

AUSTIN HISTORY CENTER
Oral History Transcript

Interviewee: Thomas W. Shefelman (with his wife, Janice Shefelman)

Interviewer: Toni Thomasson

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TONI THOMASSON: This is Toni Thomasson. Today is Monday, February 16, 2015. And today I'm interviewing for the first time architect and artist, Tom W. Shefelman. His wife, author Janice Shefelman, is joining us for the interview. This interview is taking place at the Shefelman home located at 1405 West 32nd Street in Austin, Texas. This interview is being done for the Austin History Center and is the first of what is planned to be a series of oral history interviews with Austin architects. Hello Tom.

TOM SHEFELMAN: Hello Toni

THOMASSON: Could you tell me your full name and when and where you were born.

SHEFELMAN, T: Thomas Whitehead Shefelman. Born October 3, 1927 in Seattle, Washington.

THOMASSON: Did you grow up in Seattle?

SHEFELMAN, T: Mostly, mostly. Yes. Although I spent some time as a teenager in Tucson, Arizona and at one point in fact, let's see, when I was eleven, I went, I was enrolled in basically a pony polo school where all the teenage boys had these rich ponies and we couldn't, my family couldn't afford one of them so they bought one of the cheap little, I guess you'd say, a little mustang. And when I, in front of the other boys, I first tried to get on him he tossed me off. And so I spent much of my first few weeks there going under training from the horse trainer on how to relate to a horse. And I finally, Choppo let me on. But we couldn't play polo, so we used to go on these beautiful climbs up in the Catalina foothills all by ourselves, a lonely walk. So I had a great relationship with Choppo. And then later on when I moved down again to Tucson, Arizona I went to Rosacruz Junior High School. And then back to Seattle for the rest of the time in high school except for the last year when I went to, I was sent down to Shriner Institute in Kerrville, Texas. Which was really a fine place. And I fell in love with the Hill Country of Texas. Also when I was in the navy for a little over a year I was stationed at Navy Pier in Chicago which was a wonderful place at the time. And then of course when I came down to the University after leaving Kerrville, I went to UT here in Austin, but did my graduate work at Harvard in Boston. So I lived in Boston which was a lovely experience too.

THOMASSON: Well, when did you know that you might want to be an architect?

SHEFELMAN, T: I don't know, I think, you know, I always loved to draw from the time I was three years old. But I also had, I guess you'd say a---I was fascinated with the Temple of Karnak photos in my *Compton's Pictured Encyclopedia* that was just an eyesight. And then, I was really stimulated by the

architect who gave the career day presentation at Roosevelt High School in Seattle. And then, I remember also, when I was younger, attending services with my father in the beautiful St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral in Seattle, which was a great, I guess you'd say Renaissance duplication. And also, publications of work by Frank Lloyd Wright and his work and his career and anyway, I didn't know later I would be under the blessing of one of his competitors, Walter Gropius, at Harvard. So I attended the School of Architecture for Bachelor degree at UT and did real well there with my drawing ability. It was way before computers. And then I went on to Harvard Graduate School of Design for my Masters Degree.

JANICE SHEFELMAN: Tell how Walter Gropius invited you to come and be in his class.

SHEFELMAN, T: Oh well, one of my fellow UT students that was I think a year ahead of me, was it Jim Pratt?

SHEFELMAN, J: Yeah

SHEFELMAN, T: He went to Harvard and he showed Walter Gropius a sketch---I helped Jim on one of his projects. I did the preliminary interior design sketches for him and he showed those to Gropius. So when I came up to Harvard, I was invited to come.

THOMASSON: So you applied then and were accepted.

SHEFELMAN, T: Then I applied.

SHEFELMAN, J: Well actually, I think you were looking at MIT and Harvard.

SHEFELMAN, T: Yeah, right.

SHEFELMAN, J: And when you visited Gropius' class---

SHEFELMAN, T: Yes

SHEFELMAN, J: ---or when you helped Jim with his drawings and Gropius saw them, said, "Why don't, vy don't you come und be in my class?" (German accent)

SHEFELMAN, T: Oh, I remember now that actually when I came to visit Harvard, I was visiting Jim's class basically and I did the interior perspective drawing for his group there and Gropius saw it and he invited, he's the one---as he said, "If you want to come to Harvard, remember that architecture is not about buildings. It is about zee spaces inside und outside and how they are connected." (German accent). And he invited me to attend the school.

THOMASSON: Did anyone else encourage you in architecture? That you can think of? How did your parents feel?

SHEFELMAN, J: Oh, tell what your father said about---

SHEFELMAN, T: My father said---I guess it was maybe after that career review at Roosevelt High School on architecture---I mentioned to my father, Harold, that I was really interested in being an architect. And he said, "I am so glad that you want to be an architect and not a starving artist." (laughter) Because he was a professional lawyer.

THOMASSON: He wanted you to be a professional?

SHEFELMAN, T: Right

SHEFELMAN, J: Aren't artists professional?

THOMASSON: And he didn't see artists as professionals?

SHEFELMAN, T: No

SHEFELMAN, J: Right

THOMASSON: So how long have you lived in Austin?

SHEFELMAN, T: 70 years (laughter) Can you believe it?

SHEFELMAN, J: No, no

THOMASSON: That can't be right.

SHEFELMAN, T: Well let's see, if I came to Austin to attend UT from Kerrville from Shriner Institute, that would be the beginning of my living, with some interruptions in Austin.

THOMASSON: So you were 18 - something like that?

SHEFELMAN, T: Yes

SHEFELMAN, J: I don't think it's quite 70, but---

SHEFELMAN, T: Well, 1951 was when I came to the School of Architecture. So count---

SHEFELMAN, J: Somebody do the math.

THOMASSON: I'll just write that down on our notes. (laughter) We won't do math right now. So you graduated, you got your Master's. You came back to Austin then?

SHEFELMAN, T: Yes, I did. I actually, I think I was encouraged to come to work for Kuehne Brooks and Barr which was a pretty well known Austin architecture firm in those days. So they encouraged me to come and work for them and they gave me, right away, they gave me a design project. It was the Perry Brooks Building.

THOMASSON: Oh, you worked on the Perry Brooks Building.

SHEFELMAN, T: And it was pretty "Bauhaus-y", you know, it was a square. (laughter)

THOMASSON: What other firms did you work for?

SHEFELMAN, T: Well, I got to know, of course, Charlie Granger. I went to a party with Charlie Granger and his wife when he was a partner with Arthur Fehr. And I don't know whether they encouraged me when I was still at Kuehne Brooks and Barr to come work for them or what, but anyway---

SHEFELMAN, J: No it was when you told Kuehne Brooks and Barr or Howard Barr, in fact, when we were going to get married and Howard Barr said, "Well how long do you need to take off" and we had already planned our year long trip around the world. Tom said how about a year and he said, "uh, no, we can't hold it that long." But meanwhile the word got around and Arthur Fehr said, "you have a job when you get back."

SHEFELMAN, T: Yes, right.

THOMASSON: So you came back from your honeymoon and then. Talk about the trip. I know about the book [*Honeymoon Hobos*] and I've read the book. For the interview, how did that influence your art, your architecture.

SHEFELMAN, T: Oh, to explore the rest of the world, the architecture, I was very open minded at the time and of course I was fascinated with images and philosophy of Japanese architecture. It was based on very simple structure and structuring of spaces and the relationship between indoors and outdoors, how art was a

part of the architecture and just---As it turned out I ended up, those magazines---I think there are four or five magazines that have my articles about---(to Janice) what was the name of the articles?

SHEFELMAN, J: I think it was called *Impertinent Comments on Japanese Life and Architecture*.

THOMASSON: These are in *Texas Architect Magazine*?

SHEFELMAN, T: Yeah

SHEFELMAN, J: And the *AIA Journal*

SHEFELMAN, T: So they published those articles and my sketches. I had a lot of fun doing sketches when I was there.

THOMASSON: And some of those are in the book?

SHEFELMAN, T: Oh yes, oh yes. I have all of the issues, at least a half dozen that were part of my story. (To Janice) You can open one up and show her.

SHEFELMAN, J: Well that won't get recorded. But when the *AIA Journal*, saw it in the *Texas Architect*, they got permission to publish them.

THOMASSON: Good, so you went on your trip, you came back, and you worked for Fehr and Granger? They held your job for you?

SHEFELMAN, T: Yes, they were intrigued with the Japanese influence on my architecture, my design. Which you know was really beautiful, down to earth.

THOMASSON: And did you feel it was compatible with central Texas, our climate, I would think, the indoor/outdoor---

SHEFELMAN, T: Walter Gropius' statement when I arrived at architecture, "It is not about buildings. It is about zee spaces inside und outside and how they're connected." And of course, exploring Japanese architecture was one way to explore that philosophy. And it had a very great influence on my approach.

SHEFELMAN, J: I think it was Gropius that said, "go East young man."

SHEFELMAN, T: That's right, he said, don't go to Europe, "go East young man." That's what he said.

THOMASSON: What projects did you do that you felt you most got the opportunity to use that influence?

SHEFELMAN, T: The one that had the most influence was---

SHEFELMAN, J: The Golden Pavillon?

SHEFELMAN, T: Yeah, the Golden Pavilion. and I researched with the owner, let's see what was it. Researched the Japanese Temple House. The house I helped him design, the owner designed, was the Japanese Temple House outside Wimberley. I researched with him the Golden Pavilion Temple at the UT Architectural Library. And that was the story, one of the magazines has pictures of it.

THOMASSON: So it's a private residence?

SHEFELMAN, T: It was a private residence but it really looked like a Japanese Temple on the side of a hill.

THOMASSON: Interesting, and is it still there?

SHEFELMAN, J: I assume so.

SHEFELMAN, T: I assume so. I haven't seen it in a long time.

SHEFELMAN, J: I think a key to Tom's way of designing and relating to a client is just what he said about, "he helped the client design it." He's very good at listening and using what the client said in the design.

SHEFELMAN, T: Yeah, we had to make residents' dreams come true. Tom and Pat Rick's house remodeling and Patti Prewitt's house remodeling in Navasota was inspired by our book, *Victoria House*. And Harley and Waldi Browning, I did with them a Bauhaus style on Pecos named---they named it *Waldheim* or Home in the Woods, with one of Austin's earliest solar assisted hot water heating systems. So that was a great experience. And then there was Tommy and Sherry Jacks. They named their house *Tudor Redux*---complete renovation of existing house with very close client-architect collaboration and extensive research into Tudor architecture.

SHEFELMAN, J: In fact they bought a whole Tudor house in England, bought the whole interior paneling and you put it together in their house.

SHEFELMAN, T: That's right!

THOMASSON: And you like all that research and getting into it?

SHEFELMAN, T: Oh I loved working with them on that. It was not just my research but our research.

SHEFELMAN, J: There you go.

SHEFELMAN, T: Yeah

THOMASSON: So at what point did you leave other people's firms and just start your own firm?

SHEFELMAN, T: Well, what really happened was, let's see, I guess I was with---

SHEFELMAN, J: You were with Fehr and Granger when Roland Roesner ask you to come and teach at UT.

SHEFELMAN, T: Oh and teach at UT, right, that's right. It was my entrance into UT and teaching architecture there where I began to meet other teacher dash architects and one of whom was Alan Taniguchi, whose father you know designed the garden [Zilker Botanical Garden].

THOMASSON: Right

SHEFELMAN, T: And he and a couple of students agreed to start our firm together. Walter Vacker and David Minter. So we all formed the firm.

SHEFELMAN, J: Taniguchi Shefelman Vacker Minter

SHEFELMAN, T: Right, that was the name of the firm. And we partnered for several years. But then we began to break up with Vacker and Minter. And so finally Alan and I parted. But, by that time we had hired Jim Nix. He was one of my favorite students at UT. Just full of energy you know. So he and I agreed to leave and form our own firm, Shefelman and Nix or "Shnix" (laughter).

THOMASSON: That's where I came into the picture, when I met you, it was Shefelman and Nix.

SHEFELMAN, J: Shnix, I like that.

SHEFELMAN, T: And we were together for years until finally I got so involved for one thing in the illustrating and painting. Finally decided years later to just retire and ---

SHEFELMAN, J: ---be a starving artist---(laughter)

SHEFELMAN, T: ---become a starving artist, which wasn't the case anyway. So---

THOMASSON: What year was that approximately? I mean I know it wasn't a definitive---

SHEFELMAN, T: When we left?

SHEFELMAN, J: Oh, I'm trying to think. It just sort of---had two careers and then it just moved on. I would say, what, five years ago?

SHEFELMAN, T: About five years ago---four or five years ago. And I think Jim has still, he still has his firm, downtown.

THOMASSON: Were you active on City Boards or City Commissions?

SHEFELMAN, T: Oh yeah, oh yeah (laughter)

THOMASSON: Tell me a little bit about that.

(looking at papers)

THOMASSON: It should be before our question about your favorite client. Well, we can even skip that question.

SHEFELMAN, T: No, it's there. I know it's there.

SHEFELMAN, J: I do too, I know it.

THOMASSON: Oh here it is.

SHEFELMAN, T: Oh yeah, okay, well, I was Austin Chapter AIA President for a year or two, I mean for maybe more than one term. But then I was also absorbed into the Austin Design Commission and then the Shoal Creek Trail Renovation and Austin Tomorrow.

THOMASSON: Oh, that was a big one.

SHEFELMAN, T: That was one I was busy in. I forgot which one I worked on the redesign of Congress Avenue. Was that---

SHEFELMAN, J: That wasn't with a committee. That was just a project that you had.

SHEFELMAN, T: Are you sure? I thought it grew out of being part of a committee though.

SHEFELMAN, J: Well, maybe so.

SHEFELMAN, T: Maybe it was the Austin Design Commission. Anyway, that was in effect, a civic project. I think I worked with a couple of other people too on the redesign of that part of Congress Avenue from, what was it, from 6th, 7th Street down to---we looked at the whole Avenue.

SHEFELMAN, J: You did the whole Avenue. And you worked with Bob Harris.

SHEFELMAN, T: I worked with Bob Harris then.

THOMASSON: So this must have been the very first Congress Avenue redo?

SHEFELMAN, T: Yes, right, redo, right, it was the first one where we changed the parking arrangement to head-in parking between islands with trees planted in them. That whole concept of a whole new street design concept without making the traffic lanes narrower. And, of course, the light fixtures and everything else.

SHEFELMAN, J: the paving---

SHEFELMAN, T: the paving, the paving, oh yeah, we changed the paving. That was a grand project.

THOMASSON: So that was all the way from the river to the Capitol?

SHEFELMAN, T: Right, right

THOMASSON: Was that when they widened the sidewalks too, to make---

SHEFELMAN, T: I think they did widen the sidewalks. Yes, yes, you actually walked a little bit of a sidewalk to get to your car, on those islands. Between those we landscaped and planted the trees. So that was one of my favorite urban design projects I think.

THOMASSON: What are some other projects you worked on in Austin?

SHEFELMAN, T: Well, I didn't mention it here, but the Waller Creek Master Plan and Development for the Lower Waller Creek Redesign in which we created pedestrian walkway spaces and bridges and things like that along the way. And deepened the creek for flood control. And we did design a tunnel for the last several hundred feet to the lake, but that was over the budget.

THOMASSON: So that was the first iteration of the Waller Creek Redesign.

SHEFELMAN, T: Right, that was the first renovation of Waller Creek.

SHEFELMAN, J: And it was your firm and a landscape firm from Dallas I think.

SHEFELMAN, T: Yes, let's see, what was---

SHEFELMAN, J: I don't remember their names, but the History Center has a copy of that plan, the book.

SHEFELMAN, T: I have the book, the plan in my studio if you want to get the other names out of it.

THOMASSON: If we have it at the History Center, we can get it from them.

SHEFELMAN, T: What was his name?

SHEFELMAN, J: I don't remember, it was a bunch of partners, sort of like a law firm.

SHEFELMAN, T: Right (laughter)

THOMASSON: So did you enjoy your urban design work the best? More than doing buildings, do you think?

SHEFELMAN, T: Oh each has their joy. Although it was a real ego trip to be hired to do an urban design project, you know, you're designing a lot of spaces in the city.

THOMASSON: I would think a lot more collaboration, a lot more people, required.

SHEFELMAN, T: Yes, always work with a good team.

THOMASSON: Did you have a favorite client in your projects?

SHEFELMAN, T: Favorite client, uhhh---

SHEFELMAN, J: You had lots of them.

SHEFELMAN, T: I had lots of them, all favorites.

THOMASSON: You don't have to pick one

SHEFELMAN, J: (looking at papers) Here, here, at the bottom.

SHEFELMAN, T: Okay, oh yeah, what was your favorite client and why? Well, City of Austin. I loved working with the City people on that project. They were very supportive and vice versa. And for churches. I had several churches, but the one I thought of this time was Michelle Pan, chair of the Taiwanese Presbyterian Church project. She was a lovely lady. One of the most "patting on the back" persons I worked with was Bob Mossman. He was chair of Bethany United Methodist Church from site master plan to sanctuary completion. He really knew how to work with people. And then for residences, Tom and Pat Ricks. I really enjoyed their house remodeling. Patti Prewitt, the house remodeling in Navasota inspired by our book, *Victoria House*.

SHEFELMAN, J: Oh yeah, Patti Prewitt and her family happened---bought that house in Navasota and then found out about the book, that we had used that house as the model. And so she contacted us and Tom helped them with remodeling. All because of a book.

THOMASSON: So the house really didn't get moved?

SHEFELMAN, T AND J: No, that house didn't get moved.

SHEFELMAN, T: And then Harley and Waldi Browning. That was the most Bauhaus style, rising up off Pecos Street, nicknamed *Waldheim*, parenthesis *Home in the Woods*. With one of Austin's earliest solar assisted hot water heating systems. And then I really enjoyed working with Tommy and Sherry Jacks, complete renovation of existing house with very close client-architect collaboration and extensive research. So the house got the name *Tudor Redux*.

THOMASSON: *Tudor Redux*

SHEFELMAN, T: R-E-D-U-X. And the *Japanese Temple House* outside Wimberley. I enjoyed researching the Golden Pavilion Temple at the UT Architectural Library for the owner. And for a bank, Ed Wroe, president of the American National Bank. That was my first big job when I was still with Kuehne, Brooks and Barr. Eddie so appreciated my work as designer with Kuehne Brooks and Barr that he helped finance Janice's and my *Honeymoon Hobo* journey to Japan and around the world. (laughter)

THOMASSON: Oh my gosh.

SHEFELMAN, J: Let's say he loaned us the money.

SHEFELMAN, T: He loaned us the money.

SHEFELMAN, J: All along the way.

THOMASSON: So it really was a bank thing? (laughter)

SHEFELMAN, T: Yes

THOMASSON: That's great.

SHEFELMAN, J: So that building has been recycled into an advertising firm now. It was the State Comptroller's Office. It's at 6th and Colorado.

THOMASSON: Sure, I saw you there the night of---

SHEFELMAN, J: the gala. And they recognized Tom there as the designer.

THOMASSON: That's a wonderful building.

SHEFELMAN, T: It was a fascinating building to work on.

SHEFELMAN, J: And Tom was working on that when we met. I will never forget going to the opening celebration. It was almost like the gala some, what, fifty years later. And we met Hans Knoll of the Knoll Furniture Company. And we told him we were going around the world and he said, "ah, you must go to Paris and help design the American Embassy in Paris."

SHEFELMAN, T: Yeah (laughter)

SHEFELMAN, J: I've forgotten the architect's name that did that now, but a well known architect.

THOMASSON: But that didn't work out?

SHEFELMAN, J: We didn't get there in time.

SHEFELMAN, T: No, we came to Paris by one year, long way trip from---

SHEFELMAN, J: We went to Japan first and we spent so much time we didn't get to Paris.

SHEFELMAN, T: Japan, India, Cambodia, Thailand

THOMASSON: And there's some special art in that bank building isn't there? Was that done as part of the project?

SHEFELMAN, T: Oh yes, I think I was responsible for getting---

SHEFELMAN, J: Seymour Fogel

SHEFELMAN, T: Seymour Fogel hired to do that.

SHEFELMAN, J: And for a long time it was covered up by a mural of horses, mustangs I guess. That's when the Comptroller's Office was there. But they didn't damage the mural underneath, so the present advertising firm took the horse mural off and they restored Fogel's painting. Just glorious!

THOMASSON: How did you know about Fogel? From school?

SHEFELMAN, T: Well, all I do remember was I remodeled a little building out in the country somewhere for Fogel for their house. So I worked on their house and it was really fun because it was a work of sculpture if there ever was one, the closest I ever came to that. With his encouragement. What's interesting is his son, Bud, is a partner with Robin Doerr for Images of Austin Gallery.

SHEFELMAN, J: You're getting Seymour Fogel and Ishmael Soto mixed up.

SHEFELMAN, T: Oh yeah.

SHEFELMAN, J: You knew Fogel because he taught art at UT.

SHEFELMAN, T: That's right, that's where I got to know him.

THOMASSON: And is that house still out there?

SHEFELMAN, J: It's Ishmael Soto's house. It's still there.

THOMASSON: Can you tell me a little bit about design process and how you like to approach design?

SHEFELMAN, T: In the pre-computer days?

THOMASSON: Yes

SHEFELMAN, T: Yeah, I would often start with---first sometimes we just looked at magazines and books and photographs or looked at a place they were inspired to follow, you know, like the---

THOMASSON: So what your client liked. You got a sense---

SHEFELMAN, T: But then the first step was starting with plans, site plans, perspective sketches, just to help them visualize what they were getting started with.

SHEFELMAN, J: Tom is known for being able to sit down at a table with clients across from him and sketch something upside down so they can see it. One of his partners was really amazed with that.

SHEFELMAN, T: That was the way it was, but as I say, also, sometimes we went on a little tour with clients to look at places they were inspired by. Very complex process, really.

THOMASSON: Did you like, after the design's starting to take shape, did you enjoy the working drawing phase?

SHEFELMAN, T: Well it's just going into architectural details. At some point the details are so detailed that you can just modify them into construction documents. And put more dimensions and everything else that has to go on them.

THOMASSON: Did you like the construction phase of projects?

SHEFELMAN, T: Sometimes I did, yes. Particularly if we got a nice contractor that worked with us often making changes. Of course, I would work with him making drawings and dimensions or whatever it is to help him with his problems in construction.

THOMASSON: Were there any contractors in town that come to mind that you worked with more frequently?

SHEFELMAN, T: Oh yeah, I wrote them down here, let's see. One was Dan Hoffman. He was really a great guy. And Don Huebner and---

SHEFELMAN, J: Who's now a professor of geography at Texas State.

SHEFELMAN, T: Don Huebner?

SHEFELMAN, J: Yes

SHEFELMAN, T: And Perry and Perry, husband and wife team that was lovely to work with. Let's see what was the project we worked with them on?

SHEFELMAN, J: I'm not sure, what about the Taiwanese Church, that was, I'm not sure---

SHEFELMAN, T: Maybe that was Perry and Perry. And sometimes---like Bob Mossman and Michelle Pan. They both really participated in the development of details.

SHEFELMAN, J: The clients--

SHEFELMAN, T: The clients. they were really great at that. Is that all the contractor's names, let's see.

SHEFELMAN, J: Contractor's names don't stick. (laughter)

THOMASSON: That's okay.

SHEFELMAN, T: Sometimes I'm the contractor like on this house.

SHEFELMAN, J: Donnie Huebner---

SHEFELMAN, T: Donnie Huebner worked with me on it. You might say he nurtured me.

THOMASSON: Was there anything about the whole process of doing a project that worried you the most or in general? I know that's a strange question.

SHEFELMAN, T: Well, I think I wrote down something.

SHEFELMAN, J: City regulations (laughter)

SHEFELMAN, T: Sometimes!

THOMASSON: That would do it.

SHEFELMAN, T: Sometimes, but that was a negotiation process quite often. I did have respect for most of the City rules.

SHEFELMAN, J: It's just that they got more and more complicated and fortunately, you had Dan Vaughn there to figure it all out.

SHEFELMAN, T: Yes, we had a really bright guy that could get into fantastic details to work things out. He was one of our firm members.

SHEFELMAN, J: With Shefelman and Nix.

SHEFELMAN, T: With Shefelman and Nix, yeah.

THOMASSON: Everyone needs one of those.

SHEFELMAN, J: Yes

SHEFELMAN, T: Let's see the question you had was what? What was that question you had?

THOMASSON: Oh, I was asking you if there was anything about the process of doing a project that worried you more.

SHEFELMAN, T: Well, cost was often an issue.

SHEFELMAN, J: Yeah, there you go.

SHEFELMAN, T: Sure, and so were some regulations, work with realities. And time, time schedules, some people---

THOMASSON: The usual---

SHEFELMAN, T: Well, let's see. And of course the relationship with some of the people I was working with.

THOMASSON: What project was it that you worked on when you knew your career was taking off? Let's say, you knew you had made the right decision. Would that have been the bank?

SHEFELMAN, J: Yes

SHEFELMAN, T: The American National Bank, I think was the---

SHEFELMAN, J: That's when I fell in love with him. (laughter)

THOMASSON: Everything was going well.

SHEFELMAN, T: That was the great opening into the reality and wonders of being an architect.

THOMASSON: How did y'all meet?

SHEFELMAN, J: We met in Aspen, Colorado one Christmas when we both happened to go there to ski and we happened to stay in the same tiny little lodge.

SHEFELMAN, T: And we met particularly, I think, at the lovely *gluckwein* parties that the owner, who was German, would have for their tenants. And that was the beginning.

THOMASSON: (to Janice) You weren't living in Austin?

SHEFELMAN, J: No, I was living in Dallas.

SHEFELMAN, T: I think that's when we first held hands (laughter).

THOMASSON: In Aspen?

SHEFELMAN, T: In Aspen, Colorado.

THOMASSON: And how much time was there between the meeting and the wedding?

SHEFELMAN, J: Well, we met at Christmas and we married the following September and left the country.

SHEFELMAN, T: Yes

THOMASSON: Left on your trip?

SHEFELMAN, J: But I came to live in Austin between then, so we got better acquainted.

SHEFELMAN, T: Yeah

THOMASSON: So you left right after the wedding for your around the world honeymoon?

SHEFELMAN, J: We did. We got a, what is that called, a car where you deliver it. You don't have to pay anything. You don't have to buy the gas.

SHEFELMAN, T: I don't know, a buyer's car?

SHEFELMAN, J: You take it to another city where it's sold.

SHEFELMAN, T: A dealer's car?

SHEFELMAN, J: A dealer's car, I guess.

SHEFELMAN, T: So they let you, for a very small price, they let you take their car.

SHEFELMAN, J: No, they don't charge anything.

SHEFELMAN, T: They don't charge anything. All we did was pay for the gas.

THOMASSON: And you drove it to the West Coast?

SHEFELMAN, T: and drove it to---

SHEFELMAN, J: Long Beach, California from Dallas to Long Beach and left it. Got on the Japanese freighter.

SHEFELMAN, T: *Tsuneshima Maru*

THOMASSON: And say something about the book that talks about your trip.

SHEFELMAN, J: Well years and years later, much too later, I decided to put all the story of our trip down and fortunately we had written letters home, both of us, and they were saved. And also we wrote articles for newspapers. Tom wrote magazine articles. And so we had all this material to make it seem immediate. And all the details which I would not have remembered otherwise.

THOMASSON: It must have been fun.

SHEFELMAN, J: It was a giant puzzle to put together, but it was fun. It was fun to remember all those things. You remember something and that brings on another memory. So it was like taking the trip again.

SHEFELMAN, T: Yeah, and of course I preceded that with my articles. What was the name of my articles about Japan? About half a dozen, months issues of the---

SHEFELMAN, J: The *Asahi Shimbun* ask us to write articles about our impressions and so we wrote, and that's Tokyo's major newspaper. And so we did that and Tom did. They paid me \$25 to write the article and they paid Tom \$5 to illustrate it. (laughter) So we made \$25 and that was enough to rent a place we lived in in Tokyo for a month.

SHEFELMAN, T: I'm trying to think of the name of ---

SHEFELMAN, J: Oh, those articles you wrote for the *Texas Architect*? Well I think it was called *Impertinent Comments*.

SHEFELMAN, T: Yeah, *Impertinent Comments on Japan*.

SHEFELMAN, J: We already mentioned that. Yeah, *Impertinent Comments on Japanese Life and Architecture*.

THOMASSON: Interesting, okay. Well, backing up to big picture again. Are there any projects that didn't come to fruition, that you started to work on, that never happened, that you wish had happened?

SHEFELMAN, T: I have a way of forgetting those.

SHEFELMAN, J: Well you did enter the Roosevelt Memorial Competition and did not win.

SHEFELMAN, T: Oh, yeah, did not win, right.

THOMASSON: And where was the Roosevelt Memorial to be built?

SHEFELMAN, J: In Washington, DC.

SHEFELMAN, T: And---

SHEFELMAN, J: I don't think you designed anything for a client that didn't happen.

SHEFELMAN, T: I'm trying to remember, for some reason I've been able to forget them.

THOMASSON: You might be one of the lucky architects this didn't happen to. (laughter)

SHEFELMAN, T: Let me see, I'm quite sure---

SHEFELMAN, J: You made your clients so happy by listening to them, you didn't have any disappointment.

SHEFELMAN, T: I think our firm sometimes did though, I've forgotten which one.

THOMASSON: Well, that's okay.

SHEFELMAN, J: Better forgotten.

THOMASSON: Here's a non-architectural question. Personally, what are you most fascinated by, outside of architecture?

SHEFELMAN, T: Janice (laughter)

THOMASSON: That's an excellent answer.

SHEFELMAN, J: I like that one.

THOMASSON: Did Janice respond to these? (laughter)

SHEFELMAN, J: No, he actually said that.

SHEFELMAN, T: I'm fascinated with the scenes I paint. You know, I get inspired by some scenes.

THOMASSON: And you're doing a lot of Austin urban scenes right now?

SHEFELMAN, T: Oh yes, oh yes.

SHEFELMAN, J: And he let's me name them.

SHEFELMAN, T: Yes

THOMASSON: So what is your process when you paint? You're not sitting out on the street painting? Do you take photographs?

SHEFELMAN, T: I do that. But I sometimes do sketches out on the street in a sketchbook.

SHEFELMAN, J: But you have also painted in Italy and Greece. You took an easel and painted on site.

SHEFELMAN, T: That's right. When I was fully involved with the---

SHEFELMAN, J: It was Flying Colors Painting.

SHEFELMAN, T: Flying Colors Workshop Painting. and we had easels and paints and brushes and everything. We painted on the site. And sometimes that was---we joined---that some of us from the Waterloo Watercolor group. That was a group I had participated with for years. And sometimes had won some exhibits with them and also had participated in some other workshops in addition to the Flying Colors Workshop. And some of those we did sketch and paint on site. And I think most of the members did that rather than---

SHEFELMAN, J: No, the Flying Colors group, they all painted on site.

SHEFELMAN, T: Right, but the Waterloo Watercolor group, they, we had different---

SHEFELMAN, J: Their workshops were indoors.

SHEFELMAN, T: Yeah, indoors. Looking at photographs and doing sketches from them and then blowing them up into paintings. That's what I do now mostly.

THOMASSON: And when you worked on your books with Janice, when you did those together. Are you still doing those?

SHEFELMAN, J: Well, yes, we have one coming out in Seoul, Korea in a few weeks about *Papa Haydn*. It's a sort of follow up to our Vivaldi book. And there was not an American publisher that wanted it. So I sent it to Seoul, Korea to the publisher who had bought the foreign rights to *I, Vivaldi*. And they bought it in three days. So my feeling is that Korean parents want their children to learn about Western high culture. And so it's coming out only in Korean, but it has all of Tom's wonderful paintings in it.

SHEFELMAN, T: It's been fun. It was inspiring to visit, several trips to Vienna to do sketches and photographs there.

THOMASSON: So, tell me about the process of one of your books and how you approach it. Who decides what the topic will be?

SHEFELMAN, J: Well, we discuss what we're interested in and we both loved Vivaldi's music and we began to wonder what kind of man he was and where did he live. And we found out that he lived in Venice which is our favorite city in the world.

SHEFELMAN, T: And he was known as the "Red Priest".

SHEFELMAN, J: We knew that that would be a picture book. Of course Venice is an architect's fantasy.

SHEFELMAN, T: Oh, isn't it.

SHEFELMAN, J: So I do most of the research and I write up a draft and divide it into what I think will be pages, and do little stick figures and make what's called a book dummy. It's just sort of a model of a book. And then---

SHEFELMAN, T: Some of them are really cute.

SHEFELMAN, J: Tom takes that and enlarges and makes a beautiful drawing and eventually a watercolor.

THOMASSON: You prefer to go to the site of your book?

SHEFELMAN, J: We never write about a place if we haven't seen it at length. We went many times to Venice. Once stayed two weeks in the square where Vivaldi's childhood home stands.

SHEFELMAN, T: And the same with Vienna.

SHEFELMAN, J: Same thing with *Papa Haydn*.

THOMASSON: Nice. Do you have a favorite building?

SHEFELMAN, T: Our house

THOMASSON: Your house which you designed?

SHEFELMAN, T: Designed and actually built with the assistance of Don Huebner, helping contractor, and our two sons, Karl and Daniel, when they were growing up. They helped with construction. We had a wonderful time together.

SHEFELMAN, J: Family project

SHEFELMAN, T: A family project for sure.

THOMASSON: What year did you build your house?

SHEFELMAN, J: 1976

SHEFELMAN, T: We completed it in '76. It took us about a year, more than a year to do it. To design it and build it.

THOMASSON: Would you have any advice for young architects or architecture students today?

SHEFELMAN, T: Well, of course you know, I am a foreigner to computer design process, and I'm not sure how to use a computer to work with them as students. In the good 'ole days when I was teaching architecture, it was before that and I really enjoyed teaching them free hand drawing and sketching and dimensioned drawing and taking them through the whole process.

THOMASSON: Right. So you'd have concerns today that they're missing something by not doing it by hand? Is that right?

SHEFELMAN, T: One thing I realize because I'm aware of the fact that with a computer you can do a lot of things that you used to do by hand and it's easier if you're good with a computer, it's easier to do. Quicker to do. But I just haven't taken the time to really use the computer yet. (To Janice) Have I?

SHEFELMAN, J: Nope. But you always had people in your office who could take your sketches and do it. So you really didn't need to.

SHEFELMAN, T: Yah, particularly when it was Shefelman and Nix. And we had Dan Vaughn who was a computer genius.

SHEFELMAN, J: Well I think even Frank Gehry just crumples up paper and makes shapes (laughter) and---do this! So a sketch and let somebody else do the computer work.

SHEFELMAN, T: Yeah, still it pays to be able to do a sketch sometimes to get somebody started on the computer.

THOMASSON: What do you think about the direction Austin is going urban design wise?

SHEFELMAN, T: I think you should read that, what's his name, article. On the front page of the *Statesman* today about the traffic chaos of Austin.

THOMASSON: I did read that article, about sprawl.

SHEFELMAN, J: But I don't think that article's entirely true because Tom and I both love the rebirth of downtown. Not everyone can afford to live there, so there's still suburban sprawl. But we both love the urbanization of Austin.

SHEFELMAN, T: And unfortunately they haven't gone all the way with it in the transportation.

SHEFELMAN, J: Yeah, there you go. It will have to happen.

SHEFELMAN, T: I can't believe anybody's going to make it happen, but it's got to happen.

THOMASSON: I know, I live down there in the middle of it.

SHEFELMAN, J: I know, but still the traffic there is not anything like it is in the surroundings.

THOMASSON: No, fortunately, if you live down there and you don't---I don't have to drive very much. I walk everywhere.

SHEFELMAN, T, J: That's ideal.

SHEFELMAN, T: Where do you live? Where's the location? I've forgotten.

THOMASSON: I live at the Spring Condominium which is the most western tower. It's right by Whole Foods.

SHEFELMAN, T: Yeah, oh yeah.

THOMASSON: I just gravitate more toward the Lamar corridor and west of Lamar. I still think it was right for me. I'm willing to live very small in order to be there.

SHEFELMAN, T: Right

SHEFELMAN, J: I'm jealous, except that we could never leave this house.

SHEFELMAN, T: Leaving this house would be like leaving a part of me.

SHEFELMAN, J: Yeah

THOMASSON: I could see that that would be very hard.

SHEFELMAN, J: And where would we put all the paintings?

SHEFELMAN, T: And not only that, but we're still very close in and the site we found right down on Shoal Creek.

THOMASSON: It's very natural and yet it's close to the urban area.

SHEFELMAN, T: We can walk to the University

THOMASSON: So you've lived here for almost forty years?

SHEFELMAN, J: Yeah, longer than anywhere else.

THOMASSON: Well, I think we're close to the end of our questions but I wanted to give you the opportunity, if there's anything we haven't talked about that you'd like to talk about.

SHEFELMAN, J: We've really covered it. I think we've said it all.

THOMASSON: Okay, well thank.

SHEFELMAN, T: Well, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW