, too, but we had to submit some qualifications and met with them, and they selected us. We're just negotiating a contract now. But look at all that. We've done work for the postal system. We're doing about the fourth job for the [United States] Post [Office]. Oh, another new client recently was Amtrak; we got their baggage facility. They're recent. [McDonnell] Douglas [Corporation] aircraft was relatively recent. We just got a job at UCLA. We haven't started it yet. Well, we've started some of it. Lynwood Unified School District is relatively recent, although we've done two jobs for them. But most all the rest of them are repeats except for minor jobs we have worked. There are some small jobs we've done. You have to keep going after work. It's a full market. You see, the industry's changed so much. We just lost a very large job. We've done some work in waste water treatment plants, and in '78 or so we did the Orange County Sanitation

Treatment Plant with a firm called Corolla Engineers. We've gotten to know them and we've gone for other work, but we haven't gotten it. We went for a job—this was a huge job. It was the North City Treatment Plant.

HENDERSON:

This was L. A?

KENNARD:

No, city of San Diego. See, they're big engineers, but we do all the architecture. Now, we did one for DWP [Department of Water and Power] with another big engineering firm some years ago in Sylmar. We were in joint venture with Fleuellen and Moody [Architects]. Do you know what the fee is on this San Diego job?

HENDERSON:

I don't even know.

KENNARD:

Twelve million dollars.

HENDERSON:

That's just the fee?

KENNARD:

The fee is $10 to $12 million. And the architecture alone, just the architecture base, with the planning and stuff, the fee's probably $600,000 net to us. We do it the architecture only, because they do all the engineering. There are two buildings, and there's a master plan, but we just lost it.

HENDERSON:

Ouch.

KENNARD:

I just found out. I was counting on that job, because it would have taken us into '92. And I'll bet I spent $5, 000 trying to get that job, because we were there so much rehearsing the stuff, doing sketches. It was just ridiculous. See, the problem of the small firm now is that they do not have the resources to

compete for those kinds of jobs. Gail [Kennard Madyun], that's all she does. Well, she does some personnel tasks, but I would say that 75 percent of her time is just marketing and RFPs.

HENDERSON:

That was a question I was going to ask you. I mean, how do you market yourself now?

KENNARD:

When she markets it, she has to have all the support of the staff. Mahmoud has to get in if there are sketches to do to present, we have other people that have to do the graphics and do the graphics proposal. We have Joe [Joseph] Barcelona, our director of operations, who has to deal with the man-hours, because most of them now are some kind of price proposal, so they have to be man-hours, and you have to find out how many sheets you have to do and what it's going to cost you to do it. We have one right now that has to be due by Monday. We're going with an engineering firm, and there's a whole list of stuff we have to do. Then I spend time, and they spend time, and Gail spends most of her time, and I'm out a lot talking to people to see that they don't forget who we are. So 5 to 8 percent a year of your revenue is just spent on marketing. I'll bet you Corolla spent over a million dollars just going for the job. They had to spend it. There were so many people in the meetings. We'd spend all day. They hired a media consultant just to choreograph, to set it up and figure how long you speak. It's extremely sophisticated. I was just talking to the partner there the other day when he told me we lost it. He said, "You know. Bob, it's just ridiculous. It used to be people just walked in and gave you a job." [laughter] And I remember that. They'd hear about you. Paul [R.] Williams didn't have any marketing people. They heard of Paul Williams and they gave him a job. Now it's a major thing. That's why the small architect has such trouble. For one thing, there's not many custom houses to build, which started you off when I started. And one person says to another person who tells them, "See Bob Kennard. Do this, do that." Now you don't have that. How many people can afford to build a custom house now?

HENDERSON:

Not that many. Not in L.A.

KENNARD:

Merv Griffin. [laughter] Now you have RFPs. A small office can't afford to take a week to spend on the proposal. Who's he going to bill? So in the marketing effort, the overhead costs are very tremendous. The architecture firms are getting larger and larger.

HENDERSON:

Now, how many are in your staff?

KENNARD:

We have thirty-five people.

HENDERSON:

Thirty-five. Now, see, I see you as a fairly large firm when I look at black organizations.

KENNARD:

But I've heard 80 percent of all the architecture firms in the United States are less than ten people.

HENDERSON:

Yes, yes. I've heard those figures.

KENNARD:

So when I say I have thirty-five people, they say, "You've got a big firm." They say above twenty is a big firm. But even now, I was reading in *PSMJ* [*Professional Services Management Journal*] where firms under 120 can have it very difficult. And I see it coming that way, because the jobs are getting bigger, and in order to compete, you've got to do a lot of marketing and a lot of staffing up, and it's really rough. It will be a challenge for us to stay even where we are and try to make any kind of decent profit with thirty-five people, because you have to have real large jobs, jobs that, when you get them, you've got people who are going to work on that job for three or four years. Any other job, if it stops and starts, what do you do? In the last few months we have not worked up to capacity. I have people who are not that busy. So what are we doing? We're using them to help us get jobs. I have four

jobs right now that are on hold. L.A. High Number One is $50 million, Jefferson High is $40 million, the trauma center is $30 million, and the police headquarters is $30 million. How much is that?

HENDERSON:

I don't know.

KENNARD:

$150 million. I have $150 million worth of work, and not one of those jobs we're working on right now.

HENDERSON:

Ouch. Well, do you attribute that to a general economic slowdown in the U.S., or—?

KENNARD:

Well, Jefferson senior high, the bond issue didn't pass, we finished design, so they stopped. And we'll know maybe in May whether it's going to go. They have problems with contaminated soil.

HENDERSON:

Yes.

KENNARD:

L.A. High, we finished schematics. It's waiting on a reuse study. Trauma, it stopped because they decided to add four floors. So our work has stopped. Langdon- Wilson [Architects and Planners], our joint venture partners, has continued on design. Our work will start on March 4 for working drawings. Police headquarters just got started, but it's in the programming phase. We're doing very little of the programming. Garner [V.] Grayson [III] of Steinman, Grayson, and Smylie is doing the programming. So you've "got four major jobs that really nobody in our office is working on. People say, "Well, Bob, you've got a lot of good work." That's not all that great. Right now the only thing that we're doing is a post office near Magic Mountain, which is a huge job with Jacobs Engineering. And then we have a lot of smaller school work, Lynwood, a fire station, community center, stuff like that that we're busy working on. But the problem is, when you get large, you can't just hire and fire. You've got

to keep your key people. You have a project manager who's not working under great pressure. He might be able to work on two or three jobs when right now he's only working on one job.

HENDERSON:

They add up.

KENNARD:

Very bad. I mean, that is the problem. So I've often said there are only two ways to practice architecture: be a single practitioner or get big. There is not much in between. I mean, you either work out of your house as one person or you get big, because as soon as you have one or two employees, you've got to keep those people busy, and that pushes you to constantly get work. The disadvantage when you're small is you can never do big work, so you've got to do houses, and there are not many houses, and there are not many remodels. So it's pretty rough. That's why our offices are getting bigger. You know, Ellerbe-Becket [Associates], [Thomas P.] Ellerbe [and Associates] merged with [Welton D.] Becket [and Associates]. Look at what they do. Now they've got a thousand people.

HENDERSON:

Ouch. Yeah.

KENNARD:

You know, DMJM [Daniel, Mann, Johnson, and Mendenhall] has 1,500 to 1,800. And you can take on mega million-dollar jobs. You know, we were with a team—and I won't say who we were with—to get Euro Disney. We were one of the architects with the team. And do you know what? Although this firm that we were with has total employees of 640 people—

HENDERSON:

That's pretty big.

KENNARD:

Very big, and the other firms that went had anywhere from 200 to—do you know who got the job? The job is so big, Euro Disney is so big, that they said,

"You're going to need 200 people working throughout the project engineers and everything." DMJM and Bechtel [Group] got it in a joint venture.

HENDERSON:

Goodness!

KENNARD:

Now, you know how big they are.

HENDERSON:

They're super big.

KENNARD:

I mean, I don't think DMJM could have gotten it alone. They got it with Bechtel.

HENDERSON:

Huge construction firm.

KENNARD:

They're 60,000 to 70,000. I don't know how many people they've got. They've got loads of people. Now, this is a big job, it's a megabuck job, and they didn't think that the firm I went with was big enough. And, frankly, I don't think they were, because, if you're going to have 200 people working—

HENDERSON:

On just that project.

KENNARD:

—where are you going to get them? Even in a recession period they're not walking the street. But Bechtel with 50, 000, 60, 000 people, engineers and all, and DMJM with maybe 2, 000 or 3, 000, they can begin to do it. They've got the top structure to pull it together. It's just incredible how architecture's changed. You know, I still encourage kids to come into architecture, because I think there are still always going to be the small firms. And you don't have to have a practice. You can work up into a firm where you have a major role in the firm. And I encourage minorities to come in, because I believe in the next

generation. The infrastructure of the United States is getting to the point where it has to be replaced.

HENDERSON:

Yes, definitely.

KENNARD:

And who better than ethnic minorities are better to do that? They understand. They're city dwellers. They understand the dynamics of it. And I don't think a lot of majority firms "can deal with it. I don't think they can deal with the kinds of things that you have to deal with in the inner city. I think they're going to learn to deal with it, because that's where the work's going to be, but they're going to be bringing in a lot of people that understand it. You know, my daughter Lydia [Kennard], who's doing work in planning, can go into a minority community or in Chinatown and deal with it because my kids went to Hollywood High [School]. They understand. They don't have the baggage of dealing with a diverse population like a lot of majority people have.

