University of Miami School of Architecture

Faculty Oral Histories

Interview with Aristides J. Millas

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Interviewed by Gilda Santana

Recorded by Gilda Santana

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Aristides j. Millas, a registered architect since 1962, holds degrees in Architecture and Urban Design from Carnegie Mellon and Harvard Universities. He taught architectural design, historic preservation, and history at the University of Miami School of Architecture for over forty years until his retirement in 2015. His expertise in historic preservation of architecturally significant South Florida buildings, his research on elderly populations in Miami Beach, and his diverse research library collection of books, journals, reports, and ephemera form a significant contribution to a variety of scholarly Florida-related topics as well as Byzantine and Classical Greek and Roman architecture and art history.

AM: Do you have a transcorder or trans... you know to take a ...that is not tape anymore, there used to be tape.

GS: Right, I transcribe the audio file myself.

AM: You transcribe it yourself?

GS: Yes. I listen and transcribe it. Once it's transcribed, I will send it to you for review. You can make edits or change whatever you want. OK? Is that good?

AM: Yeah, fine. Sounds good.

GS: I am Gilda Santana and I am interviewing Professor Aristides J. Millas who is now retired. Retired very recently but a professor of Architectural History and Design at the University of Miami.

AM: I started teaching history. I taught design and I teach drawing too. Hey, now this is interesting, we had to do...the requirements for the 6 credits studio that is architectural design—it varies by year versus a lecture course. Now what lecture course did I start with, maybe it was history or

drawing or a drawing class or, perhaps it was history... I just don't remember but it was something early on.

GS: What year did you start working here?

AM: 1974.

GS: Was it part of the School of Engineering at that time or was it the School of Architecture?

AM: No, the school of architecture existed before, but it [the department of architecture] had to be revived in 1972 by Professor Ralph Warburg. I was working for the city when the projects I was working on collapsed due to the recession of the early 70's. I joined the University after being interviewed by Ralph Warburg and the faculty. The new faculty at the time was interviewed to join the faculty. And I came from private practice. Not individual practice. Practice with a large organization.

GS: What was the organization?

AM: It was the Inter-American Center Authority.[1]

[1] The Inter-American Center Authority (Interama) was created in 1951 as a corporate agency of the State of Florida to plan, finance, construct, operate, and maintain an Inter-American Cultural and Trade Center in or near Miami, Dade County, Florida. The proposed center was to be opened in 1976 for the purposes of encouraging mutual

GS: Interama.

AM: It was a very big international, North and South America, kind of a fair. It was an attraction, a big attraction, with pavilions representing the different countries, and different functions. So, I was one of the planners for that.

GS: You were one of the planners for that?

AM: Yes. And it fell through. It started to be constructed and the bonds didn't sell well on Wall Street. There was a crash. We had started construction for the "Tower of the Sun". I was the coordinating architect, planner. The local firms and national firms would compete for the different pavilions to build. It was like a world's fair for the 76th Bicentennial. In 1976. It was very exciting. They actually started construction for the Tower of the Sun and another building which became the first building that was constructed, for the FIU North campus. Florida International University's North campus.

understanding, cultural exchange, and trade among the peoples of North American, South America, Central America and the Caribbean; to enhance the environment and economy of South Florida; and to provide a settling for the United States Bicentennial Celebration in South Florida. It was abolished in 1975 without being finished. http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/32414022

GS: So, was that the site for Interama?

AM: That was part of it.

GS: That was the proposed site for Interama?

AM: That was part of it. The main site was almost an island surrounded by water that you bridged across to. There were parking lots to the north and FIU's campus would be to the south. The north site was the children's world. It had a name, I have the catalogue for it. It was a very innovative project in which...it was interactive instead of proactive where children would be participants in these inventive activities.

GS: So, it was pretty progressive thinking.

AM: It was a very sophisticated project and it was...well I'll remember the name, I could dig the catalogue out...I should put it here in the library actually.

GS: That would be wonderful.

AM: If you don't have the Interama...I don't know that the main library has it or not.

GS: I would love it.

AM: Because this is an architectural...yeah and especially that project by the CambridgeSeven which was a long-ago organization that was very inventive. A children's world that was not at all like Disney World or that kind of sensational stuff.

GS: Seems there was a more pedagogical intent. That it was a learning center?

AM: And that was on the North side of the island. And in the middle would be the pavilions of Interama. I have a question actually to bring my portfolio. Anyway, the site plan is very interesting, and then they assigned...the Interama board headed by Doctor Gissindiner in North Miami, the mayor. This board would assign parcels to various architects. Some were national and some were local. They had a lot of local architects. The Tower of the Sun, the centerpiece, was by the Spillis Candela firm. Grafton Spillis Candela was the name of the firm at that time. And it was called the Tower of the Sun and it was to be a thousand feet tall, to mimic the height of the Eiffel Tower. We had our own thousand-foot symbol down here in South Florida. Anyway, it was designed and redesigned several times and that was quite a spectacle. And then underneath it, I made the preliminary designs for a big giant food court which they were going to give it to an outside architect to do but I had to do the preliminaries for it. That wasn't assigned yet. So that was my

fun, doing it with the Tower of the Sun. And then other pavilions around...Morgan, he was an architect from Jacksonville. He did a beautiful auditorium by the bay. James Morgan....I have the all this in my files. I have all of the files.

