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TONI THOMASSON: This is Toni Thomasson. Today is Tuesday, June 14, 2016, and today I am interviewing for the first time architect Girard Kinney. This interview is taking place at the Austin History Center at 810 Guadalupe Street in Austin, Texas. This interview is being done for the Austin History Center Architectural Archives and is one of a series of interviews with and about Austin, Travis County architects.

Hi, Girard. Welcome. Thanks for coming.

GIRARD KINNEY: Thank you. My pleasure to be here.

THOMASSON: Let's start with—why don't you just tell me your full name and when and where you were born?

KINNEY: Well, on my birth certificate it says, “Girard Arnold William Kinney, Jr.” But I just basically go by Girard Kinney. I was born in 1943 at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, DC.

THOMASSON: Okay.

Where did you grow up?

KINNEY: I grew up in Austin. We got back here as soon as my dad could get back after the war, and he was assigned to the Pentagon, and so I got back in ’46 and grew up in South Austin just off Kinney Avenue, which was named after my grandfather, and attended Zilker Elementary School. So up until I was about twelve that was my neighborhood and that’s where I hung out fishing on Barton Creek and hanging out in the hood.

THOMASSON: So who was your grandfather?

KINNEY: My grandfather was George P. Kinney. He and my grandmother moved into Austin and bought a house on Virginia Avenue, which was named after my grandmother that had been built by a great-uncle, a Colonel Griffin, in 1873. So I grew up in that house until after I entered the University—about the time I entered the University of Texas.

THOMASSON: So you have deep roots in Austin.

KINNEY: Yeah. Austin is my lifelong home. I went to Zilker, Fulmore Junior High, Travis High School, a South Austin boy.

THOMASSON: Yes. Sounds like it.

Well, tell me about when you first knew you wanted to be an architect.

KINNEY: I didn’t know what an architect was although as a kid I loved Tinker Toys and Lincoln Logs and all of that—the kinds of things that architects always reflect on.

But it was in junior high school in about the ninth grade, I’m thinking, that we were asked what we might want to be when we grow up, you know, what career. I think they were starting to think about college prep courses in high school and that sort of thing. And I didn’t know. I mean, up until that point in my life, I had been planning to be a herpetologist. I was going to be a—I loved snakes. I collected snakes. I sold snakes. I milked rattlesnakes. I sold the poison to the Navy to make anti-venim. I was, you know, really into herpetology.

THOMASSON: This was up into junior high?

KINNEY: Up until the ninth grade, about the eighth or ninth grade. I maintained my interest in herpetology for many years after that as an amateur. But I went home that night when we were asked to talk about what career we wanted, and I asked my dad what he thought I should do. And he said, "Well, what do you think your skills are?" I said, "Well, what I like in school and what I do the most is math and art." I said, "And I can't figure out a way to think about a career." He said, "Well, that sounds like architecture." I said, "Oh, okay." (laughs) So I started reading about architecture, became interested at that point, made a decision I was going to be an architect, and so I never considered anything else.

THOMASSON: That was early on then, wasn't it?

KINNEY: Yes. Yeah.

THOMASSON: So your parents must have encouraged you along that path?

KINNEY: Yeah. Yeah. I'm not sure they did. I think they started asking around and found out that architects don't make as much money as engineers and other people, so they weren't really that encouraging. My mom wanted me to definitely be something in the arts. She was involved—both my parents were involved in drama and theater, and so they sort of were pushing me that direction but my mom basically wanted me to be involved in the arts, and my dad wanted me to be involved in something where I could actually make a living, and so it was a little bit of a tug of war.

THOMASSON: Did you meet any architects during those high school years?

KINNEY: Well, there was one architect, who I didn't meet directly until much later, but when I was in junior high school, I was walking home from Zilker School to my home down on Virginia Avenue through a field where I normally—when I was in elementary school, I would actually take a .22 to school with me and store it in the principal's office so I could hunt rabbits on the way home in a field, a piece of wilderness that really—that I walked through one day in about—I was in—it must've been about 1955, I noticed all these stakes being put in the ground and guys with vests on and these little telescopes looking down the line at these stakes. And I didn't know what was going on in this place where I hunted and where I hiked home every day.

So I went home that day and asked my dad, "What's going on?" and he said, "Well, son, those are surveyors." "Well, why?" "Well, they're laying out a subdivision." "What? They're doing what?"

So I then became engaged in my first act of activism and got a couple of my friends to help me. After the surveyors left every day, I took—on our way home, we rearranged their stakes for them just a little bit, I would stand at this stake and move that one over and move the other one over the other way down the line. And we set the project back about six months. (Both laugh) And by that time, I was ready to go into junior high school, and so I wasn't walking to Zilker anymore.

And then years later, I learned that that was A. D. Stenger Architect Builders' project that I had disrupted, and I was able to—A. D. was sitting on the front row in about 1984 or '85, when I was asked to address the AIA about something and I told that story. (Both laugh) And he was sitting on the front row, and he said, "That was you!" (Both laugh)

THOMASSON: He remembered, huh?

KINNEY: He remembered the event. It probably cost him some money. So A. D. Stenger, I guess, had an impact although—you know, I was from early on as impressed by the architecture of the Capitol and also the town plan of Austin and the Waller Grid and all that was stuff that interested me keenly, but I didn't know who the architects were that were involved in those things.

THOMASSON: I assume you went to the University of Texas?

KINNEY: I went to the University of Texas. I actually had a scholarship to Rice but I went down to check out Rice and learned from some graduate students that they were about to lose their accreditation, which it turns out they did lose it for a couple of years. And so I'd always wanted to go to UT, so that was enough of an excuse. I gave up the scholarship that I had at Rice to go to UT, but I knew I was going to have to work my way through school anyway because my family didn't have any money, so every penny I paid, every bit of tuition, everything I ever paid for at UT, it was money I earned.

So, yes, I went to the University of Texas. Started in September 1, 1961, and went—worked three jobs all the way through school—had three jobs almost the whole time I was— in the 60's.

THOMASSON: What kind of jobs did you have?

KINNEY: The first job I had was for the license clerk at the Game and Fish Commission, which later became the Parks and Wildlife Department. But it was the Game and Fish Commission, it was in Walton Building at 11th and Congress. And I worked stamping licenses to ship out to the people that sold them and running errands for people and gofer general but worked in the mailroom and got

to illustrate one issue of the Game and Fish Commission magazine. I did the cover illustration of one of them.

THOMASSON: You must have liked that?

KINNEY: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, I did, that was more of my forte.

And then I got a job with—my first job related to architecture was in about 1962, I guess, and I was still working at the Game and Fish Commission, but I also worked at Calcasieu Lumber Company in the drafting room of the Calcasieu Lumber Company on the second floor, it's where city hall is right now.

THOMASSON: Right, um hmm.

KINNEY: And I worked under Joe Koim, but back in those days if you bought your building materials at Calcasieu, they provided for free the architectural service—the plans. So I would interview clients and a lot of times the client was a builder who was coming in, builders that are actually—some builders like L. O. Jackson who is still around today—I think he's still around today—was a young builder then. The builders would bring their client in, so I'd actually usually get to interview the client as well and draw the plans. Of course, we had a lot of standard details that we had developed, and I helped develop them. So it was a great place to learn—

THOMASSON: —good experience.

KINNEY: —how houses are actually built. And as I got into that, I realized that I wanted to work for the trades. And so I worked—the third regular job I had year-round was I managed a model car racing track (laughs) because I loved model car racing. In fact, I got fired from it because I was spending too much time racing the model cars and souping up the electric motors and stuff and it was a friendly firing. It was, like, Girard, I don't think you really wanted to be doing this. (laughs)

And then I worked also at the Texas Theater, which at that time was an art film theater. Before it became a porno theater, it was an art film theater. Of course, it is something else now, CVS Pharmacy or something, but it was right across the street from the architecture department.