HENDERSON:

[laughter] What do you mean by baggage? You mean a sort of cultural—?

KENNARD:

Well, see, I think a lot of majority architects, white architects, do not know how to deal with minorities. Here's a case in point. Here's a very good case in point. I just read today in I think it was L.A. [*Los Angeles*] *Business Journal* about the increase in hate crimes in America.

HENDERSON:

Yes.

KENNARD:

All right. Now, the newspapers and everything talk- about Japanese people buying up America, and the average man in the street believes that the Japanese are basically buying up America. And yet, if you look at the statistics, the French, the Australians, the British, the Germans own more of America than the Japanese own. When an English firm bought Crocker Bank, you didn't see this stuff about England buying up America. So the press feeds the fire

when anybody other than members of Western, European civilization buy it out. But if the truth was told, even with what the Japanese have bought already, they're still about fourth or fifth as far as foreign countries buying it out. How many people know the Kuwaitis own Santa Fe International [Corporation], the big industrial company? Most people don't know that.

HENDERSON:

I didn't know that*

KENNARD:

Not the Santa Fe Railway; this is Santa Fe International. They bought it almost in cash. How many people know that HDR, a big firm in Nebraska—

HENDERSON:

HDR?

KENNARD:

Henniston, Durham, and Richardson.

HENDERSON:

I've not heard of them.

KENNARD:

They're owned by a French firm. They were purchased. Because we went with them on a job. But most people don't know. You don't read that in the paper. But if Japanese, Asians buy it, or Koreans buy it, or somebody like that, it's all over, and they talk about, "They're buying it up." There's an arrogance of power among the white power structure. They can't face the fact that a lot of minorities are smarter than they are. [laughter]

HENDERSON:

Especially an Asian minority.

KENNARD:

Ron [Ronald] Brown, who is one of the most brilliant guys you can meet, chairman of the Democratic Party, when they write about him, I see little

things that creep into a discussion about him that have nothing to do with his ability.

HENDERSON:

Such as what?

KENNARD:

Okay. There was an article about him. He's a sharp guy, and he's brilliant. They talked about the fact that he drives a Jaguar and he wears a Rolex watch. I have never heard anybody say that about a major white cabinet officer or committee member.

HENDERSON:

Correct, yes.

KENNARD:

What they do is they pick up on the fact—because basically they're saying that as if this is something good about him, but back there basically there's a resentment of where he has gotten to. That's what I feel. Now, maybe I'm overly sensitive, but I don't think so.

HENDERSON:

Yes, those kinds of discussions have nothing to do with his work.

KENNARD:

I mean, I never hear that about George Schultz. I don't even know what kind of car he drives. What damned difference does it make what kind of car he drives or whether he wants a Rolex watch? It has nothing to do with his inner life or anything. I don't know whether you read just recently, but—I can't remember his name [Martin Bernal]. He's a famous writer, and he wrote a book called *Black Athena:* [*The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*].

HENDERSON:

Oh, yes. Yes, I read that in the newspaper.

KENNARD:

Did you see that? I mean, it's just rocking them, because what they're saying—he says civilization did not arise through the Europeans, that there were a lot of Egyptians and blacks. There's a big fight at Stanford [University] now—fortunately, the students are fighting it—to get more study of other civilizations other than, quote, "Western civilization."

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

I also don't agree with [George H. W.] Bush and this Gulf War. There's an arrogance of power that they thought they could go in there and, "Oh, it will be over in a week."

HENDERSON:

You know, that reminds me, the last time we had our session, when we were here, was on the day that it started.

KENNARD:

Is that right?

HENDERSON:

Yes.

KENNARD:

It was going to be over soon? It ain't over yet. In fact, they're scared to hit a ground war. I mean, they are very nervous about hitting a ground war. Because what happens? They always underestimate Third World people.

HENDERSON:

They do, yes.

KENNARD:

We're always thought of as not quite up to it. Now, they will deny that, but basically it's in their psyche. And it's going to be the downfall of Western civilization. And if you read *Mortal Splendor*, which is a very excellent book by Walter Russell Mead, the American experiment may be the shortest empire in

the history of the world, two hundred years, if we don't understand what we have to learn.

1.14. TAPE NUMBER: XI, SIDE ONE MARCH 6, 1991

HENDERSON:

What I wanted to start this session with was asking you about designs, in particular designs that your firm has done that you didn't think worked out so well. Maybe even a question like, do you go back and look at your buildings and say, "Okay, we did that well," or "We didn't do that well"?

KENNARD:

Yes, I know what you mean. As far as the residential work that I've done, we did a house in the Hollywood Hills, Beachwood Canyon, which was a residence but designed to eventually have three units. One of the units was going to be the person's mother. And the people [the Abramsons], their son and my son [William E. Kennard] were very dear friends, and we were neighbors. I did this house, and my concept of the house didn't end up like the way I wanted it. It's not a bad house, but in order to do a nice building or a house, you've got to have a sympathetic client, you've got to have a client that has some sensitivity to what you're trying to do, and the rapport never worked out with us. It was not a good relationship between us, especially the woman, because her taste was abominable. [laughter] We had serious disagreements at the end of the job.

HENDERSON:

They didn't sue you I hope.

KENNARD:

No, they didn't sue me. And her brother, who lived down the street, he said, "Well, I hope this relationship that you have with the Abramsons will not affect the friendship" that their son and my son had, because they started in kindergarten, and they're friends. But it didn't, because they're still close and dear friends. They went all through high school together, to Stanford [University] together. They're both on the East Coast; they see each other very often. So it didn't hurt that. But it was not a happy house. And the problem

with the house that bothers me the most is that I have to go by it on my way home. [laughter] So I don't look over there very much.

HENDERSON:

Did the plan not work well with the elevation?

KENNARD:

The plan works fantastically. The plan worked really well because it was built so that they could have one house, two apartments, or three apartments. They're very happy with the plan, and after they got in and everything, they're very happy with the house. But I'm not happy architecturally. It didn't have that spark of visual delight that a house should have that shows an architect designed the house. Most people would say it's a nice place, but to me it doesn't look like an architect designed the house. An architect-designed house has to have some kind of delight about it, some flare about it, something different, interesting. So that's one job I didn't like. As far as buildings, I'm not overly happy with one of the schools we did [Hoover Elementary School]. It was in a joint venture with Harold [L.] Williams. Harold Williams was the designer and we did the production. And in all fairness to Harold, I must say it was during the time when the school had those stupid standards.

HENDERSON:

This is the L.A. Unified School [District)?

KENNARD:

Yeah. They had those stupid standards that you couldn't deviate from. Right after that, after we did the school, Roberta Weintraub came on the board, and she and some of the other board members kind of pushed to have better design in the schools. So since then, the schools got better. Before and after that, some of the schools were pretty nice. You can do some pretty nice things. But there was a time when it was very rigid, and operations maintenance had more to say about the design than anybody else. So I don't like that job much. I've never felt good about the job.

HENDERSON:

Now, the reason you don't like the school is purely appearance? Or do you think that the floor plan looks—? I mean, it works okay?

KENNARD:

The floor plan is all right. It's okay. It's just a mundane school. It's not an exciting school. I don't think it does anything for kids as far as making them interested in architecture. The classrooms are fine and everything works well.

HENDERSON:

It meets the codes and specs and everything like that.

KENNARD:

Yes, it meets the codes. There's just no delight to it. Architecture has to have some delight. I mean, it's not just function. Architecture is, as they say, the organization of space for people. It has to meet user needs. It should be user friendly. But the thing that makes a house nice or a building successful, I think, is the delight it gives, maybe not to everybody, but at least to the people that use it—the vistas and the things that you look at and" you see in a house. I talk about houses because they're the most emotional of buildings. Churches and houses are the most emotional as far as architecture. So they need to have that element of what somebody called visual delight. I like that term.

HENDERSON:

Some sort of a spark.

KENNARD:

So when you're sitting in the room you get a nice feeling. One of the things I liked about working with Richard [J.] Neutra and then for Garrett Eckbo, the landscape architect, is both of them were involved in the site. I think I mentioned this somewhere earlier, that the site was important to Neutra. Most of his buildings were very straightforward, simple, very high-tech-looking kinds of buildings. But the way that it was sited and the landscaping that he always had a lot of and the way he set it on the site was really good. He wrote a book called *Mystery and Realities of the Site*. And then, working with Garrett Eckbo, who was one of the top landscape architects at the time, I felt that the site is just an extension of the architecture. I almost became a landscape architect, actually, because I really feel that the urban design and the siting is much more important than the building. If you go down the Champs d'Elysees

in Paris or you go in Washington, D.C., down the vistas of Washington that L'Enfant designed, the buildings are pretty nondescript in both cities.

HENDERSON:

That's true.

KENNARD:

But the feeling of the street is the point.

HENDERSON:

It's the landscape, the unifying effect.

KENNARD:

And the vistas. No matter where you go on any of those streets, you see the Capitol [Building]. Those are just tremendous things. And I don't think architects—a lot of architects are tied up in form and all the things in a building, and many times they don't relate to the site at all. It's kind of like a person with a lot of ego. The things that surround them are not important. It's too self-centered architecturally. Let's see what other building I did that I didn't like. Some houses and buildings I like better than others, and I think some of them I mentioned before that I liked.