GS: This is wonderful, I would love to see those files. I'm taking notes so I can keep prompting you.

AM: Yes, I can give them to the library. They will find a good home here.

GS: Well we may have a new library at one point. Or a research center which would be great cause then we would have an Ari Millas collection that would be world renowned. But Ari let me ask you when you started teaching here was it this campus where we are now?

AM: Right, well it was the engineering building. And very crowded because I remember the classrooms... we had to... nobody owned their desk. It changed desks. You know the morning class...there was over six hundred students, undergraduate. Now it's about three hundred and something.

GS: And those were engineering and architecture students or just architecture?

AM: No, no just architecture students, and it was extremely crowded. So, from 1974, which was my time, then I joined the school when Interama crashed because as I said before the bonds did not sell on Wall street. They had bonds but they became less quality, I don't know how that works.

GS: So, who were some of the faculty that you worked with at that time in the Department of Architecture?

AM: Well that's hard, I can't remember some of the faculty... I taught, there was a handful of upper level students. So, when I started, my job was to teach with my experience with Professor Warburton. He and I knew each other from the real world. He was the head of Operation Breakthrough[2] in Washington for HUD and I was one of the submissions from my firm from that time it was submitted and was accepted to the... my proposal was accepted along with hundreds of others that, anyway, it was a big, big publicity. (12:10)

GS: Do you still have the proposal?

AM: I might, yeah, I might have it.

[2] The Department of Housing and Urban Development launched Operation BREAKTHROUGH in 1969 to stimulate volume production of quality housing for all income levels by testing many of the techniques of industrialization.

GS: That would be interesting to add to the collection.

AM: Yeah. It's got to be around. I don't throw anything away so you're lucky there. Somebody is lucky. I don't know.

GS: So, you're part of the Harvard stream, right? You went to Harvard and that's where you got your Master of Architecture?

AM: Master of Architecture in Urban Design. So, this MAUD... now, that's a new degree that they started. So, I was right in the front.

GS: At that time is was a new one?

AM: It was a new degree that they created. They're accredited and I was one of the earliest classes. With great faculty. You know, early in the sequence of the program, the program is still taught... and I think that some of my other faculty might have that degree. I don't know what they... Just the MR. But...And so, starting out, who's the other faculty? That's what I need the pen for.

GS: Oh, I'm sorry. There you go. Sorry.

AM: No, other faculty at the time

GS: Why don't you write those down and keep talking. I'm going to get myself a pen because I forgot to bring one in here (steps out).

AM: Okay, Gilda, to answer the question about the other faculty at the beginning, as I told you Warburton was the head and with him

GS: Was he the director or the Dean or...?

AM: No, he was a Chair. We had a series of chairs I think until 1983 when we got our first dean.

GS: So, it was a department? It was not a school yet?

AM: Oh, no, was a department under the School of Engineering and Environmental Design (SEED). That included the engineers and then architecture became separate, around '83. That's still nearly 10 years after I started. And just to dwell on that a second, the first chair... the chair at that time was John Steffian who was really...

GS: Someone else told me about him. Rocco Ceo spoke about him.

AM: Rocco talked about him?

GS: Yes.

AM: He was a guy who really created a wonderful atmosphere here. No one else equaled his ability to generate interest and support, you know. So, we became friends and he was marvelous. Everybody loved him. And then he went home. He was wild in a way. We actually brought wine on campus and had a happy hour on Fridays, you know, and it wasn't the big fear of the school. Everybody would guess, you know, intoxicated.

GS: Inappropriate behavior.

AM: No, no, very civilized. You know, a little wind out a happy hour, but nobody talked. We had this, he had the little... the wine bottles up upstairs in that room, in the engineering building on the third floor. You know, there was rooms, the exhibition room, and then there we would bring out the... the staff was only like two people -- one was one secretary Anyway, we got along fine. We had 600 students in a class, you know, we had an enormous number of students and then only if

you have little staff, a tiny little staff, you know, and anything who's got the left side now the staff is just...

GS: ...bigger than the faculty.

AM: Bigger than the faculty! I get the biggest kick out of that because there's really a lot of staff. We don't know if they work, but it doesn't make any difference how hard they work. We know some do. Some do, like yourself.

GS: Thank you.

AM: But you know, who knows what all these people were for, but everybody was fun. It was a nice family, a nice family.

GS: Wonderful, that sounds, I mean, that's what I understand. So, how did you feel about about the shift—the breakaway from the school of environmental design? Were you for or against the school of architecture forming on its own?

AM: No, for, absolutely.