THOMASSON: That was convenient.

KINNEY: It was very convenient, and I became—I was an usher there for a couple of years and then became assistant manager. Then I worked also for most of the professors—not most of the professors—many of the professors—

several of the professors of architecture had side practices, and they all pooled their resources and paid rent above the Rexall Drug Store there on the drag next to the co-op. But Peter Coltman, Sinclair Black, Richard Dodge, Gerlinde Leiding, half a dozen others, Jim Coote, they all found out I knew how to—

THOMASSON: Put together—

KINNEY: —because I had worked at Calcasieu, I knew what working drawings were, and so they all hired me, and so I worked for them. So that became—more and more I began doing that. And then I actually left Calcasieu. A guy that was working there at Calcasieu, Mel Burkett, he was my immediate boss at Calcasieu, went to work for Gene Wukasch Architect, and he then convinced Gene to hire me, and it was great! I got a raise from—I think it was—fifty-five cents an hour I was making at Calcasieu to seventy-five cents an hour at Wukasch—

THOMASSON: That's huge.

KINNEY: —so I got a big raise to go to work for Wukasch. I don't think I made much more than that all those years I worked for him though. (laughs) So I went to work with Gene Wukasch.

THOMASSON: Still in school?

KINNEY: All still in school. Everything I'm talking about—

THOMASSON: I don't know how you had time for school. (laughs)

KINNEY: Well, and along the way I got married and had a child in about 1964. So I'd been in school about three years when I got married and had a child. So that became most important since my parents didn't provide any funding, I was the breadwinner then, and my spouse also worked. Then once I graduated, she then graduated—she continued her schooling.

THOMASSON: When you were in school, did you have any favorite professors or instructors or people that mentored you along the way?

KINNEY: Yeah.

THOMASSON: (inaudible)

KINNEY: Yeah. The very first day that I went to the University of Texas, I had moved out of my home and was living over on Baylor Street, and I walked to school, walked to UT, and I walked by the—right across the street from Jack

Martin's—what was the cleaners—but anyway, on MLK that was then 19th Street. But on the north side of the street, there was a cleaners there. It's not there anymore. But that cleaners—there was this old man mopping the floor or sweeping the floor of the cleaners, and I walked by him and said, "Hi." He said, "You going to school?" I said, "Yes," and he said, "What you doing?" and I said, "I'm going into architecture." He said, "Ah!" He said, "You won't make no money." (He and Thomasson laugh) I said, "Well, but I want to do it." And so we talked a little bit and I said, "You know, well, where are you from?" He said, "I'm from Cuba." Said, "Oh, really? Well, nice to meet you, sir." And he kept sweeping and I kept walking.

Later that day, I had my first drawing class and it was Luis Divino, (Thomasson laugh) and he was the guy that had been sweeping the floor. (laughs)

THOMASSON: (laughs) That's a great story.

KINNEY: (laughs) Yeah. Yeah. And we became great friends, and I admired him greatly. So he's one of the ones.

My first class, though, that day at eight o'clock in the morning was design, and it was Eugene George. And Eugene George, he was a fantastic, fantastic teacher, and I maintained a connection with him up until his death a few years ago.

And also a person sitting beside me in that class was a guy named Tabor Stone, who we became friends—very close friends all the way through school and decided—but we actually decided that day that eventually we were going to have a firm together. (laughs)

THOMASSON: Wow, that's amazing.

KINNEY: And so many, many years later, we formed a firm of Billington Kinney Stone Partnership in 1978, I think it was. I went from Wukasch to that, having started my own firm.

So those two.

And then other teachers that were very significant to me were Alan Taniguchi and Robert Harris. I think those were the main ones. There were other professors that I valued their input particularly on juries, like Peter Coltman, but those are the main ones that I really—I really connected with and that helped me a lot.

Also Richard Swallow. He was my advisor from the very beginning, and so he became very close friends. He, Richard Swallow, is the one who encouraged me to develop my thesis on—I did the first thesis that'd ever been done in the school of architecture that was a written thesis rather than a clump of drawings. It was not to plan a building; I just did a written thesis on humor in architecture. And Richard Swallow really, really encouraged me to do that, and then once I'd done it, he encouraged me to go to graduate school and to actually go after a doctorate. And he actually years later helped me actually get admitted to Berkeley, but I didn't go. I mean, I got—I had it all set up but I just—I couldn't really afford it. I mean, by that time I was in practice, and so I couldn't give it up, and so I didn't. And he—Richard Swallow has never forgiven me for that and said I really blew a great career by not developing that as my sort of thing, you know.

THOMASSON: So, when did you finish at the school of architecture?

KINNEY: Well, I dropped out in 1969 in a protest. I protested—I was one of those architecture students in the trees at Waller Creek when Frank Irwin was telling those bulldozers drivers to cut down those trees. And I was up in one of those trees, and I was mad about that and then I was also mad about the position that UT took on the Vietnam War. So for both of those reasons I just dropped out. I was scheduled to graduate. I would've graduated. I mean, I had all the hours I needed, but I didn't graduate. I quit. I dropped out of school and went to work full-time.

At that time I had gone from Wukasch to Brooks Barr Graeber and White. And while I was at Brooks Barr Graeber and White, Walter Vacker was working for Brooks Barr Graeber and White and he quit Brooks Barr and teamed up with Tom Shefelman and Alan Taniguchi to form a little firm down on Congress Avenue that eventually became TSVM, but it wasn't called that yet. And Walter called me up and said, "Why don't you come to work for us?" and so I did.

Where were we in the story? (laughs)

THOMASSON: When you finally graduated.

KINNEY: Okay. Okay, okay, okay. So what happened was, I was—when I went to work for Alan is about the time I dropped out of school. I was working for him. He was the dean of the school, and I just went in and said, "Alan, I can't do this," and he respected that, let me keep working for his firm even though I was dropping out of school, and I wasn't going to be getting a degree.

THOMASSON: He was going to be dropping out again soon too, wasn't he?

KINNEY: Well, he went to Rice, and when he was at Rice, it was great because I got to go down and be on juries and stuff when he was in Houston. I would go down and be a part of—be a guest juror and stuff.

THOMASSON: Sure.

KINNEY: It was great. And he and I maintained a good friendship.

But he was the principal at TSVM, but, like, a couple of years into that is when he actually moved to Rice, and he continued to be named principal even though he was at Rice, and so we had a person that lived down there and was doing that.

THOMASSON: But you must've gone back to school.

KINNEY: So I dropped out. So that was—eight years after I started I dropped out, and I went all the way through until 1978 when Bob Billington and Tabor Stone and I formed a partnership, and I said, "Oh, by the way, you know I don't have a degree," and they said, What? Well, Tabor knew, but Bob Billington didn't know.

And they said, Well, I'm sorry. You're going to have to get your degree. So when I was in school, I was required to have 185 hours to graduate. By the time that I went back to school to get a degree, you only had to have 169 or something—163. It was, like, twenty hours fewer hours, so I had way more—and I had taken all these graduate courses and stuff, so I had about two hundred and something hours, but you had to be enrolled to graduate. So I enrolled and took an acoustics course and graduated.

And then took the exam within a month or something after I graduated.

THOMASSON: Because you would have had all that experience.

KINNEY: I had plenty of—had all the experience, and so I just did the paperwork and took the exam and aced it, and so I became instantly registered (laughs) and legitimate, much to my partners' delight. They were pretty embarrassed that they had somebody with no credentials at all. (laughs)

THOMASSON: (laughs) Well you fixed it, that's what counts.

KINNEY: Yeah.

THOMASSON: So I'm sure you took many architectural history classes while you were in school. Did you have any favorite architects that you've held onto all these years?

KINNEY: My favorite story about architectural history class, though, was in Alexander's class. The very first survey class that I took he showed slides of the brief history of architecture in the world by showing examples in Austin, Texas of what we had, and he started in the early 1800s—

THOMASSON: Interesting.

KINNEY: —and going to present. And at one point when he got up to the 1870s, up comes this picture of the house I grew up in on Virginia Avenue.

THOMASSON: Wow.

KINNEY: And he said, "This is the best example of Greek Revival architecture in Austin, Texas," and stupid me, I said, "But, Professor Alexander—" because what he was talking about was the neo-classic façade. It had a gallery and screened in porch upstairs, the columns and I said, "—but my grandfather ordered all that stuff and put it on the house in 1910." (Both laugh) "He ordered it from Sears." And Drury Alexander—he turned red and it was like, who is this insolent young person? (Thomasson laughs) It took years—but then in that same class I did the HABS, the Historic American Building Survey drawings that are right here in this collection. Right here, at the History Center.

THOMASSON: I think they're at UT.

KINNEY: They may be at UT now, yeah. And I did the drawings, did them on linen and so—

THOMASSON: You got to draw your own house?

KINNEY: I got to draw my own house.

THOMASSON: That's incredible. It must have been fun.

KINNEY: Yeah. It was fun. But through the history courses, I began to learn—I can't remember. I'm terrible with architectural history, to be honest with you. I remember there were some architects that I really was fascinated with, particularly planning, laying out of cities. I was really interested in that whole aspect of city planning.

THOMASSON: So you had an early interest in that?

KINNEY: I did, yeah. Yeah. And I—but also of humor. I mean, who's the architect, Viollet-le-Duc, and there were two or three that did a lot of whimsical stuff anywhere up to the Renaissance. I was always interested in that, and I was interested—I was very interested in the development of the churches—the cathedrals. Who were some of those, like, William Penn? But I was interested in that mainly because of the relationship between the church buildings and the evolution of music because I took this course under Hans Berthold Dietz of UT, where he talked about the influence of architecture—of music on architecture. And I remember I got in a big discussion—a debate with him that I thought that the architecture actually influenced the music more than the music influenced the architecture because the churches all were hard surfaces, and so you didn't have a choice but to have, like, Baroque with organ music—

THOMASSON: Adapt your music.

KINNEY: —because if you— (laughs) since you couldn't understand each other, ten feet away from each other, you weren't going to have the word, you're going to have to listen to the music. (laughs) But anyway.

But in answer to your question about architects, as we—I became really---I was not a—I'm not a Frank Lloyd Wright fan although I obviously admired the man. He was an incredibly brilliant person who did some beautiful things. But I never really considered him to be a complete architect because in my view he didn't really care much about building to the lifestyle of the people that he designed for. He just expected them to adapt to his architecture. (laughs)

THOMASSON: That's right.

KINNEY: And to me, from the very beginning an architect was someone that's at the service of their client. They really are, and that's why—that's one of the reasons that Louis Kahn is my favorite architect of the big name architects. But also I. M. Pei, and some of the modernists now are wonderful. I mean, they do fantastic work.

But certainly I became—early on I was a fan of the early Phillip Johnson glass house, you know, all of the Mies van der Rohe, the modernists that were expressing the materials. I mean, I just took completely to that whole way of thinking about architecture.

THOMASSON: Okay.

Let's talk about some of the Austin architects that you've worked with or partnered with.

KINNEY: Sure.

Well, the first architect that I worked with was Gene Wukasch. And Wukasch was a funny old bird. I mean, he was a real, real interesting man, and he made as many enemies as he did friends, and he was real hard to work for. He didn't pay any money. Almost everybody that went to UT back in the '60s—just practically everybody worked for Wukasch at one time or another.

THOMASSON: Um hmm.

KINNEY: And it was considered a sweatshop. I mean, it was down in the basement and everybody was—

THOMASSON: And where was that office?

KINNEY: It was 2000 Guadalupe, which if you were at MLK you were going north on Guadalupe, it was the—there was the Holiday House across the street from it back then, which is, Dobie's there now, I guess. But on the left there was a G & M Steak House eventually, and then it's become several other things since then, and then a little vacant lot and then there's a building, and that was the building. That's 2000 Guadalupe, about half a block north of MLK on the west side of the street.

And he was in the basement. Eventually while I was there, he moved up and expanded the office up into the upstairs of it, but all the time I worked for him in the '60s it was down in the basement.

I was actually with Eugene Wukasch and Leon Lurie, who was the director of the urban renewal agency in Austin in about '69, I think, and he had gotten a commission—Eugene had—from the Symphony Society to work on the site that is now known as Symphony Square, but then it wasn't the Symphony Square. But the Symphony Society did own the Jeremiah Hamilton Building, which is the triangular building on the corner, and we walked down the creek, and Leon Lurie was involved because it was an urban renewal project. But that whole site had been bought by the City through urban renewal, displaced a lot of people.

THOMASSON: Um hmm.

KINNEY: Very sad moment in our history. But it did give the city this site, and Eugene Wukasch and I walked with Leon Lurie down the street and stopped and looked at the Jeremiah Hamilton Building and one of us—I think it might've been me or it might've been Eugene—said, "You know, this would be a great amphitheater." And so that idea of an amphitheater at Symphony Square was

born among the three of us right then walking the creek, and Eugene went back and sold the idea to Jane Sibley and the Symphony Society people and we were on our way to design that project. So Eugene Wukasch worked on many, many projects, a lot of church architecture, a lot of air force base architecture. (laughs)

THOMASSON: We have a lot of his work in the collection here. I've seen those drawings in fact.

KINNEY: I did a lot of those drawings. Yeah, I helped Susan Wukasch get them to the City.

THOMASSON: Good, well we thank you for that.

KINNEY: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. But Eugene Wukasch.

And then of course, Alan Taniguchi, Walter Vacker, David Minter to a less extent, didn't work with David that much.

But certainly with Tom Shefelman. Became very close with Tom. I had never had Tom in school, but he was my boss when I worked for TSVM Architects, and I became a partner at TSVM, a junior partner. Three of us did, Juan Cotera, Larry Johnson, and I became the junior partners of that partnership. But I had enormous respect for Alan Taniguchi. I considered him my mentor and just—Alan was a great man who brought out the best in everybody that ever worked with him.

But Walter Vacker too was a very talented architect, and I admired his work and he was kind of the modernist in the firm. I took to that and developed a lot of the drawings.

THOMASSON: Was he the one into the concrete? Did you do a lot of—

KINNEY: Yeah, he did Manchaca Library,

THOMASSON: Yes.

KINNEY: I'd worked on that drawing—those drawings for the Manchaca Library. And he did the Chaparral Country Club out on Lake Travis, which I did the drawings on that. Larry Johnson, who was the structural engineer student—recent graduate that I brought in to the firm because Alan Taniguchi asked me to go out and find the best young engineer around, and we found Larry Johnson, who was working for Clark Craig at the time, and brought him into the firm, and he worked on that project doing the engineering on that project. Those are two

really great concrete buildings. But he also did another library that Jim Nix was more involved in than I. It was out on Burleson Road, I think. It's concrete also.

THOMASSON: The Clarksville Clinic?

KINNEY: Oh, and the Clarksville—yes, the Clarksville Clinic. Worked on the Clarksville Clinic. So those were some local architects.

But then along the way, I was a real fan of Gustafson—what was Gustafson's first name? Was it Winifred?

THOMASSON: I think that's right.

KINNEY: Gustafson. Yeah. He did—Gustafson did he own office on South Congress, and I got to know him a little bit because I admired his work. It was very Wrightian, and so it wasn't really my thing so much but I admired the detail and he did the Lahala House, which now is Joe's Crab Shack, but it was the Magic Time Machine—

THOMASSON: Oh, yes, on Riverside.

KINNEY: Originally, it was the Lahala House, and it was a Polynesian kind of restaurant.

THOMASSON: Oh, Okay. That was very different from those concrete buildings.

KINNEY: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Well, Gustafson is who I'm talking about. Yeah, right, right, yeah, for me it was very, very different.

Other local architects, I mean, I got to know all the early architects, you know, Charlie Granger and Arthur Fehr.

THOMASSON: It doesn't sound like you worked for, like, the Pages or the Jessens.

KINNEY: I did work the Pages. I worked for the—when I worked for Brooks Barr Graeber and White, I got to know Max Brooks, and I got to know, you know, the other named principals, but mainly I got to know David Graeber there. But the guy that I worked directly under was—I've forgotten the name, I'm sorry. Drawing a blank—Kirby Keahey. Kirby Keahey was a junior partner at Brooks Barr Graeber and White. And Brooks Barr did the only joint venture they ever had done or ever done since with Page Southerland Page. So Page and Brooks came together to do the highway department building that was going to be at 11th and Congress, directly across the street from the Walton Building, where I had

worked at the Game and Fish Commission and where the old bakery is now. And we worked for a year. We rented a separate little building, it was a floor in the Travis Building, to work in and I from Brooks Barr and Jim Little from Page Southerland Page were the young designers, and then I was under Kirby Keahey, and he was under Ernesto Liebrecht, Ernesto and Kirby collaborated on the design and then Jim and I drew it up, and we developed the entire set of construction documents for a building and then it didn't get funded and so probably a good thing. But we built it all the way around the—

THOMASSON: I was going to say, was the bakery going away—

KINNEY: No, no. Of course not. No, no, no. And I became at that time actually a proponent of the idea of some little buildings like that being actually better off built around, where you build a setting for them and actually set them off—

THOMASSON: Incorporate them.

KINNEY: Yeah, incorporate them but in a very respectful way that kind of honors them not competing with them but honoring. Kind of like there's a church in San Antonio—I've forgotten which one it is. It's a Catholic church that a Joske's or something that was built—

THOMASSON: Yes.

KINNEY: —all the way around. And that was the example I kind of used to convince myself that it was okay to be doing this. (laughs)

THOMASSON: Did you ever work on another one like that?

KINNEY: No. No. I can't remember if I did or not. I did some—I worked on some really wonderful projects. When I worked for Wukasch, I worked on the Caswell—well, there's two Caswell houses on West Avenue and 15th. One's on the south side and one's on the north side. The one on the south side in the southwest corner that overlooks House Park, you know.

THOMASSON: Yes.

KINNEY: Wukasch had the commission to do the restoration of that project, and that was one of the most fascinating restoration projects I have ever done in my life. I mean, it was just really wonderful. We actually lowered the floor of the basement by two feet in order to give head room underneath it.

THOMASSON: To make it more useable?

KINNEY: To make it actually functioning space. It was just—just full of dank, wet books and stuff (laughs) when we first went in there. That was an absolutely fascinating project.

One of the things I learned during that project was something about the geology of Austin and foundations and the way that—back then the standard was you would just simply go down a certain distance into the ground and then put sand, they weren't even pouring concrete. I mean, a—big stones—I mean, put big stones as the basis, but you'd just go down a certain distance and do this, and then you started laying it all up.

Well, when you're on the side of a hill like that, what I had not realized—it was counter-intuitive to me. I learned it much later—but the shelves—as the ground erodes away, the dirt gets in between the layers of concrete and it actually raises up, so the strata is higher at the edge than it is back here. Well, in that building, when they built that building, they excavated down, they got to rock along the west side of it, but on the east side of it, it was too deep, and so they weren't on rock. So it was on two different kinds of footings.

THOMASSON: Um hmm.

KINNEY: And so it had started to move. And so when we had—when we did the work of making the—excavating for the basement, we had to go down below those footings and pour concrete—needling in and pouring concrete to hold the whole west facade of the building (laughs) to make this work. And I remember that was a wonderful thing to have learned.

THOMASSON: Was that a City project when you worked on it? Was it City of Austin property?

KINNEY: No, I don't think so. It may have been a City of Austin project. It was—our client was the—what's it called? The women's club—

THOMASSON: The Junior League.

KINNEY: The Junior League. It was the Junior League. Mary Arnold was our client.

THOMASSON: I think originally—I think the City sold the property to the Junior League.

KINNEY: Yeah.

THOMASSON: I just wasn't sure when the renovation had occurred.

KINNEY: Yeah. Yeah. I think it was a City of Austin project. I think it was.

THOMASSON: It seems like I remember the drawings at the City.

KINNEY: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

So where were we? Other things I worked on, where were we?

THOMASSON: Well, we were talking about different architects you had partnered with or worked with.

KINNEY: Yeah.

THOMASSON: And we had gotten to that many of your firms.

KINNEY: That's right.

THOMASSON: At what point, like, what year did you start your first, your own firm?

KINNEY: 'Seventy-eight, 1978, April 1, 1978 we—I always get that wrong, it may have been '77.

THOMASSON: The late 70's.

KINNEY: It was either '77 or '78. Taber Stone, Bob Billington, and I formed a partnership of BKS, Billington Kinney Stone. They were in that order simply because we thought that sounded better than KBS or SBK. (laughs) And we rented a space at Patterson and West 6th Street, and put out our shingle and started the firm. That was—Bob Billington had moved—had worked with Tabor in Washington, DC at Perkins and Will, and they both wanted to start, and Tabor said, "I'm going to start a firm with Girard Kinney, so come join us," so Bob moved to Austin from Seattle—or Vancouver—from Vancouver, Canada. He sold out of a firm—a very successful firm in Seattle—that did mainly architectural programming, that specialized in programming. In Canada back then at least, all schools and all hospitals had to have programs separate—had to be a separate architect and couldn't be the same—if you were the programming architect, you couldn't be the architect for the building.

THOMASSON: Oh.

KINNEY: So they specialized in programming. So they were going to come to Austin, Texas—he's gonna come to Texas—and by God, we're going to do

programming. Well, the trouble with that, of course, is that nobody paid for programming in Austin, Texas. (laughs) They expected you to kind of do that as part of schematic design. And it's changed to some extent now, but for years you just never could get paid for doing programming, and the clients, the City, the school district, private clients, everybody thought they already had their program. Here's what we're going to do. We've figured it out. And they never had figured it out—and so you spent a lot of time. So we tried to develop that as a specialty, and until this day, I believe in programming. I'm a huge fan of programming. I believe in it.

But at the end of the first year, Bob Billington said, "Girard, guys—" you know, he had gone from making $60-80,000 a year. I mean, to me, right now that'd be a lot of money, but to him then that was really a lot of money. He went from that to making, like, under $10,000 the first year in this new firm. He said, "I just can't do this anymore," so he bought back into his old firm and moved back to Vancouver at the end of the year.

Tabor Stone and I incorporated as Kinney and Stone January 1, 1979. And then that firm, Kinney and Stone—eventually Tabor died, and by that time Paul Crews had come to work for us and Robert Kaler had come to work for us, so we had—after Tabor left the firm before he died—it's a difficult thing for me to talk about. (laughs) about the thing about Tabor leaving. But after Tabor left, we formed Kinney Kaler Sanders and Crews, KKSC, myself, Paul Crews—Bob Kaler, Paul Crews, and Sid Sanders then come up. First it was Kinney Kaler and Crews, and then it was Kinney Kaler Sanders and Crews. We wedged Sanders in because it didn't sound good to say Kinney Kaler Crews and Sanders. (Both laugh) So Kinney Kaler Sanders and Crews had better. . .

THOMASSON: Flow?

KINNEY: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And that firm became very, very successful in the 1980s and we did a lot of projects, developed—had expertise in theater architecture, cinemas, did a lot of planning work for private clients. One of our theater clients, which was Presidio Enterprises, bought a site that we worked with the owner of the site, who was Bill Gurasich of Gurasich Spence Garrilick and McClure. And they sold the project to our theater client, Charles Chick of Presidio Enterprises, and Presidio hired us to design their office building on Loop 360 on that site. So we were their theater architects but they hired us to do an office building, so we did our first kind of multi-story office building there.

THOMASSON: Is that the one with the big red sculpture?

KINNEY: No. No, it's not. And this building preceded that building. I know what you're talking—that one is farther north.

THOMASSON: Oh, okay.

KINNEY: This is down closer—this is where if you go out Bull Creek Road, 2222, and before it gets to Loop 360, right before you cross the creek, if you turn right, it's where that road comes back in.

THOMASSON: Oh, yeah.

KINNEY: And right there on the corner on the other side of that is where this is. And then later someone else bought the building and built kind of a matching building. It was called the Presidio Building and anyhow—and then we moved in there, officed there.

But that experience with that kind of a building caused Walter Vacker to hire us to do the Echelon Office Buildings, the ones that three years ago now were hit by the airplane. And we designed those buildings and we designed the Kaliedo, which was an office building right next to the Echelon, the four buildings of the Echelon and then the two buildings that were the Kaliedo. So we designed all those and we were cooking in those years. We got up to about twenty-five people in the mid-'80s, so we were for Austin standards a pretty good sized firm.

THOMASSON: Yes, definitely.

KINNEY: For international, tiny still but— (laughs)

THOMASSON: Was all your work predominantly in Austin and Travis County?

KINNEY: Almost all of it. The exception was that we were hired by Pants South to do some jeans stores all the way back when I was with Wukasch, but then all through TSVM, we did probably twenty stores, and of those a bunch of them were in the Texas Valley, San Antonio, Corpus Christi, Houston, and then Louisiana, New Orleans, and Florida. So we did these pants stores in malls and I got to travel around a lot to babysit those projects.

And then also the movie theaters—the work that I did for Presidio developing movie theaters, the Arbor Cinema and many others here in Austin attracted some national clients, and I got hired by Fitzgerald Theaters in New York to do some theater work in Utica, New York and then by a company, Muvico, in Miami and they hired us to do three theaters in Miami—movie theaters. We were kind of considered sort of, you know, New Wave experts on cinema at the time. I was—part of that was because when I was with Presidio, they worked with Lucasfilm. This was before Lucasfilm had developed the THX sound system, and they needed someone to consult with them on the

development of the THX sound system for movie theaters because it was going to be so expensive, and so I got hired by Lucasfilm to help them develop the THX sound systems for movie theaters. The first one—the first THX sound system was in South Park in Austin, Texas. It's not there anymore but it was the first one. It had the best acoustics of any movie theater I've ever been in. (laughs)

THOMASSON: Interesting. So Kinney Kaler Sanders Crews, how long was that firm around?

KINNEY: Kinney Kaler Sanders and Crews got left holding the bag (laughs) with the great demise of the economy in the mid- to late-'80s. We were finally owed so much money by our clients that they couldn't pay us, and so we downsized and moved out of the Presidio Building, moved downtown. Sid Sanders left the firm to go with the University of Texas and actually at first he went somewhere else and then he went to the University of Texas. Paul Crews—and Robert Kaler left and began doing movie theaters on his own and doing some other work—and Paul Crews was the only one who stayed with me, and we moved down to Sabine and 6th Street in about 1989, and then ultimately I re-formed as—went from being a corporation to being a sole proprietor in 1991. So Kinney & Associates, which is the firm I have now, and Paul was working for me. Paul then worked for me rather than being my partner, he worked for me for two or three years there.

THOMASSON: And you're still Kinney & Associates?

KINNEY: I'm still Kinney & Associates, and I wound up—at that time I rented from Carl Daywood at Sabine and 6th, but then I moved over—when I became—that was in '89 when we moved. In '91 when I became Kinney & Associates, I moved—this is when I thought I was going to be going to Berkeley for a doctorate, and so I put all my furniture and everything in storage, this storage building over on the east side of I-35 on 6th Street, and just carved out a little space about ten-by-ten right up near the front door and put a drawing table there to try to finish up some work to get myself ready to go.

But then I started getting calls from clients wanting me to do things, and I'd have to refer them to another architect, and it was going to cost so much to go to Berkeley, I said, "Well, maybe I ought to just try to make it here for a while," so I kind of carved it out and stayed in that building that I moved into in 1991 until a year and a half ago. A year and a half ago—so, how long is that? From '91 to 2014? So that's a long time. (laughs)

THOMASSON: It is a long time.

KINNEY: We moved back onto the alley and in another building owned by Carl Daywood and we designed it as a tenants place for four tenants and we were one of them—we are now one of them.

THOMASSON: You're still there.

KINNEY: Yes, so we're still there.

THOMASSON: Okay.

I know that you will have a lot to tell me about this next question. It's about your service to the community on boards, commissions and taskforces, advisory committees. I know there's been a lot. What do you feel has been your most significant contribution, of the things you've done?

KINNEY: I don't know. You'd have to ask other people that question about things that I've been involved in.

Everything I've gotten involved in, I've gotten involved in because I love it. I mean, I just haven't done it unless I—I was really honored when I became—see, I became a member of the AIA—at first I wasn't a member of the AIA. In fact, at first I was really anti-AIA because it was way too establishment for me. But Tom Shefelman, I think, finally got me—to say, "Girard, come on." I hadn't worked for Tom for years, but in 1979 or '80 he said, "Join the AIA," and once I got registered, "You should join the AIA," so I got involved. Then Allen McCree became a kind of a mentor to me. You know Allen?

THOMASSON: Um hmm.

KINNEY: Allen would—of course, he was already working—at that time I think he was already working on the Congress Avenue—first Congress Avenue project with Carol Keeton—at that time Carol Keeton, yeah—she had become—I don't know when she—

THOMASSON: I can't keep up with all her names.

KINNEY: I can't keep up with them either, yeah. (Thomasson laughs) She may have become Carol Rylander—I mean, Carol McClellan—when she was mayor, she was Carol McClellan. And Allen McCree worked on that, and he got the AIA—both TSA and the local chapter to back the plans that he was proposing for Congress Avenue, and the big planters and the—

THOMASSON: Benches.

KINNEY: —the benches, all of that.

And so I became involved in AIA, and Allen was on the AIA board nationally, and he convinced the state board that I should be—they should appoint me as a vice president. I hadn't been a director, (laughs) directly from being a lowly member to being a vice president of TSA. It was really strange.

THOMASSON: At that point you hadn't even served on the board of the local chapter.

KINNEY: Um um. Um um. No.

THOMASSON: That was quite a leap.

KINNEY: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And then—

THOMASSON: Was that okay?

KINNEY: Well, it was interesting. I found it very interesting, and then I became a—I got on the board of the local chapter. I guess it was Jim Pfluger that brought me in as—convinced me to be a member of the local board, he and Tom and Bob Coffee. And when I got involved, I realized that there were a lot of things that the AIA was not doing—that in my opinion AIA was not doing locally, kind of working with the community. One of the first things I learned though was that—at that time there was a position on the Austin History Center Board that was a liaison with—the AIA board member was always assigned to be a liaison to be on the Austin History Center Board. And so I said, "Yeah, I'll do that." Well, I think it was automatically the president of the local chapter or they could appoint someone else, and so I don't remember if I got appointed, but I stayed on the History Center Board for, like, three or four years. And during the time that I was on that was when Ruth Parshall and I decided—and she was on the committee that we had formed to do local projects—the two big projects we did that year—I think it was in 1983 because I don't think I was president yet. I think that I was under Pfluger, and Pfluger was president and I was the president elect, and the president elect developed the programs, and so the programs that we developed were the Balloon Arch across Town Lake. That was my first bridge that I designed, and the architectural drawings collection at the History Center—.

THOMASSON: Um hmm.

KINNEY: —wherein architects could donate their drawings to the History Center, drawings done by local architects of local buildings. That was the criteria at that time. In fact, the fact that I had done that is why many years later I was able to

get my hands on the drawings of the Echelon in the same day that the plane hit the building. (laughs) So I came down and so we could get them.

So the History Center was an important—board of directors was an important thing because while I was on the board, there was a lot of talk about the preservation of this building, and so I got to work on that.

So many cases I've been involved in things where because I was involved as a board member, I wasn't eligible to be the architect for these things. (laughs)

THOMASSON: Yes, that's true.

KINNEY: So I've been involved in an awful lot of things which was just pro bono work.

And then somewhere in about 1984 or '83, after Leyla and I moved over near Mueller, I got involved in an organization called CARE, Citizens for Airport Relocation, lobbying for the moving of the airport to what is now Mueller. And I was asked to be on the Airport Advisory Board as the neighborhood representative on the Airport Advisory Board. So I served on the Airport Advisory Board for ten years from about '84 to '94, something like that.

And then from there I went almost immediately to the Design Commission—well, not immediately. There were three or four years in between and then I went on the Design Commission and worked from about 1998 to 2008, something like that—I've forgotten the exact years. But I served about ten years on each board. So those boards and commissions were very important to me because the Airport Advisory Board is where I learned about the whole value of the extent to which a community can shape its own environment. And when we knew that the airport was going to be relocated, it was the communities around Mueller that then began forming the vision for what Mueller should be.

So in 1996 having been on the Airport Advisory Board, I was asked to head up the Mueller Commission, which was the commission that developed the vision for Mueller, and I did that—we worked for six months from October of 1995 to April of 1996 and produced the report about what Mueller would be. Here's the vision. These are the sixteen people that worked day and night on this thing, so many meetings, you wouldn't believe it, very diverse group, and got the AIA to endorse it along with many, many other organizations—all the boards and commissions basically endorsed—it was a consensual report. It was one of the most interesting involvements I've ever had in a board or a commission because in the entire six months, we never voted on anything. Everything was done by consensus. If we couldn't all agree, we just stayed on the topic until we could agree.

THOMASSON: Kept working?

KINNEY: Some people, you know, well, it's not exactly what I would do but I could support it. So at the end, all sixteen people signed the report. There was no minority report.

THOMASSON: That's pretty amazing.

KINNEY: Yeah.

THOMASSON: That was quite an accomplishment.

KINNEY: Yeah. Yeah. I was very proud of that. It was—I learned a technique that I've used a few times since then because I also founded the Cherrywood Neighborhood Association about—even before I went on the Airport Advisory Board, I was the founding president of the Cherrywood Neighborhood Association. A few times along the way, I've needed to use this same technique, and that is when you have an issue where there's just two opposing views on some topic and you couldn't come to—there was no way you were going to come to a decision, and what I did at the Airport Advisory Board was that I appointed two people who best represented the two sides of the idea and said, "You go away and don't come back until you've worked something out that you can both support," and let them work it out (laughs) and then bring back a suggested compromise that they were happy with. And that happened on two or three important issues for Mueller.

THOMASSON: That's a great tool.

KINNEY: Yeah, yeah. It was. It worked very well. So that was one.

The Cherrywood Neighborhood Association was something else. I wound up—I've served several times on the board of it. I'm not on the board right now.

For years I founded and then chaired the Land Use and Transportation Committee of the neighborhood, and so I became very involved in that.

And in 1991, I was the founding chair and still—I'm founding president—I'm still the president of Scenic Austin. And Scenic Austin is the chapter of Scenic Texas, which is affiliated with Scenic America, and those organizations are totally focused on what America and Texas and Austin look like from the roadway. The visual appearance from the roadway. And we are the only organizations that actually take on the billboard industry. There are other wonderful organizations, like, Keep Austin Beautiful, Keep Texas Beautiful, whom we support, but they

can't support us because they have people with the billboard industry on their boards and so—and we don't—and so because our goal is for there not to be any billboards, so we're very unabashed about that. But I have been involved in that issue since 1991 as time has gone, so I've become passionate about that.

But my wife and my partners and my employees all will tell you that I spend way, way too much time on that stuff and not nearly enough time trying to make a living. So, but those are some of the organizations I've been involved in that I loved.

THOMASSON: Okay.

KINNEY: Early on in my life I was very involved in Boy Scouts. I loved that.

THOMASSON: Yeah, I would think so.

Did you have a favorite project?

KINNEY: That's a good question. One of my very favorite projects right now is a tree house I designed and we're building for my granddaughter. (laughs)

THOMASSON: That sounds fun.

KINNEY: Yeah, it's fun. It's taking forever to build it. We've been working on it for several years. It's just kind of weekend work, you know.

THOMASSON: How old is she?

KINNEY: Well, she's ten now, going on eleven, so—

THOMASSON: You need to hurry.

KINNEY: Yeah, I know it. (Both laugh) She's going to be having teenage parties in the tree house.

THOMASSON: So where is the tree house being built?

KINNEY: It's in Dripping Springs. It's on a piece of property that her father owns—and her mom, my daughter, and her father are separated, they live in different places, but they're very close friends and they work together on all kinds of stuff. So this is on the site where Russell, my son-in-law—ex-son–in-law, lives. So he and I are the ones that are working on the tree house.

Did you know that my grandson, Ellar Coltrane, was the star of *Boyhood,* the movie? Are you familiar with *Boyhood*?

THOMASSON: I am. Of course. And I had no idea.

KINNEY: Yeah. Yeah, he's the main guy. Yeah. Yeah. The twelve-year project. Yeah.

THOMASSON: I love that movie.

KINNEY: Watching—yeah, it was very interesting to see him grow up.

THOMASSON: So what is he doing now?

KINNEY: Well, he works for Russell—Evelyn, my granddaughter's father, he is a landscape contractor, and Ellar works for him as a landscaper when he's not making movies, but he also flies off to New York and Los Angeles to work on movies.

THOMASSON: So he's still in the business.

KINNEY: Oh, yeah, yeah. And I think he probably will be for the rest of his life. In fact, the funds from his ability from *Boyhood* have allowed him to buy some property near Wimberley, where my daughter now lives on that property and raises horses.

THOMASSON: It sounds like a nice life.

KINNEY: Yeah.

THOMASSON: Okay.

Do you have—is there an aspect of the whole, thinking of the design and the construction in architecture—do you have a favorite aspect or a favorite phase of that process? Or do you just like the whole thing?

KINNEY: I do like the whole thing, and I noticed that some of the questions were the business or design side. It's all of it. I mean, it's just the whole process, but I think that the parts of it that I love the most are kind of at the very beginning and at the very end, and that is the very conceptualization of a project, the working with the people that are going to be—I hate spec houses, for instance. I just hate them because I don't know the people that are going to live there. I can't actually be responding to a lifestyle or having to design a car for somebody to pick it out, you know. I like customer--

THOMASSON: That interaction--

KINNEY: Yeah, right. And so that development of the program and the early conceptualization of the project I love, and then I actually like it all. I like writing specs. I like doing the details. To me, the drawing up of a building is the building of a building. It's a virtual building. And if you can't do that, if you don't know how to build a building, you shouldn't be drawing it. I always tell my drafts people, "Draw it in the order that you would build it." Draw it, build the walls, build the—put skins on, do it in that order. The trouble with that is that with the CAD, CAD gives you all that stuff, so it doesn't really—it's not really conducive to do it that way. So it's tough. But then I love building. I mentioned that during—when I went to school—I didn't mention all of these—I worked as a carpenter, I worked as a brick mason, I worked for Featherlite building double tee's and the concrete blocks. I worked for the steel, Tips Iron and Steel, doing shop drawings in their shop and actually worked on the steel as well. This was as a laborer, but as a mason I actually helped—got a mason—held a union card as a mason for a while. A short period of time I worked for a mason and laid a lot of brick. (laughs) So you know, I worked for all the trades.

THOMASSON: You have that understanding then.

KINNEY: Yeah. Well, that's what I was going to say, is that in developing projects, being able to go out to a site and having actually done just about every trade myself, it gives me—lets me add value to the actual construction process. And I find it, you know, the sort of natural clash that happens between architects and contractors, I'm able to overcome that a lot by the fact that I kind of can see it from their point of view.

THOMASSON: Are you a sketcher?

KINNEY: Oh yeah.

THOMASSON: Carry a book around with you?

KINNEY: Yeah. I don't know if I—I should've brought one. I don't know if I have one with me or not right now that has anything in it, probably not. Oh, this is an empty one.

THOMASSON: But you've got one in that bag?

KINNEY: Yeah, I usually—these are two that I stuck in here for a trip, and I took the ones out that had all my sketches in them. I just got back from Santa Fe, and I did, I think, four sketches in Santa Fe of buildings and places. I do for myself, I

never sold any sketches or anything like that. I just do it for myself. But I got sketch books full of sketches.

THOMASSON: Where else have you traveled?

KINNEY: Well, not near as much as I would love to. All over the United States though at one time or another. At one point I'd been to every AIA national convention for, like, fifteen years in a row, so everywhere they had a convention I went, so I think San Francisco twice, Houston two or three times for that, but also Philadelphia and New York City and Miami and Chicago twice, I think, for just AIA conventions. And we would go and then turn it into a vacation, so I've been all over the United States, New Orleans. I guess, New Orleans—New Orleans and San Francisco other than Austin—New Orleans, San Francisco, and Chicago are my three favorite U.S. cities. And I've been to those places several times. Taken the train back and forth to Chicago several times. I love doing that.

But I've only been to Europe once. But I did travel for three weeks in Europe by myself. The first part of the trip I was with my stepmother, but left them—had gotten a Eurail pass and traveled—in fact, this is back in '76 or '77, right after my Dad died. I traveled—we flew into Lisbon, went to Madrid and Barcelona, and then to Paris, and then to Liege, Belgium, where my stepmother was from. And then I activated my Eurail pass and went up to Amsterdam, spent several days in Amsterdam. Loved Amsterdam. Came back, went to Munich, went from Munich to Venice, through the Italian Alps.

Had one of the most wonderful experiences that you can imagine. I got on the train in Munich—I got on the train because I had a Eurail pass. It was first class, you know, just go get on, you didn't make any reservations or anything—got on the train to head for—I guess, it was for Prague—no, it was Vienna—for Vienna. Going from Munich to Vienna. And so I was sitting there on the train and got into a conversation with these people just right across from me, but they were from the United States, and I said, "Oh," so we got to talking. They said, "Well, when did you get your tickets?" I said, "What are you talking about?" "When did you get your ticket to this—for this trip?" ''I just walked in with my Eurail pass," and they just kind of looked at each other and said, "We had to get our tickets over a year ago for this." I said, "What are you talking about?" About that time we started to hear—I started hearing this band coming through this train, and they said, "You don't know what this is?" I said, "No." They said, "This is the last run of the Orient Express." (laughs)

THOMASSON: (laughs) Oh, my gosh.

KINNEY: "You're on the very last run of the Orient Express." (laughs) "Oh." And it was a party. It was a party all the way to Vienna.

THOMASSON: What a great experience.

KINNEY: Yeah, it was great timing to walk into that.

THOMASSON: So do you think (inaudible)

KINNEY: Barcelona was one of my favorite places in Europe.

THOMASSON: Do you think things you saw in Europe impacted your views on design?

KINNEY: Well, certainly it impacted—yeah, sure. I mean, some of the things that had a profound effect on me were, for instance, in Amsterdam, where you had buildings that were five hundred years old, but the ground floors were as modern as anything on earth. I mean, incredibly modern storefronts built into and compatible with these ancient buildings. The idea that you could do preservation and very modern things at the same time if you're just trying—as long as they're done with the skill and the intention of doing something that is up to the quality of the building that you're working within, but it can be of this time. It doesn't need to be copying some old thing, so that the whole business of the difference between preservation and adaptive use restoration is something that I really—traveling in Europe, I really—they do a much better job than we do in the United States, I think. So I learned a lot about that.

I also learned things like—I never realized that—I always was familiar with Gaudi's work in Barcelona just from school, you know, I knew about it. And I went to the Sagrada Familia and climbed around in the building and was blown away by the architecture and all that, and went to a lot of his other projects, but what I didn't understand was where he got these ideas, and it was in walking and not out in the formal part—the main street of Barcelona, but some of the back streets that are very curving and the buildings are kind of stacked out—sometimes stacked out over the street and they're these very organic forms. And he was getting all of his clues about the organic detailing that he did from his city, where he grew up—it was a very organic thing, and I had never gotten that from anything that I had read about his life.

THOMASSON: No, I've never heard that.

KINNEY: And I knew all about the structure and hanging nets upside down to make the shapes, the steeples and all that stuff, I understood that. But not the drawing impact. Yeah, I mean—and then also the whole fact of in Europe they had learned the value of public transportation very early because they really had

to because of the geography. And that density is not the enemy of quality of life. (laughs) It fact, it enables quality of life if you do it right.

THOMASSON: All those public spaces and plazas

KINNEY: Well, right, the fact that you have the public spaces always adjacent to the dense communities is always thought of that way.

THOMASSON: I think that's something that impressed me when I first went to Europe was how small you could live, how little you really needed as long as you could go downstairs and be out in the piazza, see your friends.

Personally, outside of architecture, is there anything that fascinates you?

KINNEY: I love whitewater canoeing, and I love to fish. Those are two of the things that I love the most, and I don't get to do either one of them anywhere near as much as I would like to, but I do—I've been known to—it's been a few years since I've done it, but for years, I would go down and take a whole week just completely by myself and live on, like, St. Joseph's Island or somewhere and camp out and live off the land just because I love to do that.

THOMASSON: So where do you go whitewater rafting?

KINNEY: Not rafting, canoeing.

THOMASSON: Oh, canoeing.

KINNEY: It's canoeing and not kayaking. I like to kayak, I like to raft, but canoeing is to me the really great sport, and I've canoed most of the rivers in Texas, the Colorado. My first canoe trip—major canoe trip in my life was in a canvas canoe that I built when I was in the Cub Scouts and went from Austin to the Gulf of Mexico in just two weeks. (laughs) Thank God, I was a Cub Scout.

THOMASSON: Was that in the Guadalupe River?

KINNEY: No, the Colorado.

THOMASSON: Oh, it was the Colorado.

KINNEY: Yeah, from Austin.

But, no, I haven't done Safari. On the Guadalupe, they have this Safari, which I've never done. It's a very interesting trip, but I've not done it.

THOMASSON: That ended in my hometown so I was familiar with it.

KINNEY: Yeah. Where is that?

THOMASSON: I was from Port Lavaca.

KINNEY: From Port Lavaca.

THOMASSON: On Matagorda Bay

KINNEY: Yeah, right.

THOMASSON: We did lots of fishing too.

KINNEY: But I have canoed the Guadalupe from Kerrville all the way down to Canyon Lake and then Canyon Lake down to Gruene. I've done all of those trips many, many times. A lot of times camping out, anytime it was a trip big enough that it would be more than one night, I camped out. And that's the nice thing about canoeing as opposed to kayaking, you can actually put some gear in a canoe. (laughs)

THOMASSON: That's right, you can carry a whole lot more.

KINNEY: I grew up hunting and fishing. I mean, from the time—by the time I graduated from high school, I had seldom eaten beef. I mean, just all we ate was fish and stuff that we raised in our garden and venison and rabbits and squirrels and things that we brought home and cooked.

THOMASSON: That's a pretty healthy lifestyle.

KINNEY: It's a very healthy lifestyle.

THOMASSON: What advice do you give architectural students or young architects these days?

KINNEY: Well, they don't pay much attention to me.

THOMASSON: But you try. (laughs)

KINNEY: Yeah. One is I alluded to a minute ago, and that is as you're doing drawings, try to develop the drawings in the same order that the building would be built. Think about it that way. Once it's designed and conceptualized, and you start putting the building together, put it together in the order that you would build

it. If you don't know how to build it, learn. (laughs) It's important to understand how the building is going to be built.

The other is really understand that water really does run downhill. It really does, and it's amazing how many roofers and landscape contractors and people that you would think should know better, just have never really figured that out. Just think about it.

THOMASSON: Donna Carter talked about this in her interview.

KINNEY: Did she? (Both laugh)

THOMASSON: It's a major theme.

KINNEY: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

There's also—one of the things that I have noted kids today that—to me, architecture is an early morning business. That is, you've got to be able—for one thing, early mornings are beautiful. And being out on sites very early in the morning are very informative. There are times it can be very comfortable and very spiritual, but you can also learn a lot about the site early in the morning. But more importantly, that's when the people at the city, the inspectors, the people that you really need to have on your side on a project, they get there at seven or earlier, and that's when you can actually get to them on the telephone. (laughs) And you can actually do some business—get something done early before everybody else gets going. And these days, I can't find an employee that wants to come to work any earlier than nine o'clock. They all want to come in later in the morning, you know.

THOMASSON: And stay late.

KINNEY: Yeah, and then stay late, you know, when they ought to be going to bed. (Both laugh) That's sounds like kids today.

THOMASSON: Yes.

KINNEY: Yeah.

Other things that I—well, one thing I say to people going into architecture is you really do need to—it is really hard. It's a hard profession. It's hard to do it. It takes a lot of work and dedication, and so if you're in it for the money, don't do that. Go into something else. Go into it because you love it. Don't go into it to try to make money because you're likely to be disappointed. Not that some

architects don't do well. Walter Vacker has done very, very well for himself. But others—most—don't.

THOMASSON: Do you have any favorite spaces or buildings around Austin?

KINNEY: Well, my favorite building, I think, in the world is the Kimbell, Louis Kahn's the Kimbell is a magical place although the new—the addition to it is just—and I haven't been to it yet. I've seen it from the exterior as they were finishing it up. Is it Piano? Whoever did it, did a great job. But they didn't try to copy anything, but still it's a great combination.

And you know, I love the Meyerson Concert Hall in Dallas.

Austin, you know, I'm somewhat of a fan of a couple of projects I have done, the Zachary Scott Theatre, Whisenhunt, the little theater—

THOMASSON: Theater in the round.

KINNEY: —theater in the round, yeah. I'm very partial to that building.

THOMASSON: I like the gargoyles you did.

KINNEY: Yeah, the gargoyles. That's so interesting. The guy who built the gargoyles I just saw this weekend. He's a guy named Stephen Ray, who lives in New York now, and he had the firm here in Austin that built them, and a very close mutual friend of ours died earlier this year and they had the memorial in Santa Fe this weekend, and I saw him for the first time in thirty years. He hadn't changed a bit, but we talked about the gargoyles. Yeah. That was fun. You know, we raised—the gargoyles raised $75,000. They didn't cost anything. They raised—they contributed.

THOMASSON: So, the people's whose faces--

KINNEY: No, it's not the faces. We came up with all the different people that would be represented, they're all parts of the theater and the project that people would adopt—that we asked for people to adopt them, and there's a plaque on the building that has the people that adopted each of the gargoyles. And they each contributed $15,000 to the building fund, and the gargoyles themselves cost, like, $10,000 and raised $75,000, so it's the way. And the bricks with people's names on them out front raised another $10,000 at least, all toward—so the whole idea of art being able to actually—the artists can all get paid plus you can actually contribute rather than using the budget of the building. What other spaces do I really like? Of course, like everyone I love the Capitol Rotunda.

I'm a big fan of the expansion of the Capitol to the north. I think they did a wonderful job with that. The underground expansion where you can look up and always see the Capitol. I think that's great, and the restoration of the Capitol. Carolyn Peterson with Ford Powell and Carson was the main restoration architect for that. She did a wonderful job on the restoration and worked with Kirby Keahey, who worked on the expansion, was that 3DI, I guess, that did—whoever it was in Houston that did the expansion, Kirby was the project architect. I remember when AIA did a tour of it for TSA or something, he led the tour of it. That was a very interesting project.

You know, things that I—one thing I've very proud of is saving the—having served on the Airport Advisory Board, I knew what the plans were for the base command building at Mueller—I mean, at Bergstrom, at ABIA, which was for it to be taken down. They were going to raze it, and I always thought—I feel like the greatest act of sustainability is to save a building if you possibly can.

THOMASSON: Sure.

KINNEY: And so I arranged the meeting. I introduced a developer, who had a connection with Hilton, to Charles Gates, who was the Director of Aviation at the time, and said, "Why can't we figure out how to save this building?" And at that time they had already put it up on the auction block to try just raze it and sell the site. And nobody had taken it. So they were able to actually work directly with this developer. They didn't have to go through an RFQ process, or RFP or anything, they just worked directly with the developer. And I did a study for them to show that it could be saved, and could be a Hilton Hotel, so I was the concept architect on that building, and I wasn't the hotel architect. I mean, we brought in a hotel architect to do the actual construction documents.

I kind of like the inside of that building, the actual lobby space that was originally the courtyard, mechanical courtyard for the building. That space is kind of nice.

THOMASSON: What about coming projects? Anything that you are particularly interested in?

KINNEY: Well, I'm really excited about the—theoretically, if it will ever get started. I'm the architect for the—and Donna Carter is on this team—my team—the repurposing of the Mueller Tower—the Observation Tower at Mueller figuring out what to do with it and being the architect for that. That's an exciting project, yeah.

I didn't mention, by the way, one of my favorite projects that I've done is the Pfluger Bridge, the pedestrian bridge. And then the Great Streets Plan—that

Sinclair and I did—so a lot of the things that I'm proudest of and that I'm most comfortable are exterior spaces.

THOMASSON: Yes.

KINNEY: You know, (inaudible) and at Mueller I was very involved in the kind of conception of the plan at Mueller, and that was pro bono. I was very involved—I got very—I'd been on the Mueller Commission—I mean, the taskforce that developed the vision and the city manager hired me to actually be on the design team with Roma who they had hired to be the planners—to be the kind of memory of what the goal was supposed to be there. (laughs) So I got to—because I actually did get engaged for a while. But being involved—and the whole—you know, trying to understand city planning from an architect's point of view, it's just been a fascinating thing for me. I've learned so much. I mean, I was greatly inspired when I wrote—when I first read Jane Jacob's book about how cities live and die and how they work, and seeing American cities try so hard to kind of buck the trend to somehow develop around the automobile, which finally people are trying to—finally figuring out that that's really not the way to design a city. But now they try to retrofit cities—

THOMASSON: Undo.

KINNEY: —undo. I mean, it's just been a fascinating thing.

THOMASSON: I think you've had a fascinating career. More to come too.

KINNEY: I hope so.

THOMASSON: Is there anything that we haven't talked about that you would like to say or add?

KINNEY: No, I think we've pretty much covered the highlights of my professional life here. (laughs)

THOMASSON: Okay.

Well, I really appreciate you coming in to talk to us and do this with us, so thank you.

KINNEY: Thank you, Toni. I've enjoyed it myself.

END OF INTERVIEW