HENDERSON:

Yes, yes. I don't have my notes right in front of me on which ones you liked. Maybe I should sort of ask you questions about some buildings, and then you tell me what you don't like about them. The Van Nuys State Office Building?

KENNARD:

I think Van Nuys State Office building—I don't think it achieved what we wanted to achieve. And the reason why it didn't is because the landscaping in the center court, it's devoid, I think. Landscaping would have made that building, but we had such a low budget on that—secondly, the idea was to cover the atrium in glass, which they never did.

HENDERSON:

Right.

KENNARD:

So that when people move about they don't have interior hallways, they have balcony hallways.

HENDERSON:

Oh, you get rained on. In fact, you can't move inside the building without going outside?

KENNARD:

You can move in your suite, and some suites have restrooms, but to get to the major restrooms and the garage, you've got to go through the atrium. This whole area was going to be covered from the weather, you know, so that when you walk out, you're not in the rain. And since they never did that and they never planted the building well, it didn't come off properly. It wasn't really our fault. It was the fact that we just couldn't go to that next stage, and they just never did it. There's a very good example of siting and landscape that could have changed the face of the building. It could have changed the whole concept of the building. So many public buildings do not spend enough money on the site. HENDERSON; Oh, really?

KENNARD:

No, they always skimp on it. L.A. [Los Angeles] High [School] is a very good example. We had one of the best landscape architects in this city as landscape architect for L. A. High.

HENDERSON:

This is the Ambassador [Hotel site] project?

KENNARD:

No, the L.A. High on Olympic [Boulevard].

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

Emmett [L.] Wemple was the landscape architect. I mean, he's a fantastic landscape architect. He did a lot of houses for me. He's doing the [new J. Paul] Getty Museum, he's doing Richard Meier's museum. They cut the landscaping so bad it isn't even funny.

HENDERSON:

Oh, my.

KENNARD:

It's a big building, and it needs to be softened by landscaping. There are not many buildings that look real good without landscaping, I don't think. One of the buildings that probably does look good is the National Gallery [of Art] in Washington, D.C., that I.M. Pei designed.

HENDERSON:

Oh, I.M. Pei. Yes, yes.

KENNARD:

Pei is a fantastic architect. He knows how to use geometry to create interest.

HENDERSON:

Even my mother likes that building. She went to D.C. and that was one building she talked about. So when I went to D.C. I had to go see that.

KENNARD:

It's good outside, it's good inside. And there's not a lot of landscaping. You know, even the [First] Interstate [World Center] tower, it's a piece of sculpture. Pei's more of a sculptor than he is an architect. I think his work is very sculptural, and I think he is really a very fine architect. I really like his work, I mean, next to [Eero] Saarinen. He's number two in my book. [laughter] Don't let Cesar Pelli read this. [laughter]

HENDERSON:

Yeah. One building that does have a lot of land around it is the [Charles R.] Drew [Postgraduate] Medical School [Medical Education Building]. Do you think that that's well landscaped?

KENNARD:

Yes, that was done well. [Donald] Jung did that for us. He did a nice job there, especially on the northern side of it. On the north of the building, it's very nicely done. But even in the front, the lighting and the vistas are very nice. I could have used a little more—we didn't put a lot of landscaping in the front because there was going to be a big plaza to be built out there, and we couldn't afford to put the fountain in the plaza. So we didn't want to put a lot of trees in front because we'd have to tear them down. But in the back and along the side, that's very nicely landscaped. He did a nice job.

HENDERSON:

Who did that building next door to the [W.] Montegue [Cobb Medical Education] Building?

KENNARD:

That's [Donald L.] Stull and [M. David] Lee and Carl Kinsey. That's the Allied Health Building. Another little building that I think is very nice that we did is the Scott United Methodist Church. Talking about small buildings, it's a nice building. It's very low budget, and there's an indication of a budget that was low but was handled very well because we had a real good client. The church and the people were very cognizant of what they were doing. It was a neighborhood church, and it's very much into the residential character of the site.

HENDERSON:

Now, that's across from the Gamble House?

KENNARD:

The Gamble House, yes.

HENDERSON:

I need to go see that.

KENNARD:

I'm happy with that building. They've kept it up very well. The landscaping's restrained but nice. And we took the stained glass from their other building and wove it into this building. We used it in a. nice way. It's a nice building.

HENDERSON:

Have you been by Temple Akiba lately?

KENNARD:

No, I haven't been by it lately. Temple Akiba's a really good building. I really like that building, except the site is so small that it doesn't do it justice. It's just too tight on the site. Sculpture-wise and plan-wise it really works very well.

HENDERSON:

When I pass that now, I take notice of it.

KENNARD:

The plan really works well. And the thing about the Temple Akiba is it reflects the philosophy of Judaism, because, you see, in Judaism—I found out as I worked with the Jewish community more—the foundation of their religion is education. That's why there's always a school, usually, with their synagogues. So although we almost had to do it, the synagogue actually is on top of the school. The school is down below. What we did is we dug six feet out and we went up a little bit, and all around under the sanctuary and also under the social hall there are classes that revolve around a little court. And by just going six feet down and having a garden down there, the kids, although they were in the basement, they had a patio area, and they could see the light, they could see the sky, because we didn't want them to be put in the basement. So it was really a nice solution to the building. I worked on that a lot myself. I was very much involved in that job. Art [Arthur] Seidenbaum wrote an article about that which was published, and we got a lot of publicity on that, mainly because it was an unusual building, but also, as far as I know, I'm the only black architect in the West, at least, that's ever done a Jewish synagogue.

HENDERSON:

[laughter] You might be right on that. I started to think of something Paul [R.] Williams did. He did Hillside [Memorial Park and] Mortuary.

KENNARD:

Yes, he did Hillside Mortuary.

HENDERSON:

For Groman [Mortuaries].

KENNARD:

But it follows a philosophy of Judaism. I wish it would have been a bigger site.

HENDERSON:

When you're thinking of these design ideas, how do you come up with your creative statement? That is, when you're thinking of that synagogue—I know the floor plan is an odd shape—

KENNARD:

It's a hexagon.

HENDERSON:

Hexagon.

KENNARD:

The whole thing is a play on a hexagon.

HENDERSON:

Okay. Is that your standard way of coming up with ideas?

KENNARD:

Well, you know, the more constraints you have, the more interesting the design.

HENDERSON:

Right.

KENNARD:

That was such a tight site. We had to put a sanctuary of five hundred, a social hall, administrative facilities, a school, all on one site.

HENDERSON:

And it is small.

KENNARD:

And if we'd have done a square, a rectangle, you'd have a wall up along all the sides. By doing a hexagon, you cut down the boxy feeling.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

A circle is the most efficient space, but our technology makes it difficult to build a circle.

HENDERSON:

Right.

KENNARD:

So the next best thing is a hexagon or an octagon or something, because that's as close to a circle as you can get. Also, the sanctuary worked out fantastically because it's a hexagon, and we sloped the walls inward, and inside the sanctuary the ceiling dips like this.

HENDERSON:

Dips toward the center.

KENNARD:

It dips kind of toward the center.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

We called in [Paul S.] Veneklasen, who is an acoustical person, to have him just check the plan and see if we needed acoustics. He said, "I don't need to do anything." He said, "Acoustically it's fine." You see, we had carpet on the floor

and then a hard surface above. On the sides, there was no bounce back. In this room, here, sound bounces back and forth.

HENDERSON:

Yes, you've got straight walls.

KENNARD:

Yes, and they're opposite each other. But in a hexagon, all that are opposite each other, they're canted.

HENDERSON:

Aha. Okay.

KENNARD:

So if they bounce, they bounce down to the people. I didn't know that. I wasn't thinking about that when I was designing. It was just an architectural thing that happened to work out well. We have five hundred people, and he said, "Oh, you can stand there on the podium and you don't even need a mike." And we don't, because sound really stays in there. Of course, there's no glass. Then we have a skylight above. Albert Wein was the sculptor, and he designed the sculpture on the outside. He was a Prix de Rome winner.

HENDERSON:

What's his name?

KENNARD:

Albert Wein. He designed the menorah and the eternal light. The eternal light is gorgeous. The eternal light hangs down from a sculptured skylight that's above. There's just a beautiful—and then in back of the bema, which is the stage—

HENDERSON:

Like the altar, okay.

KENNARD:

—he's got this metal frieze. The artwork is really beautiful inside. And in that job, what was also nice, the artist was on board at the beginning, so we

worked with him all the time. We designed the building so that it complemented the art. I'm very fond of that building. And it was in a period of time when I had a lot of time. I didn't think of it as a job; I thought of it as a wonderful exercise. And the rabbi, who was named Herschel Lyman, was such a nice person. We got to be very close and dear friends. So it was a fun thing. We spent a lot of time together. I can't tell you how many lunches and dinners and stuff we had, talking about the building and getting to know each other really well. And it was a time when I didn't have a big practice—I had only four or five people—so it wasn't as harrowing a time.

HENDERSON:

About what year was that? You've told me before, but I've forgotten.

KENNARD:

It was the year of the Selma march. Was that '67? 'Sixty-eight? It was in the sixties.

HENDERSON:

Okay. I can look that up.

KENNARD:

No, it had to be in the early sixties, because Ernest [H.] Elwood and Art [Arthur H.] Silvers were working for me, and Ernest left in '65. So it had to be in the early sixties. That's right.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

That's when we were designing it, '62, '63. God, that's a long time ago. It's almost thirty years.

HENDERSON:

Any other buildings you can think of that you like or don't like?

KENNARD:

I like Central City Community Mental Health [Facility]. I think it serves its purpose really well* It's a big building. Oh, I like this building here, Oak Center Towers.

HENDERSON:

Oh, the Oak Center Towers. We're looking at the company brochure.

KENNARD:

I like Oak Center Towers. A fellow in our office named George Barnes was a project designer on that job. He was a very talented guy. He was an American Indian. He articulated that building very well. It's 198 units of just repetitious elderly housing, but the way he articulated it—

HENDERSON:

Up at the roof and all along?

KENNARD:

Well, all along, you see how he did that and other little things?

HENDERSON:

Well, explain to me, by articulation—my idea of articulation is not decoration but it's how you handle small details, so I'm seeing that this has sort of minimalist corners, but there's a lot of interesting—

KENNARD:

Well, I call this articulation.

HENDERSON:

Oh, right at the top?

KENNARD:

Yes, right at the top.

HENDERSON:

Okay. Yes, yes.

KENNARD:

And also the way it comes in and out.

HENDERSON:

And it makes a good shadow line.

KENNARD:

The shadow line—it's not just a box.

HENDERSON:

Right.

KENNARD:

See, the plan was really good, because instead of taking the building like that—. [begins sketching]

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

—he took the building—

HENDERSON:

Which is a dead rectangle.

KENNARD:

He did like this.

HENDERSON:

Oh, he's offset it.

KENNARD:

Yeah, we offset it, and it kind of—another architect had done a building just like that, a rectangle, and it was just ugly. [laughter] I will not mention his name. And then John Williams, who was the director of redevelopment, said Episcopal Homes Foundation, who was supporting it, did not like the building. So they said they were going to let him go, and I said, "Could we do it?" And

we did it. It's still a very simple building, but then you start doing stuff at the ends like we did there.

HENDERSON:

Yes, add little small volumes.

KENNARD:

And the elevators and the stairs you articulate.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

See, this was very simple.

HENDERSON:

You pull out from the main volume little smaller volumes.

KENNARD:

Yes, yes. Then, even at the top, see, at the top he just pushed those rooms out a little bit, made them larger.

HENDERSON:

Just a few feet, yes.

KENNARD:

Yes, just to give it a nice feeling. It's really a nice building. This is the best part of it. Now, another job we liked, I think Carson Civic Center is a very nice building. We did that with Bob [Robert E.] Alexander and Frank Sata. Frank Sata was the project designer. But we had a wonderful relationship, the three of us, in working together, so we got all involved in the thing very carefully. Bob Alexander was involved a lot in the site planning. We were really managing partners and kind of choreographed the whole thing, but it was a nice relationship of the three people, three architects that had a lot of respect for each other, still good friends, and it's a very successful civic center.

HENDERSON:

Is there anything about that civic center that didn't quite reach potential? Or is it really almost the ideal building, as far as you see it?

KENNARD:

I think it's one of the best. They had a lot of money to spend on landscaping.

HENDERSON:

And they have good landscaping. I was down there recently.

KENNARD:

Well, the guy that was our contact, Howard Holman, was head of [the Los Angeles City Department of] Parks and Recreation, so he was really into landscaping. Yost Kuromiya was the landscape architect, and I'll tell you, the landscaping is just incredible. It's beautiful. The spaces in there are very exciting spaces, and it's been a very successful building. They make a lot of money there. They rent out the auditorium a lot.

HENDERSON:

Yes, yes.

KENNARD:

The exam is done there.

HENDERSON:

Oh, really?

KENNARD:

Yes. The AIA [American Institute of Architects state licensing] architecture exam is held there. And there are a lot of weddings and receptions. They make a lot—and they have a huge catering kitchen there. We had twenty-four, twenty-five consultants on that job. We even had an agronomist, because the soil was so bad that we had to take out eighteen inches of soil all over the site and bring in new soil. They had corrosivity problems as well. We had a theater consultant. We had all the sound people. They had money to do it. It's a nice building. It works very well.

HENDERSON:

Okay. Maybe I should turn to the second part of what we're going to talk about, and that is being, I guess I'll call it, a community role model. Your time is sort of constantly being called upon, demanded of, people asking you to do lots of things. What are the effects of all that? Like you were saying that [Los Angeles] City Council candidates were asking you for endorsement money.

KENNARD:

Yes, well, they ask everybody for money.

HENDERSON:

[laughter] But especially you, I guess.

KENNARD:

Well, I think that particularly in the minority community I get that, because we do a lot of work in the minority community, and the contacts are great. It's really bad, because I really am for public funding of political campaigns. Because I think it's getting way out of hand. I think it's a burden on the candidate to always be asking for money. They really can't do a job well when they're asking for money all the time. And I think it makes for some real ethical questions. And I don't think the people that are in the community are represented as well as the people with the money. I have always contributed to Common Cause. In fact, Walter Zelman was supposed to be the ethics commission chairman, and he turned down the job in the city. But Common Cause, which is Archibald Cox's thing that he started—I think you really need to look at a lot of ethical considerations about how candidates raise money. That's the way it is, and I think as long as you do work in the public sector you can't deny that that's going to be something that you have to respond to.

HENDERSON:

Well, let me ask you a trickier question. How do you decide, maybe, which cause to back and which public service activity to get involved in? How do you make that determination for yourself?

KENNARD:

Well, I think architectural students are my main thrust. And I do that because, when I started, very few architects really took the time to counsel me and talk to me about architecture. I was extremely discouraged by it. Architects, they

were always too damned busy to just give you a little bit of time. And I vowed if I ever got a practice I would never turn a student away. It takes a lot of time. I've been involved with so many schools, not only the L.A. school district and all the speaking things. Now I have some of the people in our office take those speaking engagements. Bill [William W.] Adams [III] goes out, and Mahmoud [Gharachedaghi], they go to the elementary schools and the high schools, when I used to do it all. But I was involved with Cal Poly [California State Polytechnic University], Pomona, in the summer intensive program. I've been involved in the Shadowship Program from Cal Poly [California State Polytechnic University], San Luis Obispo. They send the student down once a year. They pick a student

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

In fact, I have a student [Everett Johnson] coming down Sunday night. This young fellow, he's a fourth-year student. George [J.] Hasslein has picked him out, sent him down. I usually request black students because I think we have a responsibility there. This kid's coming down Sunday night. He'll come to our house. He'll drive down. We'll probably have dinner, and my wife [Helen King Kennard] and I will take him out, he'll stay all night, spend the night just to see how we live. Then all day Monday he's just going to be in our office. Bill Adams is going to take him to the [Los Angeles] Central [Public] Library with him. We have a "lunch Monday where the project team that's doing a big post office in Santa Clarita is going to present it to all our officers. We have that every once in a while. We bring all the people in our office into a little lunch to show them what we're doing in the office, because some people are working on one thing, and when we get through design we make that presentation so people will know what we're doing.

HENDERSON:

That's a good idea. It's a very good idea.

KENNARD:

It's fun. So Everett Johnson, the young black student, he'll go to that. If I have a meeting with a client, he'll probably go with me. So then I'm involved with 'SC [University of Southern California] very heavily, with the [Architectural] Guild. I'm on the dean's council [of the Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning] at UCLA. I was just asked by Lou [Louis M.] Naldorf to be on the board of advisers for Woodbury [University]. It's really getting pretty heavy. I'm going off the guild this month. Then Virginia [W.] Tanzmann said, "Would you want to serve another term?" I said, "No, I can't. I've just got to control my time." A lot of people come in. I got a call by a fraternity brother of mine [Hack Woodford] who has now moved down near San Diego, and they have a mentor program down there. He said this young" fellow was from Oklahoma, but he's now going to Poway High School. His name is Ron Turner. He graduates in June and is looking for schools to go to. He's already been admitted to Arizona State [University], but he'd kind of like to go to 'SC. Well, Hack Woodford knew that I was involved in 'SC. So I've been on the phone with Ron Turner, and I talked to him, and he said he's already been interviewed by USC. He's got a 3. 4 average, so he's in pretty good shape. So this Tuesday before the mayor of Los Angeles's design advisory panel, Dean [Robert H. J Harris and I had breakfast, and we were talking about a lot of other things, but I said, "Listen, I want you to make a note of a young fellow." Because, out of 450 students, only about 10 are black at 'SC, and I think Dean Harris is really trying to get more black students in. I want to help him. I said, "Now, remember, it's very expensive." He said, "Don't worry. We've got a lot of scholastic money and financial aid." So I gave him the name, because this kid has already been interviewed by admissions, and so, by Dean Harris knowing that name, this kid may get in.

HENDERSON:

He'll know how to look for him.

KENNARD:

I want to meet him. His mother's going to drive him up sometime. I like architecture, and I think more kids should get into architecture, but I think you also have a general responsibility, since I think education's the most important thing. There's nothing more important than education.

HENDERSON:

Not these days.

KENNARD:

I've given my kids a good education, but they're not in architecture, so you reach out to architecture students, because I know something about that. I don't think I should be dealing with other things. Also, our office deals with other things. Gail [Kennard Madyun] is very much involved in more socially oriented projects, like homeless projects, and the [Los Angeles] Marathon. But as a minority firm, I think you have a special responsibility. White architects—it's just like Barbara [Ingram] and Stacy [Williams] said—have more opportunities to get internships, etc. You know, there's still a reluctance on the part of a lot of white architects to help minority architects. I think a lot of them will not go out of their way to find a spot for them in their office.