GS: You were absolutely for it?

AM: Because it led to our independence. Now when it was the school of Engineering, I might say of engineering and environmental design, which included architecture and landscape architecture and interior architecture. I guess they had a whole bunch of stuff. That was the name under engineering. The Dean was the dean of engineering and he was a stickler for rules and protocol. Now, becoming the School of Architecture in ’83 meant the school had its own autonomy. And then with its own autonomy comes a lapse of rules and protocol because people will do their own thing, and nobody knew what anybody was doing.

GS: Who was the first dean?

AM: I think it was Tom Reagan. Tom Reagan was a good dean, he passed away. He was a good fellow. He was the first time that I discovered that there's people in this academic world that aren't architects. They're administrators. The first time I realized that, I said, that's interesting because it's on the faculty at that, that time, you know, with Professor Warburton were people who had some pretty good experience. My experience was in the community. So, I started to do things that had a community. My projects with the handful of graduate students were community related, and there are two I can mention now.

GS: So, the school was formed around having a...maintaining a civic responsibility?

AM: Say that again?

GS: So, one of the precedents of the formation of the school, would you say that it was maintaining a civic responsibility and attitude?

AM: Well, not necessarily if faculty did their own thing.

GS: So that was your thing?

AM: Now Professor Warburton was involved with HUD. That is housing and urban development in Washington. He had his Washington ties in community development. Big Time. So, he liked what I was doing. How can I say, other people didn't even understand it because academia was something else then. My work experience always was interdisciplinary, always working with other people. So, I tried to recreate that in school with the students. That didn't exist then. Didn't exist.

GS: So, you're a pioneer.

AM: The faculty just to do their individual projects, you know, hypothetical projects. But, the one that I was immediately involved with was a study of the Florida Keys, which was called by the

governor, an area of critical state concern. The governor was Askew[3] at that time. A very well-known Florida governor, better than what we got today by leaps and bounds, by leaps and bounds.

GS: So tell me about the study.

AM: The site was the keys and I joined up with, professor Prestamo who headed up our planning wing. Then there was Langendorf was the other professor of planning. They came in after I started, but not very shortly after I started. Nick [Nicholas Patricios] wasn't involved in this, but Langendorf [Richard Langendorf] was the principal and myself with my handful of graduate students. We did studies of how to develop the Keys directly—What not to do and what to do, in terms of demonstrating how one should approach development in sensitive coral reef areas. We had workshops in the Keys. We got Pidgeon Key. We actually, the students and everybody, slept over there and the public came there from the Keys. So, we made presentations to the general public and in the evening, we would have hotdogs over a fire and a beer, you know, so...

GS: Sounds like Florida was fun back then.

AM: Yeah, it was fun. It was fun, real fun. And then of course I got involved with the Making of Miami Beach. That's where I really got heavily involved. Again, using class after class, after class,

[3] Reuben O'Donovan Askew served as the 37th Governor of the State of Florida from 1971 to 1979.

to do demonstrations, studies, have workshops on the beach, with the people, with the elderly. And I got grants from HEW [Health, Education and Welfare] to help.

GS: What year was that around?

AM: Late seventies, because the beach issues started in ‘76 and that's only two years after I started here. So, I took that on as a big community issue, you know, nobody...

GS: While you were still at the school of Engineering and Environmental design.

AM: Well it didn’t become a School of Architecture yet, but my workshops were architecture students.

GS: No, I'm just trying to establish a timeline in my head.

AM: Well I have the less, that should be easy enough to sort out like when our school changed to a school of architecture and then the engineering school went through a series of name changes and Doctor Einspruch was the dean of the engineering school. He was a gruff guy, you know, he said to me, yours was the easiest tenure that he ever gave. I said that was a very nice thing for him to say.

GS: That a very nice thing, but you probably deserved it.

AM: Well, again, I'm doing these community projects and stuff as sort of community service. That's it. And being involved in Miami beach meant a lot of headlines for the school too. We got into the newspapers a lot.

GS: The making of Miami Beach was a publication. Do you want to tell me a little bit about that?

AM: There's two publications that I have, but the two publications that I created were not the Making of Miami Beach, it was a report called The Development of Mobility Criteria for the Elderly. The grant addressed independent living by senior citizens. So, it's not just designing a cool apartment, it's really looking at the bigger picture. How they got around. And then, I did an interdisciplinary project with anthropology. Unheard of for this school at the time. Claudia Rogers from the anthropology department. That's a small department in this school. But it's vital, very vital. These kinds of interviews are what anthropologists do. So, I did it from anthropology, then my next publication was with Nick, and that was called The Development of Design Criteria for the Elderly. I have a copy. There should be copies here. There should be copies here.

GS: I'm sure we have them.

AM: You know, there were extra copies. Well that room, what happened to that box?

GS: We haven't gone through that box yet. But it's there.

AM: Yeah, there were, there were copies of that in there.

GS: There was quite a lot of stuff in your office.

AM: They're disappearing. But any rate, so that was where the elderly, but it took months of material... interviews. I did interviews with the elderly, I had the students do interviews.

GS: What kind of questions did you ask them?

AM: Well, for one thing, I had the students actually spend time with them and they loved being with the students. In the mobility criteria book, the students would accompany these people on their daily walks and their missions to the grocery store to whatever the doctor, to wherever they had to go. Living independently meant that they had to get to these places. To eat, buy groceries, and for the medical needs. So, the students were assigned individuals and sort of camped out with them. That was nice.

GS: That was great. That sounds amazing.

AM: Yeah! I mean, as far as asking questions, you know, just make notes and I'll go over them and we'll summarize through everything we did. We had some interesting questions. One of the jokes that comes out of these sessions was, "What do you think of Art Deco?" The elderly person would say, "Art Deco, I don't believe I know him. Does he live here? [laughing]

GS: Art deco, art shmeco.

AM: Does he live here?

GS: Did you record those interviews?

AM: I don't think so. So at that time the Art Deco [preservation] movement was going. My publications, the background research that's necessary for the Department of Historical Preservation. And so, we needed that and we have a history chapter in the front of the publications. And so, that gave me the time to get that part, as part of the interviews. And we had this history section that documented the area, it's physical condition. Now, one thing that really made this important is that, and it's my shining moment—my shining moment—when Janet Reno, who was

Attorney General at the time... it was at the state of Florida. Yeah. I guess it was... anyway, she, they were filing to demolish, you know... do urban renewal, but it has to go through a process. And they had their own surveys of the housing. And the city intentionally...it gets political...the city intentionally made it a red zone where they would put no repairs into anything. So, they took all services away from this area to let it decay. To let the buildings decay. They redlined it, it's called redlining. And so, they did that to the art deco district to the area below fifth or sixth street. It was scheduled for the complete demolition, they had other plans. We fought those plans and when the Attorney General came in, Janet Reno, she had me up there in court, you know, as her witness, you know, that's my shining moment, I was on the stand for days. They were trying to say it was blighted and I said, no blight. My surveys show different than yours. They had to bring in their windshield surveys, you know, and there was a world of difference between the two.

GS: Windshield surveys...?

AM: Well they drive through the area and just make their notes, you know, just looking at buildings from outside.

GS: And this was politicians. Do you remember any of them?

AM: They're Trump types. Trump all over again. It's the same thing. I've been through it too many times.

GS: Oh, but this guy's really scary, but we won't go there. Do you remember who he is?

AM: The city attorney was a real fighter. He's an old man whose name was Joseph Wannick. He and the attorney general, Janet Reno, you know, they put the skids on that development. Not completely, but almost completely. There was always some loophole.

GS: Who was it that was pro-development?

AM: The guy who represented the developer...well, actually, the biggest, again, a Trump type, the richest developer in Miami Beach is called Muss, Steven Muss, and he also is in New York too. He's got the buildings in New York and he got it all from his father too. I have two episodes working. This was done through academic channels, this battle. The other battle was done professionally against the developer, the richest man in town who inherited all his wealth from his father like Trump and proceeded to cause havoc. You know, city, wanted to tear down things and build things and stuff. That was one of my other battles. But there was a similarity. I started thinking about this with Trump world, you know. I said, these people won't go away. They don't act human. They have no humanity.

GS: They do not. I agree with you there.

AM: Well I'm glad you're not a Trumpeteer.

GS: No, absolutely not.

AM: So, we had this battle with Steven Muss, the developer. He worked in private and secret and I was fortunate enough once to be...this is a little story. I have a friend who's a Miami beach architect, very well known. He's the developer's architect, he builds all those ugly condominiums, well, they're not completely ugly, but they're all tall buildings and he said, "I have a conflict of interest. Listen, go to this meeting for me, would ya? I'll tell them I'm sending you and you can represent me." I said, okay, "I'll go to the meeting." And so, I go to this meeting in Miami Beach and there I find the big man, his name is Muss, giving orders to the banks, bankers and things like that. It's, you know, we want to keep, get rid of these people.

GS: Meaning...the old people?

AM: Yes, the old people. We got to get rid of these old people and tear those buildings down. Literally, I'm sitting there, hmm they're very interesting. I don't belong here. I don't think I belong here.

GS: But you got it straight from the horse's mouth.

AM: You can see it point blank in a closed-door meeting, you know, what their scheme is. To the public outside, they don't know. They don't know what's going on there. I didn't hang out very much with that, that developer. Representing my friend, my friend who wanted to stay out of it because he knew it was going to be a can of worms and it's just terrible when they started, and it was. But it succeeded with the Janet Reno who had to require public hearings on this thing. You know, it was a requirement, thank God, of the government in order to put the halt to tearing down the buildings. But the process of decay had started and set in, and so there was a lot of decay in the area, but not enough to cause wholesale demolition, and the old people lived there. So, for a while I became sort of their spokesman, you know...

GS: Their champion.

AM: Yeah, for a little while, a few minutes of fame.

GS: It worked.

AM: It worked, and so, those public hearings lasted for quite some time, but that was one of my other projects going back to school here. So that was a long range involvement where I got and

used graduate students, but as time wore off, somebody else took over the graduate program and made it their thing. And I was left with whatever's leftover and then I didn't have an exclusive to the graduate students anymore. They changed the program. They changed the name of it.

GS: What did they call it? Do you remember? It's okay, don't worry.

AM: I don't remember but when I had it, it was called a Master of Science in Urban Design. And then they called it a Bachelor of Architecture and Urban Design. It would be a graduate degree and a master of architecture. They created another title and gave it another administrative name with somebody else in charge, or with nobody in charge? I don't know. Because the school was going through a lot of changes with different deans and you had a whole series of deans and then a whole series of acting deans, including Jorge Hernandez, Nick Patricios and in the lags between having a leader here... and that hurts the school a little bit because then the school started going its own way. People started doing their own thing. There wasn't a cohesive mission. I think the school became fractured. A clique developed and everything became very privatized. What did I do? I just went along teaching classes, you know, oh, I was always coming up with some kind of project that was a community oriented.

GS: Do you still stay in touch with some of the students that you worked with on these community projects?

AM: Oh, yes. Some of them have become good friends.

GS: Oh, are they still in architecture?

AM: In public service, architecture in public service. I even baptized one of the kid's daughters. I would seem responsible for fixing up people.

GS: So, you played cupid as well.

AM: Please, cupid as well? I had a boy and a girl in my class. They fell in love.

GS: Those are good memories. You said that the school was fractured at that time? Is there a time when you feel like it started to come more together or did it remain fractured from then on?

AM: I think that with Steffian everybody was really proud to be a school of architecture. Oh, Tom Reagan was the first dean, and then there's like a blank period after that. I mean, it just kind of bad because there's comings and goings, acting deans, then more acting deans.

GS: But no consistent leadership.

AM: There was Basil Honigman, I think that Tom Spain made friends with him. But these deans, Oh, there was a dean who was a disaster. He was called [Javier] Cenicacelaya. He and his boyfriend they were here for one year exactly. He was totally out of his element. I think this present guy is out of his element too, the ought to send him back to Canada. This guy, he's a techie. But he doesn't... he has no social skills. And he is supposed to be dean of the school but no one ever sees him. Do you ever have meetings with him?

GS: Yes, I see him quite often. Actually, I think he's got a lot on his plate.

AM: He's got a lot on his plate? He's trying to do too much?

GS: No, I think it's just, there's a lot of things that need to be done and you have to chip away at them. You have to chip away a little at a time and stay in the present, in the world of 2016 and that's difficult. But anyway, we don't want to talk about him. I want to talk about you.

AM: He's not exactly... he needs, has a lack of respect for the school at this point. At this point in life, you can't memorialize the school very easily when you have a dean who's not really a dean.

GS: Well, let's not talk about him. Let’s talk about you. I want to talk about your period here. I want to talk about your work.

AM: I think, I did say a lot of things here.

GS: Yes, you did. Or, do you want to stop and pick up some other time?

AM: No, no. If you have questions, you know, we'll move it along with questions. I don't care. I mean, I find that there's blanks for me. I'm surprised at my own memory now. You know, like this weekend I was going to try to look through old files and things, but I didn't have a chance. They kept me real busy this weekend with stuff. Parties and luncheons. And then I had a painting class. So, it was a busy weekend.

GS: You also taught architectural history?

AM: I taught architectural history. I inherited architectural history from Paul Buisson, who was my friend. And he was also Tom Spain's close friend too. And when he passed away, suddenly I took on all these courses. Before that, I taught the architectural history, I taught a course that was designed for the engineers. I made that course up for the architectural engineers and that's why I branched into, again, low level, history courses until we got Kathy Wheeler, to do history fulltime

for the requirements for accreditation. And then I stayed with Paul's courses because nobody was teaching those courses and nobody's teaching them now. That pisses me off. That is not a dean. These are important courses; I don't know what they're going to do when accreditation comes or when his review time comes. But you got to have... these courses have been taught here since the beginning of the school of architecture. The ones that the school made up, the histories that would be two semesters that were comprehensive, then the others were electives, you know, specializing in different eras of history. So, different faculty take over the different eras. I took on not the oriental because Paul knew that... and then we had a girl that year and she was an expert. She was Asian, but she went up to Miami Dade I think now. That's an area of history that's not taught right now. Then I took on the Byzantine and Medieval. I enjoyed teaching that a lot, you know, with the sciences. And then, when I retired with Lizz [Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk], I retired halftime. Be a working retired. This is what, this new thing then renewed. That way I could keep teaching so many credits a semester. But not a full load because it was tiring, too tiring, and then the full load is just teaching any design class. I always like to make up special classes, you know, something that had special ingredients to it, which had to be invented. I had to develop those. The repetitive ones, well for example, teaching design with an emphasis on the handicap should be essential, you know, to everyone. It's not taught here. We have a lot of omissions now.

GS: Well, I think that they have to comply with ADA.

AM: Accreditations? Well, somebody's going to wake up and see where they do and what they don't or try to cover it up.

GS: Well, I think the accreditation process has changed somewhat. So, there are probably areas they are going to focus on more than others.

AM: Well the accreditation process... they might emphasize certain areas other than others. That could be... they will go heavy on the technology. People are going overboard with it.

GS: Well, I think it has to make... technology has to make sense in the real world. It can't be technology for the sake of technology, but rather technology in the service of your discipline.

AM: Well, we'll see about that. It’s only use has been to make, create flamboyant architecture making curves where are not needed and things of that sort.

GS: Are there architects that you have respect for, that you admire? Can you tell me some of them?

AM: OMA [Office of Metropolitan Architeture], first of all.

GS: You like OMA?

AM: Yeah, because it's a research oriented architectural practice. Which builds interesting in buildings based on research, based on research theories, not just technology. Right, and research. They don't teach... people don't know how to do research anymore.

GS: They don't. I'm trying to change that.

AM: They don't know how to do. They want to be told what to do and then look it up. Google it. This is not education. They don't know what it is like to face a blank piece of paper and then struggle through it. And they don't know how to use their hands.

GS: Right, I agree.

AM: No, I had my criticism about architecture. That’s part of me.

GS: But, somehow, you know, if you look outside here to the left, you can see the design build studio. Somebody is trying to do something about that.

AM: That is great. That is just great. What Ceo and Jim are doing. Yeah, I love it. But that's not all. There has to be more.

GS: No, there has to be more.

AM: But that is really good.

GS: Getting tired?

AM: No, I'm not tired. I'm into it!

GS: Good. You spoke about a certain text that was very.... had a significant meaning for you. Why did you want to become an architect?

AM: Well, from the very beginning I was gifted as an artist. I thought I'd take my talents to architecture, at a very young age. I went to a very good high school, when public schools were very good. I went to a thousand students per class and three classes, so 3,000 student high school.

GS: Where was that?

AM: In New Jersey; Trenton. The capital. And they gave me lots of options to do things, the extra-curricular things in pre-college, but I got involved with the theater and theater design. I designed

sets and stuff. And I was the president of the art club and won some contests. As a high school student going into architecture and my dad, being a practical man, he said, well, a career in art is very unforgiving. You know, it's not stable. So, he says I think you'd better, you know, concentrate on architecture some. So, okay there, I'm saying I'll apply to architecture school. No problem. Got to be an architect from the beginning, you know, and then, but I also applied to a drama school for theater design. I was accepted to that too.

GS: Which drama school was that?

AM: Carnegie Mellon. Carnegie Mellon had everything. The School of fine arts had everything, had theater and had music. Art and architecture. Yeah. It was the college of fine arts. You know, we had everything in one building. It was a great place. Great place to go to school.

GS: I'm sure it still is.

AM: Yes. At Carnegie, it still is and, by the way, they're good at technology too. They have branched out there a lot too. So, then I went into the service. I got my GI bill and that took me into graduate school. I finished Carnegie and then went to graduate school. After that I became a licensed, I decided to not go to graduate school until I became a licensed architect.

GS: So, you became a licensed architect first.

AM: Before I went to graduate school. I finished the mission. I worked for a while doing some things. Some pretty good things, I was very lucky to be in the right place at the right time. A city that was remaking itself, you know.

GS: Pittsburgh?

AM: Pittsburgh, yeah. It's known for its renaissance. We had a big, big hand in a lot of that. I was in the right place. Then that made it easy to get into graduate school too because the stuff I was doing, no student ever had done these things before. Just coming into graduate school.

GS: What kind of...?

AM: You know, the kind of work that had to do with the city's renaissance. All aspects of it and so... and then when I came back, I came back there after it was sent in city planning. I went back to Pittsburgh. I had a job to do with the stadium development. They gave me a job and a title. The redevelopment of their downtown with the stadium in it. I had the Pittsburgh stadium...the development prospectus. I made a publication. Yeah, so that was that. Then, let's see. Then came the recession. Then came Florida and came UM. UM- the academic world. I taught part time

classes at different universities as a guest lecturer before then, but then I never had a full-time job until I came here and that was [Ralph] Warburton who hired me.

GS: That was 40 some odd years.

AM: Now it’s 41, maybe more.

GS: And you’ve amassed quite a library which you have donated to the school of architecture and we’re in the process of doing an inventory of your collections, which are fascinating to me.

AM: I have books that I actually had in college in that collection.

GS: Yeah, I see. I see that, which is why they're in my office and they're not out here. And you said you're an avid collector of postcards?

AM: Oh, yes, the postcards. They’ve been on the shelf right now. We do one thing at a time, but that's part of the many things I have to do yet. You know, collecting, being a collector, all these years means that my organization has not kept up with the collections at all and I don't have a staff to help me either. And so right now it's just overwhelming, but we'll get to it.

GS: One box at a time.

AM: One box at a time.

GS: Well, anyway, I would like to continue this conversation in the near future.

AM: Yeah, you develop some questions, let me know and I can think about some things too.

GS: What do you think is your biggest contribution to the school?

AM: To this school? There's just two things, you see. The real world and I was taught, I had a great mentor in the real world and I was taught about teamwork. Nothing is ever achieved without teamwork.

GS: Who was your mentor?

AM: And the professional world... my experience... and that I was involved a lot of really great projects, especially the remaking of the whole city. And city planning, city design, urban design is my forte. When I went to Harvard, I remember you had to do an intro project, you know, so I was

working on my experience and say like, I did a civic center for Pittsburgh, in other words, I knew the city so well, you know, I could take this project, you know, based on your own experience. Everybody had to do something from their own experience. So I was very fortunate, really very fortunate to be in the right place at the right time. I was single. I had every opportunity; I had no ties. I was avoiding those things.

GS: You were a playboy.

AM: I was a playboy. That's what everybody calls you. When you're not married, you're a playboy. There is no other choice, you know. I think they're envious. Get serious Mills, you got to find somebody, you got to push, you know, from your family, from everybody. So, I got involved in architecture. I mean the ladies were there, but I didn't get serious, you know, I dated. That was fine. Going steady? No, no, no, no. I wanted to be free. So anyway, I can remember the agony of constantly getting badgered by people because you're single.

GS: Like there's something wrong with you.

AM: There's something wrong with you. You know, that has crept along. I mean, in my late twenties to my thirties... my forties!

GS: So, you didn’t get married until later.

AM: Yeah. And what's wrong with you? So anyway...

GS: You finally married Gaga.

AM: Or she, she captivated me. She did it. She charmed me. But anyway, that is being a bachelor. You're a playboy. I wish I was a playboy as much as they thought I was.

GS: There's the perception and then there's the reality.

AM: They have that perception, you know, they’d ask, what'd you do last night? And I’d say, well, I partied all night, you want to hear it? I partied all night.

GS: You must have been to some really fun parties.

AM: No, no, I’m saying that as a lie. I’m just try to jerk everybody’s chain. Oh yeah, you should have been there, it was a wild. And it hurt my advancement too, professionally, you know, they don't want a single guy in responsible positions. But I managed to get one.

GS: I think you did okay. I think you did fine.

AM: And I finally got some of them, but I know that that was a negative. I said it's very unfair. It's very unfair. But anyway, there was, this was the world I had to live in. And don't forget, where I was, was a corporate world. Everything by the book. U.S. Steel is a client. Westinghouse is a client and you have to sit in meetings with them and dress the right away.

GS: What was the name of the firm that you were with?

AM: It was named D. R. S. It used to be Mitchell and Richie. And then Deeter and Richie. Yes, and he's from Alcoa. He was Alcoa's architect and Richie was my mentor. And then Sippel was the youngest guy in the firm. He and I were both... we got together, really. So, I was signed up, ready to go on that firm and they heard of me and I got there as soon as an opening developed, you know. When they get in here, because they were doing all the great work in town. They had all the great commissions.

GS: And they were based in...?

AM: Pittsburgh, but they were doing things elsewhere too. We had an office in Boston for a while, so I would go up there and then we had something in Washington too. Deeter had a Washington connection. So, we were all over the east, but primarily Pittsburgh. It was good. It was good fun. And I've got to tell you one thing that is very clear to you. My mentor there was a great man, he supported my going to Harvard, he himself was a Harvard graduate and he was a fellow at Harvard and supported my going there and taught me a lot of things. And about good things and about the firm and of course I advanced, you know, in the firm, you know, to be responsible for urban design. My specialty at Harvard, you know. Working at a large firm doing large works, requires a lot of teamwork. So, my shock with education is that everybody is off on their own and extremely paranoid about self-adulation and self-recognition. No teamwork. No teamwork.

GS: Do you think it's changing at all?

AM: No, Warburton is not that way. Warburton is the guy who hired me. He knows all about teamwork, but the others, they don't know. They younger ones, I guess, come straight out of school and once in a while, they want to do practice instead of teaching! I said here you got to do one thing or you do the other, you know, you got to devote time to teaching. Down here, practice is very little stuff except for Jose Gelabert-Navia who is involved with some good stuff. He's involved with some problems, some big, big things. But that's a fulltime job. He's a junior partner there.

GS: At Perkins & Will?

AM: At wherever the firm is that he's in. Yeah, he was one of our acting deans for a while, you know, we had a whole slew of them for a while.

GS: So, you like the work that he does.

AM: The difference in academia was a bit of a shock to me, but I was doing what I could do. So, and I was given the opportunity to do, you know, what I can do. Nobody held me back. Nobody except... yeah, nobody helped me. I have no complaints. Our leadership, except was very fragmented over a long period of time. And the best time was when this school was formed. Those days were interesting, you know, with a lot of interesting people who were deans or acting deans. Well, the acting deans are still here as faculty, you know. Faculty and practice, I would say, but the, the deans were some interesting deans. Roger Schluntz was one who had high standards. He had a very high standards and he's tried to cap these people here who are more interested in their private practice than teaching school and using school facilities for the private practice. Again, we have these people who are hell bent to make a name for themselves through private practice. And uh, the school is not their officers and studios. So, we had this conflict. He ran smack into it and so he was pushed out. Because the faculty, wanted to have their own way doing their own thing here. It's a private school. I myself can brag about the fact that I devoted my time entirely to the school, teaching, which I think the job is for that purpose. You know, the outside activities become very, you're allowed a certain percentage of time to do outside activities. I forget what the percentage number is, but the most it would be, would be a week in a month, but no, that's

abuse...greatly. And I thought, well, I'm here as... well this is my primary place of employment. I would do an occasional consulting. I did two things here that, well, let's see, a couple of things. One thing I did on my own, I was able, and it was a nightmare because it was so, I didn't get any rest, but I was able to do a master plan for Florida Atlantic University. I'm proud of that. But it was an ordeal to do it, and to keep your classes at the same time.

GS: And was it implemented? Was the plan implemented?

AM: Yes. For the year 2000. And I won that job by competition. I wanted to make presentations to the state of Florida. And the other thing is, is with the art deco district, you know, participating in the master plan for the art deco district, getting the first 20th century historic district designated in the United States. I was right at the ground roots of that. So that's another thing. Now those things are outside of school. The work of school doesn't get those merits. That's what you do beyond school. There are other things that I did. I can't remember them right now.

GS: But you seem to really have enjoyed teaching.

AM: Well, the teaching, oh yeah, I enjoyed teaching. I miss the students. I love the students. You know, they're my family.

GS: I'm sure they miss you too.

AM: I love the students. I miss them. I hope they might miss me, some of them. But, now, without this year has been very strange for me. Not teaching. I have this strange feeling, you know, I say, "Gosh, I'm retired but I'm bored. You got to find something to do." And of course, I have lots of things to do, but it's not enough. And the regimen of teaching, I like a lot.

GS: It's very structured.

AM: Very structured, yeah, I like that. Otherwise, when you're on your own, you go this way, that way, every which way. Now with the spur of the moment... impulse. But anyways, it's a big difference for me, seeing these two worlds together. Now, teaching now, it's been long time, long time. And Liz for 14 years, you know, we got to get used to Lizz.

GS: 18 years.

AM: 18 years. 18?

GS: Yeah, almost 18, I think.

AM: I got used to her. When she became dean...and more of us said that she would let the faculty do anything they wanted. She let the faculty roam free. And she had this way, you know, and then she will do the rest. Do anything for you. So, I had no complaints during that time because the last 10 years I was part time retired and then I was able to teach the courses and devote most time to the courses. There were the histories, especially. I had a lot of fun with history, a lot of fun. So, I miss the design studios. Just teaching a design studio without having some meaning to it was very unsatisfactory for me. I like to do a design studio that, you know, like the other ones I described. So how long can we keep doing that? I don't know. I guess we can keep doing it, but it has to be...It has to have some validity. So, students can experience and, you know, they get serious, then they have to get serious. They can't just be a frivolous exercise. I take architecture that seriously.

GS: So, what do you consider a serious exercise? Can you give me an example of a serious exercise versus a frivolous exercise?

AM: Well, a project that has some social relevance...

GS: ...and impact.

AM: Yeah, a project that is not just sticks and stones. Sticks and stones will be for the earlier studios. I like the upper level where things take on a purpose beyond sticks and stones, but they better know their sticks and stones. A lot of our students have made personal complaint against

others because they're unqualified. They're coming out very poor and their ability to put buildings together. Just the simple rudiments of putting a building together. And like the design studio, if they require models to be built, not superficial models, not bulk models they learn from that, really, they learn from that very well. Depends on what you do in the studio and what level it is. But, again, my studios are good. Lately I was able to get some influence. I was able to put some studios together that took place... one in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Oh, I had a good one there. That's why I brought students there, in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

GS: Netherlands?

AM: That was one of my more recent and favorites studios. Amsterdam. And I brought the students over there. I had the help of a Dutch architect. There was a plan development by Alma who did the master plan. And the students were given a partial to design, you know, given partials out of the master plan. They had to work from a real master plan.

GS: That's good.

AM: Yeah, that was good. And they actually went there because we found accommodations for them and everything. When we're able to do things like that, it's really super. Yeah, so my Amsterdam project. Then I had another one, but I couldn't bring them there, but I had another one.

[recording cuts off drastically.]

END OF INTERVIEW

Gilda Santana

03/15/2019 (transcribed)