HENDERSON:

You're right. You're right.

KENNARD:

I see a lot fewer blacks going into architecture.

HENDERSON:

You mean it's a lower number these days?

KENNARD:

Well, I don't think it's a lower number. There's more number, but not more per capita of the architects that are going in.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

How many in UCLA? I can't remember.

HENDERSON:

We were talking about 10 or 11 at UCLA in architecture.

KENNARD:

Out of how many? HENDERSON; Out of 300.

KENNARD:

So you're talking about, say, 3 percent?

HENDERSON:

A little more than 3 percent.

KENNARD:

A little over 3 percent.

HENDERSON:

Yes, about 3 percent.

KENNARD:

At USC it's not even 3 percent. It's 10 out of 450. I think maybe at Woodbury and [California State Polytechnic University] Pomona and San Luis Obispo, those schools probably have a few more. But I think our percentage should be growing, and I don't think it's growing.

HENDERSON:

Oh, let me ask you a quick question before I forget. You mentioned a fraternity. What fraternity are you a member of?

KENNARD:

Oh, it's the Sigma Pi Phi fraternity. It's one of the oldest black fraternities in the country.

HENDERSON:

Okay. Do you think that NOMA [National Organization of Minority Architects] should get more involved in this kind of activity?

KENNARD:

What "do you mean by "activity"?

HENDERSON:

Working with students.

KENNARD:

I do. I think the problem with NOMA is that the young practitioners are so busy building a practice, it's hard for them to take the time that I can take, because I have a staff of people, and I can delegate a lot. So I don't want to be critical of the young people in NOMA, Bob [Robert S.] Moore and Roland [A.] Wiley. Roland does a lot in the AIA [American Institute of Architects], but it's harder for them. They're starting a practice. So I think I bear a little more responsibility. Our firm is larger, I have more of a structure. Gail helps me a lot, my daughter. Also Bill Adams and Gail [R.] Bragg, they're interested in this, too. And Bill is always on the lookout for black architects that we can possibly bring in through Howard University, etc. So I have a little better opportunity to do it. I don't expect people to do it at the same level.

HENDERSON:

Kind of in Roland's defense, I've worked with him when he's brought, say, junior high school students to his office. And when I brought the Prairie View A and M University], half came here and the other half went to RAW [Architecture].

KENNARD:

I'll tell you, Roland is unique in that, even though he has a young practice, he's quite active. And I really think they're going to be a very major firm in the future here in L.A. They do good work.

HENDERSON:

Yes, they do.

1.15. TAPE NUMBER: XI, SIDE TWO MARCH 6, 1991

HENDERSON:

When I was asking the question a few minutes ago on how you decide what activities to get involved in and whatnot, maybe I should rephrase the question this way: You're an 'SC person and you've gotten involved at UCLA. You don't find a contradiction in that? Or you're so interested in architecture that that's no problem?

KENNARD:

No, I don't think so. I've been involved with every architectural program except [University of California] Berkeley. SCI-ARC [Southern California Institute of Architecture], I was very much involved in SCI-ARC at one time, and my daughter Lydia [Kennard] now has just been asked to get on the board, which she's going to take, because they want more non-architects on it. UC [University of California] San Diego just started a new thing, and I know Adele Santos quite well. I intend to go down and talk to her sometime. She is a very fine architect, a very good designer, and I think she will probably work to get more minority students in. I don't see a contradiction there. I think architecture's my field, and I should be dealing with kids in architecture. I don't know anything about law or medicine. I can't talk to them about that. But then there was a time when I was very much involved with Dr. [J. Alfred] Cannon. In the sixties there was a Central City Federation, which was made up of a lot of black businesses.

HENDERSON:

I don't know about that.

KENNARD:

Yes. Ivan [J.] Houston was on it and a number of other people who represented large black businesses. It came through the leadership of Dr. J. Alfred Cannon. What he was trying to do was to form a structure to address the educational, social, and cultural problems in the black community. It was a fabulous experience for me. And I gave a lot of time. I wasn't involved with architecture students at all at that time. But out of it came the Frederick Douglass Child Development Center, through the Head Start Program, that had places all over the city; Central City Community Mental Health Facility that was built in Wrigley Field; and the Inner-City Cultural Center, which is still going. They just bought the Ivar Theater in Hollywood. They were all to serve the minority community, primarily the black community, although Inner-City has even expanded more. It's extremely multiracial now. C. Bernard Jackson runs it. And we had some fantastic people on the board. Mario Thomas was on the board of Inner-City.

HENDERSON:

Really?

KENNARD:

Gregory Peck, Robert Wise. Out of the Inner-City Cultural Center—to show you what it did—it gave opportunities to black artists, particularly in the media, that are now household names. The first person that we had was Lou [Louis] Gossett [Jr.] in *Tartuffe*.

HENDERSON:

Oh!

KENNARD:

Andre Gregory was the director. Paul Winfield got to be known through there. He played in *The Glass Menagerie*. Glynn Turman played in plays there. We had the Harlem Dance Theater come here. Cicely Tyson was in some plays. They were relatively unknown then.

HENDERSON:

Yeah, they're well known now.

KENNARD:

They're very well known. And Gregory Peck was very sensitive. I went around with Gregory Peck raising money. We'd go to Lew Wasserman and the National Theater to try to raise money. And they put on a big affair. We'd raise $50, 000 in one night at the Factory. He knew everybody. Peck is a very nice man. He's a very warm, socially conscious human being. He just got the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] award this last year. Mario Thomas, nice person, was very active on the board, and a lot of other people who were from business and the arts. I gave a lot of time to that. And the story of how I got into it was, one day Dr. Cannon—he was a black doctor, graduate of Columbia [University], teaching at UCLA—said, "I saw your article in the paper about Temple Akiba." He knew I was a black architect. He came into my office—I was on Washington Boulevard—and he said, "I need your help." He said, "I need somebody to help me put these programs together, help write the program and do these things." He was such a committed social activist. And, you know, I had five people in my firm, I'm struggling, and I said, "Al, I don't know how I can do it." So that night, I said, "Just let me think about it." I went home, I talked to my wife, we got to talking about it, and I said, "You

know, you really can't afford in good conscience not do this for the community." It was right after the Watts riots, and everybody felt a real social consciousness. "Well, someday what are you going to say that you did?" So that began a relationship with Al Cannon that spanned until he died. Unfortunately, he died too young. He died a couple of years ago in a very freak kind of surgery accident. You know, he moved to Africa.

HENDERSON:

Oh, I didn't know that.

KENNARD:

Yes. But that's a whole other story. We probably don't have time, but that's a thing that I'm really proud of in the extracurricular things that I have done. Actually, it was the basis of why I was awarded the Whitney [M.] Young Citation, plus my help to the students. But I think, when you have a practice that allows you to do those kinds of things, I think that it would be derelict if you don't give something back. Because, let's face it, a lot of these people helped me get there. Al Cannon was a dear friend of mine who just tried to get me a major job in Zimbabwe when he moved there. That's why I went to Africa two or three times. We didn't get the job, but it was sure fun trying. I think there are a lot of rewards when you do that. Well, like you're doing now. I mean, the things that you're doing—you can make money and you can still do good. They're not mutually exclusive.

HENDERSON:

Okay, thank you. [laughter]

KENNARD:

I mean, you could do something that would just have no social significance and probably make as much money or more than you're making right now.

HENDERSON:

Well, doing these interviews, to me, is something that I feel like I need to do.

KENNARD:

Yes, yes.

HENDERSON:

See, I'm interviewing five black architects, and I feel like I need to get your stories before they're gone.

KENNARD:

Yes. And, also, I think there's a learning curve. When you deal with people like I dealt with Dr. Cannon and the people at Inner-City, I learned a lot. I learned a lot that makes me a better person and a better architect. So it's not time you're giving up. When you brought the students over here today, I learned a lot. I learned a lot about what their concerns are, which is going to help me when I deal with other kids, and it will probably light a fire under me to try to put a space in this office for interns sometime. You can't say that you're for it and then you don't do it. We've had a lot of interns in here, but I think sometimes you've got to just get a kick in the butt once in a while. You're so involved in your business, and you're looking at the bottom line and trying to make the payroll.

1.16. TAPE NUMBER: XII, SIDE ONE MARCH 21, 1991

HENDERSON:

One of the things I wanted to at least touch on in this last interview was the article that was in the *Los Angeles Times* last Sunday. It was a very nice article. There were many things in there that I'd seen before. But I've got a few questions that I kind of want to clear up just for our records. One little nit-picky thing is that she, Ruth Ryon, the writer, said you went to Monroe High School.

KENNARD:

It should be Monrovia [High School].

HENDERSON:

Monrovia, okay.

KENNARD:

There was another error there, too.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

She talked about how it was difficult to get a job. It was not after I graduated from 'SC [University of Southern California] that I had the problem getting a job; it was after I graduated from Pasadena City College that I had problems with a job.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

There's a little difference there. Not that it was that easy after 'SC, either, but it was almost impossible after junior college.

HENDERSON:

Okay. Oh, one other thing from the article: You said you did a project with Paul [R.] Williams, and I think in another session you told me what that was, but I want to make sure I've got that for my records.

KENNARD:

It was the Jessie Terry Manor right there at Jefferson [Boulevard] and Vermont [Avenue].

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay. That's a home for the elderly?

KENNARD:

Yes. It was a joint venture of Tuskegee [University] alumni, Prince Hall Masons, and the Stovall Foundation.

HENDERSON:

And that was just a joint venture on—?

KENNARD:

Well, what happened is that Stovall and the Masons went together. I had done a job of affordable housing up in the [San Francisco] Bay Area for the Masons,

and Paul Williams had done some work for Stovall Foundation here. Some people leaned toward hiring Paul Williams and others leaned toward hiring me, so we said, "Well, let's not battle it. Let's just go together and do it."

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay. About what year was that?

KENNARD:

Oh, I'd have to look it up, but it was probably in the early seventies. Probably the seventies sometime.

HENDERSON:

And you both collaborated on the design? It was a joint design? Or who did most of the working drawings?

KENNARD:

We did most of the design. We did a lot of the work. Paul was pretty old at the time. He was involved in the design a lot, but Jim [James C.] Moore [III], who was the director of design in our office, really was in charge of most of the design. But Paul was in a lot of the meetings on design. It was a partnership. It was a very tight budget—$21 a [square] foot or something.

HENDERSON:

Ouch. Oh.

KENNARD:

I mean, it was just ridiculous. We could barely get it up.

HENDERSON:

It looks nice. I saw it this past weekend.

KENNARD:

It's not too bad. It's worked out fairly well considering the budget was so low.

HENDERSON:

Oh, a project I saw yesterday, because I went specifically to Pasadena to look at it, was the Scott United Methodist Church. That was a wonderful building.

KENNARD:

It is a nice building.

HENDERSON:

Across the street from the Gamble House there are these condominiums. I had thought Scott was one of those condominiums, the community building for the condominiums. Because what I like about the building is that it looks very residential. It's low scale.

KENNARD:

That was the idea, because a lot of people didn't want a huge church there, because there's a lot of housing around there. You know, it's right across from the Gamble House. It was a very critical job for us. We spent a lot of time on the design, and we had very good clients. They were very nice people.

HENDERSON:

I think it was a very successful design.

KENNARD:

We took the stained glass from the old building that they demolished or sold and we integrated it into the sanctuary there.

HENDERSON:

I could see that from the outside. I did not go in, but it looked very well integrated.

KENNARD:

Yes, and they take good care of it.

HENDERSON:

I looked at the dedication stones, and they had one from 1929, which I guess was their old building—

KENNARD:

Yes.

HENDERSON:

—and one from 1975, which, I guess, was the new building.

KENNARD:

That was the one we did, yes. It was in the seventies.

HENDERSON:

Okay. One project I do want to talk about—and we haven't talked about it a lot, and it's not mentioned in the article—you did two office towers in downtown Inglewood?

KENNARD:

I did one.

HENDERSON:

Oh, one.

KENNARD:

And I did another one on Sixth Street [in Los Angeles]

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

That was a redevelopment project.

HENDERSON:

That's what I wanted to get into. Was that design/build?

KENNARD:

My daughter Lydia [Kennard], who's in the development area—she has a company [KDG Development] that is handling development, construction administration, construction management, and real estate—public-private partnership. We did the first building on Sixth Street right across from MacArthur Park.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

We built that building ourselves. We designed it and built it and got the financing. We hired Tishman Construction Company to bid it for us—Abe Bolsky, who just recently passed away—and they were very helpful on that. Then we hired a superintendent, and we built it. Then the next building we did was in Inglewood, which we did in a joint venture with Broadway Federal Savings and Loan.

HENDERSON:

Oh, which one is your tower? Where Broadway is in the bottom floor?

KENNARD:

Yes, that's the one.

HENDERSON:

Okay. I thought you had done the one across the street, but the one where Broadway is, it's a gray building.

KENNARD:

Yes, gray-blue.

HENDERSON:

Gray-blue?

KENNARD:

Right. That's where Broadway Federal Savings has their branch office. Yes, that's the building. But we're not in the development business now.

HENDERSON:

[laughter] Has the real estate market kind of bottomed out?

KENNARD:

It's so bad it isn't funny. I mean, it's worse than I have ever seen it. I mean, nobody is lending any money, especially on an office building.

HENDERSON:

Lord have mercy.

KENNARD:

So that was our escapade into the development thing. Right now it's better to buy a building, and residential is a lot safer.

HENDERSON:

So the company with your daughter Lydia, is she still just exclusively involved in development?

KENNARD:

What Lydia did—I don't know whether I mentioned this before, but Lydia joined the firm when we had a big planning staff. Jeff [Jeffrey M.] Gault was head of the planning, so she worked with Jeff on the project.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

When Jeff left the firm, Lydia had been in a real estate law firm down the street here, where they did a lot of real estate work. In fact, one of their clients was the Phillip Morris Company, who developed Mission Viejo, and McKenna, Conner, and Cuneo. But she tired of the practice of law, so she said, "Why don't I come in, and I'll do the planning, and we'll do some development, and I'll do some economics and public-private partnership?" So for a while she worked for me. Then we shifted and she shared the office, but she had a separate company. And now, because of her growth and our expansion, she moved to the third floor, so it's a completely separate company. The reason why we separated the companies is mainly because of the development, because with architects doing development and doing the architecture, too, the liability is terrible. So we didn't want to have the liability of being in the construction business. So, although we had an equity position in the building, we were not part of the whole entity that did the building. Lydia's company did the building.

HENDERSON:

Even though design/build was sort of a trend in the eighties.

KENNARD:

Yes, design/build connotes that you have a client. This was just a speculative office building. Both of them were. And the idea was that we would build them and rent them. Then the market was so bad, both of them were mild disasters. I mean, we didn't get killed on it, but we were hurt badly. So it was not a good thing. We hit the market at the wrong time. And now that's where you see so many architects that are doing work for developers are in deep trouble. We're very careful about working for developers. The only one we really work for is Maguire Thomas [Partners]. We did the [First] Interstate [World Center] parking structure for them. But they're number one in the United States, so they're pretty solid.

HENDERSON:

They're a pretty big outfit, yes.

KENNARD:

Oh, they're big, and they've got a great organization.

HENDERSON:

Okay. In the *Times* article there was mention about the Cal Poly [California Polytechnic State University], San Luis Obispo, Shadowship Program.

KENNARD:

Right.

HENDERSON:

And" I wanted to ask you about that on tape.

KENNARD:

Well, George [J.] Hasslein was the architect that started the architecture department at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo.

HENDERSON:

Oh, I didn't know that.

KENNARD:

He's still there. He is not the dean anymore—there was a kind of a shake-up—but George is an old friend of mine. I've served on various committees with him. You know, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, is probably one of the largest architectural schools in the United States.

HENDERSON:

It is?

KENNARD:

Well, I know in California it is.

HENDERSON:

I thought [University of California] Berkeley was the biggest.

KENNARD:

Oh, no. Berkeley's nowhere near it. See, most of the schools like 'SC, they're four hundred or five hundred people. Cal Poly at one time had, I think, fourteen hundred students in their environmental department—that's architecture. They have a lot of minority students, so he tries to match a minority student—say, a black student with a black architect, probably a Latino architect I'm sure would go to a Latino firm—and what he does is what they call a Shadowship Program. They will come down, say, one evening, they'll spend the night at my house, and then they will follow us around. They just stay with you all day. Not only myself, but they stayed with some of the people in our office. So the last person that came just a few weeks ago was a young fellow named Everett Johnson. He's a black kid who had a very difficult family life. I mean, his father is practically unknown to him, and his mother, who is very religious, raised him. He has some brothers and sisters, but they're from other fathers, so it was a very dysfunctional family. But he did quite well in high school I understand, and his mother really pushed him and stood by him and was very close to him. And he went to work for Ford Aerospace.

HENDERSON:

Oh, I should mention here, you said he grew up in the Bay Area.

KENNARD:

He grew up in the Bay Area, I think around—well, they live in Sunnyvale now, but I think around East Palo Alto or Oakland or somewhere around there. I can't remember where right now. I can't remember whether he lived in Oakland and then moved down there or not. But for ten years he worked at Ford Aerospace, and he learned AUTOCAD computer [programs]. But he always wanted to be an architect. And the fellow he worked for at Ford Aerospace was an architect. He always wanted to be an architect, so he decided he would just go back to school. So he went back to Cal Poly. He's in his fourth year now, he's extremely bright, very personable, with an incredible sense of humor. George Hasslein wrote me a note about him and told me how much we would like him because he's a good student. This next year they have overseas study, so he's going to Denmark for his last year.

HENDERSON:

Oh. Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

So he met us at our house at around four thirty. Helen [King Kennard] and I took him out to dinner, and we talked, and he spent the night. He came here, and he sat in my office for a while and listened to some of the things that happened. Then Bill [William W.] Adams [III] took him to the [Los Angeles] Central [Public] Library, because they had a visit out on the construction site. He met all the people, and he stayed here all day long. Then, that evening we kind of wrapped it up. We spent a couple of hours just talking about what his future would be, what he should do when he got out. He actually was making pretty good money when he left Ford Aerospace. He was making about $35,000 a year.

HENDERSON:

That's pretty good.

KENNARD:

You see? So what he wanted to know from me was whether, when he got out of school—let's face it, the entry level is maybe $10 or $12 an hour, whereas if he went back to Ford Aerospace, he could probably go in at $19 or $20 an hour, because the job is open for him. I think Ford Aerospace was bought out,

but the job was there for him. So we discussed his career objectives. Because he takes care of his mother, he's got to make a pretty good wage. And it's not a bad idea for him to stay in that corporate situation. There are a lot of advantages. He goes in at a very good salary, evidently people like him a lot, he's got the kind of personality that can move with that, and it's probably a pretty good idea for blacks to move in that corporate level in the architectural world. He's worked for an architect, so he could get his license pretty fast. He could take the exam real quick. And he can open up other opportunities for other minorities, too. So I said, "Don't make a decision now. Why don't you just wait till you get out and see what happens?" But let's face it, if he was getting out now, I'd definitely tell him to go back, because the market is so recessionary. But by that time, you don't know what's going to happen. But he's got an advantage because he's done a lot of architectural work with Ford Aerospace. He did all their facility stuff. Plus, he knows computers. It's not only interesting for the kids, it's interesting for us.

HENDERSON:

It sounds like a good exchange.

KENNARD:

Yes. He wrote a wonderful letter to me before he came down. It was really funny. It was a very, very crazy letter. He had a picture of himself, and it said, "Beware of a strange vacuum cleaner salesman who will be knocking on your door on some—" [laughter] It was very funny. He's really a neat kid. I was really impressed with him, I'll tell you, because he had such a tough time. For him to stop, go back to school, was something. And he's the first kid in his whole family that's ever gone to college. George Hasslein said, "Bob, I want him to come down because," he said, "he's never met or talked to a black architect." You know, if you're around Sunnyvale, and then you go to San Luis Obispo, you won't run into one. I told him, "Well, you just missed my ex-partner, because by the time you got to San Luis Obispo, Art [Arthur H.] Silvers had just left." So he missed him. But there was no other black architect. So George Hasslein said, "He's got to come down and talk to you." If he comes down again, it would be very interesting You really should meet him.

HENDERSON:

I think I should. He sounds very interesting.

KENNARD:

I was very impressed with him. You've got to admire a kid like that. That's tough. Most of us couldn't have done it.

HENDERSON:

It's tough for me to remain in school right now.

KENNARD:

I'll bet it is.

HENDERSON:

Financially.

KENNARD:

Well, you have a lot of guts. Sure, it is tough. But, see, a lot of kids—we had a young woman come down, and she was very nice, and she's a very bright student.

HENDERSON:

You mean this was another Shadowship student?

KENNARD:

Yes. She came down a year ago. Every year they send them down. But her father is a very well-to-do doctor, and she's driving down in her BMW. [laughter] I mean, she didn't have a hell of a tough time. There's nothing against that. She has a job, and I put her in touch with a lot of architects that I know. I don't know if you know Allison Williams. She's an associate partner of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, a very bright black woman architect. So I put her in touch with her, because the networking is important for them, especially the women to meet other black women.

HENDERSON:

In fact, I've never heard of Allison Williams. I need to see if I should get her into NOMA [National Organization of Minority Architects]. But that's another concern.

KENNARD:

She's up in the Bay Area, San Francisco.

HENDERSON:

Oh, she's in the Bay Area?

KENNARD:

She's in San Francisco.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

Her father was director of redevelopment in Oakland for years, John Williams.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay. John Williams.

KENNARD:

John Williams, a good friend of mine, and smart! And Allison's smart, too. She's an associate partner in design now at Skidmore. She's real good. I understand she's really sharp.

HENDERSON:

Oh, that's a heavy position.

KENNARD:

You're going to hear a lot about her. She's going to be one of the lead people.

HENDERSON:

There was another mentor-like program you were telling me about. This was a student in San Diego, a high school. How did that go?

KENNARD:

Oh, yeah. Oh, that's going pretty good. This kid came from Oklahoma through a fraternity brother of mine. They have a mentor program. Not just architecture. I belong to a fraternity, Sigma Pi Phi, and they have a mentor

program. One of my brothers [Hack Woodford] who moved to San Diego, lives in Rancho Bernardo, he called me because he met this young kid, Ron Turner, who is interested in architecture. He goes to Poway High [School]. And I called him up. He is a 3.4 grade [point] average.

HENDERSON:

That's good.

KENNARD:

He has been accepted to Arizona State [University], and he applied to USC. So I was having breakfast with Dean [Robert H.] Harris. Bob Harris said out of the 450 students at 'SC, graduate and undergraduate, there's only about 10 black students, which is too low. So Bob Harris was very interested in meeting Ron. And Ron said he had already talked to one of their counselors. So Bob took his name, and he called me back just about four or five days ago, and he said that they had not received Ron Turner's application, and he wanted Ron to call him. So I called him just a couple of days ago. I didn't get him, but I talked to his mother, and I said, "Get the application in. Bob Harris said to tell him to call him."

HENDERSON:

It's in the works.

KENNARD:

They were a little nervous because 'SC is very expensive, but Bob Harris said, "Don't worry about it. We've got a lot of financial aid."

HENDERSON:

Arizona State would be expensive, too, if you're out of state.

KENNARD:

Is it?

HENDERSON:

I don't know. I mean, it's a state school, but—

KENNARD:

This kid was from Oklahoma, but he moved to Poway, I guess, with his family, his mother. So I haven't met him, but his mother's going to bring him into the office someday, because I'd like to meet him, particularly if—because I think we can get him into 'SC. With that 3. 4 grade average, I think I can get him in.

HENDERSON:

That sounds good. Okay. One other project I wanted to ask you about that's not mentioned here in the article, I don't think, but we've talked about it a couple of times, and that's the central library. That has had some controversies design- wise and maybe even political-wise. What's your perspective on that? Or what would you like to say about that? Maybe I should point the question a little better. How is working with Hardy, Holzman, and Pfeiffer [Associates]? How has that worked out?

KENNARD:

That's an unusual job, because we did not get that job like we normally get a job in which we join with an architectural firm in a joint venture and go get the job. The job came to us primarily because of pressure from [Los Angeles City] Councilman [Gilbert] Lindsay's office. See, the library commission interviewed a bunch of architects. Now, I knew Hardy, Holzman, and Pfeiffer because they were on the Bunker Hill competition [for downtown L.A. office buildings] with us.

HENDERSON:

Oh, I'd forgotten that, okay.

KENNARD:

I'd met Hugh [L.] Hardy. I'd never met Norm [Norman H.] Pfeiffer. I was not involved in the selection at all. They were looking for people heavy with museum experience, and, of course, they're a very good firm—very heavy museum and library experience. So they were selected in the job by the library commission and, I guess, other people. Well, naturally, Gil Lindsay was very upset when he was not involved in the selection of architects, [laughter] And I will not comment on that. [laughter] Because the man is now dead, and I don't want to seem ungrateful. [laughter] But he insisted that there be a black

architect involved in that job, to his credit. So Norm Pfeiffer, who was running the job, said they didn't know any black architects. [laughter]

HENDERSON:

Oh, my. You know, I keep hearing that comment again and again. "We don't know any black architects."

KENNARD:

I mean, I don't know whether that's true. He probably didn't because he had just moved. He didn't know any out here. So, anyway, a list was given him of all the black architects in Los Angeles practicing: Harold [L.] Williams, John [D.] Williams, myself, and everybody. Lindsay's position was that he didn't want to tell Pfeiffer who to bring in, but it was up to him to go around and pick. They came around to this office, they visited this office, and they went to the other offices. I never will forget—and I think I'll put this in there—they asked me—see, we were going to be involved in the contract documents of the Goodhue building, which is the old [central library] building. The idea was that we would put a job captain on the job, and we'd have our own people work on that. They were the design architects and we were going to do the documents. They were going to do the east wing, and that's where there was a lot of controversy. We really weren't involved in that. That was the design part of it. But I was telling some people the other day, when they came in—we had about forty people in our office. We were a little larger than right now. So he said, "Well, there's going to be a lot of need for a lot of people." I said, "How many people?" He said, "Well, you're probably going to have to put fifteen people on the job." He said, "Do you have fifteen people?" And I said, "Well, I don't have fifteen people just sitting here doing nothing waiting for somebody to call me if they can put them on a job." But that's a typical question to architects, which is really one of the most ridiculous things I've ever heard. I mean, people always ask that. I said, "But we have the key people to build the staff up to that." I think the most we've ever had on the central library was nine people at one time. Now we have three people in doing the construction administration. But anyway, Pfeiffer, I guess, said if he has to work with anybody, he'd just as soon work with us. [laughter] Naturally, an architect doesn't want to give part of his job away. But the funny thing about it is the way I found out I got the job. I didn't hear from anybody, but my son [William

E. Kennard] is a partner in a law firm in Washington, D.C. [Verner, Lipfert, Bernhardt, Mcpherson, and Hand], and one of the partners was Lloyd Hand. Lloyd Hand was very heavy in the Democratic [Party] administration. He was Lyndon [B.] Johnson's chief of protocol, and he's a good friend of Lindsay's. Because I think he came from California somewhere, he knew Councilman Lindsay very well. So they were back there during the black caucus, and every time Lindsay goes back there, Lloyd Hand takes him out to lunch or dinner. And since my son was a partner from California, had heard of Lindsay, he asked Bill [Kennard] to go along to lunch. And Gil Lindsay, at the lunch, when he met my son, he said, "I know your dad, Kennard." You know how he is. He said, "I know him." He said, "We're going to give him the library. He's going to work on the library." So my son called me that night. He said, "I just found out you got the library." [laughter] I said, "My God, I mean, you're way back east and you're telling me what I got." [laughter] That's how I found out. That was so funny.

HENDERSON:

Oh, my goodness.

KENNARD:

And Bill had met Gil Lindsay—I think he had met him when Gil got an honorary degree from Howard University.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

Dr. Leroy Weeks, who's a fraternity brother, wanted some of the people from L.A. to go back and be there when this honorary degree was conferred on Lindsay. Fortunately, I had to be back in Washington, so I made the trip on the same week that Lindsay was going to get it. So we went to the big reception for Lindsay, and my son met Lindsay, so there was a connection. Lindsay was a real power broker.

HENDERSON:

Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

KENNARD:

Hardy, Holzman, and Pfeiffer is a very good firm. They're a very good design firm.

HENDERSON:

There's been no friction with them since you've been—?

KENNARD:

No, we've gotten along fairly well. It's been very professional. I deal mostly with Steve [Stephen] Johnson, who runs their office, sort of an associate partner. But it's not the best situation that we like, because we like to go in where we go together for the job. It's always a little uncomfortable when you're pushed into it after.

HENDERSON:

It's like a shotgun marriage.

KENNARD:

We don't like to do that. But business is business, as the guy says.

HENDERSON:

Take your projects as you get them. One other question. Somehow I wasn't sure. Did you do Saint Mark's Lutheran Church on Vermont [Avenue] next to DSC?

KENNARD:

Yes, we did that.

HENDERSON:

You didn't have that one listed in your projects, in your brochure, but I just wanted to check and make sure that that's one that you did.

KENNARD:

It's on the list of clients, I think.

HENDERSON:

Let me check and make sure. [tape recorder off]

KENNARD:

Missouri Synod [of Lutheran Church] is another group. We did Palisades Church under that. No, we don't have it in here.

HENDERSON:

Well, it's not that crucial.

KENNARD:

Oh, wait a minute. It's under another name. It's a different group. We did two. We did remodeling on the Missouri Synod of Pacific Palisades that never went ahead. Then we did two other churches. We did Saint Mark's Lutheran—is that Saint Mark's?

HENDERSON:

Across from USC is Saint Mark's. Yes, I think it is.

KENNARD:

Saint Mark's Lutheran on Vermont, and then we did a Lutheran church, Saint John's [Lutheran Church], in Cerritos. We did that, too. We did two churches that we actually built. That was in our religious era. We did a Methodist church, a Lutheran church, a Unitarian, we did a synagogue.

HENDERSON:

What was the Unitarian church?

KENNARD:

We did the Unitarian church school. Unitarian Universalist Association.

HENDERSON:

Yes, that's listed.

KENNARD:

It's the Hugh Harding Center, but it's under Unitarian Universalist.

HENDERSON:

Where is that located?

KENNARD:

That's over right in back of Eighth [Street] and Vermont, the Unitarian church.

HENDERSON:

Oh. Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

It's in terrible disrepair. I just passed it the other day. It looks terrible* They've got a great big old chain-link fence around it. It's just awful. But the community is really depressing. That's one thing about Scott United [Methodist Church], they keep it up really well.

HENDERSON:

The landscaping was marvelous.

KENNARD:

Yes, they really keep it up well.

HENDERSON:

It had just rained, and the grounds were nice and wet, and you could see clouds and the mountains in the back.

KENNARD:

Yes. The sanctuary's very nice. Did you get in it?

HENDERSON:

No, I did not go in.

KENNARD:

The sanctuary's really nice. It's kind of a double shed thing, and it's all wood inside.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay. I will have to go in.

KENNARD:

It's nice inside.

HENDERSON:

Just out of curiosity—I don't know if the Methodists do that—is that a black church? Or is it mixed? Do you know?

KENNARD:

I know the minister was black. It was primarily a black church. I don't know whether they have a mixed congregation, but when we did it, the minister was black. I don't know who the minister is now. It was part of the big Pepper redevelopment [project in Pasadena], and they moved over there, and they got that site* That's a great site for it.

HENDERSON:

Very good site.

KENNARD:

A neat site.

HENDERSON:

Let me shift the questioning just a little bit—and this sort of touches on Gilbert Lindsay. You're a native of L.A. and you know many prominent people. Have you seen any new trends emerging about political leaders in the black community? Are the same people sort of still in control? Are they being pushed aside? Are new people coming up? Or do you see things just evolving gradually?

KENNARD:

I think there is a change. As a matter of fact, I was thinking of even addressing it Tuesday night [at the USC Architectural Guild dinner, April 2, 1991]. But the trend I see is not only in the black community; I think it's just generally in the political arena. For one thing, in the black community there's a whole changing of the guard now. Lindsay's gone, [Los Angeles City Councilman Robert] Farrell is leaving. And it's really time, too, to have younger people move into that political arena. They're more aggressive. But also, I think Maxine Waters was the beginning of really kind of a grassroots kind of a support. When Maxine Waters ran, even for [United States] Congress, she hit

the streets. I mean, she went door to door. Because Gail [Kennard Madyun] lives in her area. She said one day she's coming in, and all a sudden here comes Maxine Waters walking up. A very good case in point is [former Los Angeles City Councilwoman] Gloria Molina's election.

HENDERSON:

Oh, okay.

KENNARD:

I mean, where a lot of establishment people, other than [United States] Congressman [Edward] Roybal, were for [California State Senator Art] Torres. He didn't make it. And I think the reason why they didn't make it was—I stayed out of that race completely, because I really felt that Molina would be the person to get that position. When" they were trying to put the prison out in East L.A., she fought the thing, and she took on everybody, including [Speaker of California State Assembly] Willie Brown, everybody. And I think that's the new thing, where you have community activists beginning to exert political power. Even though she was outspent two to one, she still won. And I believe that's happening more and more. It will probably happen more and more in the black community. Now, the problem is with the black community, there's not a cohesive black community. I mean, the number of blacks in Los Angeles is dropping. According to the census, all the other groups are growing, but the black population's about the same. The good news is that a lot of blacks have really taken advantage of the upward mobility. They're moving out more. We work in Pomona. There's a big black population in Pomona and Diamond Bar and Walnut and Cypress and Santa Clarita. I mean, they're moving all over the place.

HENDERSON:

Yes.

KENNARD:

It was white flight; now it's kind of black flight. [laughter] And it's okay, because—and I think you'll see blacks running for political office where they will not be depending on the large—well, like [Los Angeles Mayor Thomas]

Bradley. Bradley didn't get elected with a major black constituency. And in Pomona and in San Diego, blacks are now on the city council.

HENDERSON:

I didn't know that.

KENNARD:

They're not the big bulk of the vote, which is kind of good, that people are going to be voting for the candidate, not necessarily what race they are. That's an encouraging sign. I think it is an encouraging sign that we're not polarized. After all, blacks have all kinds of different political beliefs.

HENDERSON:

They sure do. And they came out during this war [Gulf War], this past war. The tape is beginning to wind down, and I've got one more question I want to make sure I get. For the oral history books, a lot of them have titles that are sort of descriptive of the author or what they're trying to say, and I wanted to ask you what you think you might want as a title for your book. I've got just a couple of things that I'll bounce off of you.

KENNARD:

God, I don't know. I'll have to think about it.

HENDERSON:

You think about that. Okay. [laughter]

KENNARD:

[laughter] I don't know. It's hard to say. I don't know whether it is a good title, but I believe that architects have to be more aware of the social aspects of architecture.

HENDERSON:

Okay.

KENNARD:

Maybe" it's just "Social Aspects of Architecture." I mean, our architects are so involved with how people live. I mean, we touch people more than many

professions, other than writers. We have a very kind of quiet but important influence on people. Sometimes they don't even realize that they're being influenced, because buildings are so much a part of everybody's life.

HENDERSON:

Yes, they are. You live in one, you eat in one.

KENNARD:

You live in one, you do everything in one. I mean, it really has a tremendous effect on people, not so much style and whatnot, but, I mean, just the subtle things about—you know, you walk into this room, and the extension of this room to the outside has an effect on you.

HENDERSON:

Yes. There's a lovely view to the Hollywood Hills and mountains beyond. It's a very clear day today, and we're on the eighteenth floor of a skyscraper looking north.

KENNARD:

It changes. I mean, my mood changes depending upon the weather out there.

HENDERSON:

Oh, it does?

KENNARD:

That I can see. Yeah. A day like this, it's just gorgeous here. You want to be out there. Sometimes it's dreary and it's smoggy. All of us are affected by the weather. Aren't you affected by the weather when you're at home?

HENDERSON:

I am. I am.

KENNARD:

When you get up in the morning and you see the sun shining, don't you want to just get out of there?

HENDERSON:

I want to get out and exercise. I walk around my neighborhood.

KENNARD:

Yes, that's right. You want to walk. See, I walk up near the Hollywood sign. In fact, we plan to walk up there tomorrow morning.

HENDERSON:

Oh, this tape is about to end, so we'd better call a halt to the formal session.

KENNARD:

Well, Wes Henderson, it was a pleasure working with you.

HENDERSON:

Thank you. It's been a pleasure interviewing you, also.

Date: