

Interview with Warner Masters, track 3

WM: And I found it was impossible to work from a script. Those people are freewheeling, and so I just don't have any notes or anything either of their talking(??).

JB: One of the nice things about this is you anticipate my questions very nicely. (laughter) Well, we were talking about this building. One of the things that strikes me about this building is that it's an elegant building. How did you persuade the state to underwrite such an opulent building this is with the lovely furnishings and—?

WM: Well, that's of course two or three questions involved in that. Number one, this is not an inefficient building. This is an excellent, very definitely efficient building. It's a square, is what it is. It's a square building. It has no, nothing about it is extravagant from the standpoint of the function of the building. We did have to argue a great deal for escalators, but we indicated to them that you're not gonna move these people by four floors by elevators because it's just too much mass. Everybody gets up to go to class ten minutes before the hour and I said, "You're gonna have all kinds of jam-ups." And I said, "Not only that, but if an escalator breaks down, you can still use it; it's a stairway. And so, we were the first building in the state college system to use escalators. But those kind of little things that we were able to persuade them on. But the main thing was, is, when Roland Foreman was the architect for this building, assigned by the State Division of Architecture, and Roland did moonlighting, and he was a good architect. He designed some buildings privately out of his home, so to speak, which is alright and State Division of Architecture doesn't care. And very cooperative, so with he and Floyd together, we came up with the idea that this ought to be the real center of this campus; it was gonna be located in the center and it ought to be an imposing building, a classic building in a modern sense. And so, we came out of the idea of the Parthenon you know, I started thinking about the place, you know we don't want the Parthenon here, but we want something that might be a modern addition of this kind of an idea. And so, they started sketching, they came up with these real usable(??) pillars that were not, you know they're not holding up the roof, incidentally—

JB: They were just there.

WM: They're just there, you know. Well, they looked like they are, but the roof simply extends right out there and it isn't an absolutely essential element to the structure. But, so this concept, and then I said, "I want some nice railings with benches around." I said, "Now we've got the pillars out here, let's have a porch around this thing." So the students could sit down on a nice, somewhat protected, particularly on the shady side of the building, and sit down on one of these benches if they feel like it and study and read when the atmosphere is nice. And so they looked at that idea and said, "Okay," and then we wanted those big railings, of—I wanted them out of teak. They got them out of something else; I can't remember what it was, and they've been a headache ever since, but they've apparently

been able to keep them from checking too badly and they still look pretty nice. Worked with all kinds of finishes to try to make it look—but we got all those kinds, everything that we wanted was put into this building, just exactly the way we wanted.

JB: It's remarkable.

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WM: That's what it turned out to be, yeah. Now, it was not designed to be added to the way it is. It was designed to have another one just like it in front of it and a bridge. Now, the librarians are the ones that indicated to me that they felt that that was gonna be very costly to administer two buildings connected by walkways, because they were gonna have to have two accession points, two checkout points, and so on and so forth. And that was persuasive to me, because it looked like to me that we were going for something like a low—once we had the building built it would be beautiful and would have a great passageway through the center, it gives you the good appearance on all sides. And we had a model built of it; it looked beautiful. But, it didn't function properly, and if you've ever had an ongoing cost for the next hundred years, that's gonna be excessive to operate, then we'd better not do it that way. So now we've got this other direction which is fine.

JB: I'm starting to become aware that I need to get you back by ten o'clock, so I apologize, but—

WM: It's alright.

JB: I'm going to pose additional questions so we have some more rapid rate, if you don't mind.

WM: No. As long as I answer "yes" or "no".

JB: (laughs) Don't want you to do that. "College-oriented concept" is a phrase that you coined or which was coined to describe the surroundings of this campus, the surrounding environment. Would you talk a little about how that concept came to be and how successfully it was fulfilled?

WM: Well, sure. First off, it became very apparent that we were gonna be surrounded by a bunch of hamburger stands and stuff that just simply was not complimentary to what I had viewed as being a permanent fixture on the landscape indefinitely. And this is true of

institutions, uh, if you look at Western civilization there's changed capitals, you've changed boundaries of countries, Heidelberg is still right where it was, Oxford still right where it was, Cambridge is where it was, Harvard's where it was. We're gonna remember(??) where they are. Few colleges are moved. There are some little ones that have been, but most of them have become a permanent fixture in the community of the nation. One of the most permanent fixtures in Western civilization, I was gonna say, some big churches, rather a challenge with them(??), I guess. But, basically, with that concept in mind, why in the world should we have the environs be a bunch of junk? Berkley is a classic example of a terrible environment in the vicinity. More recently, Isla Vista at the University of California in Santa Barbara, and we went up and looked at all of these things. I'll digress just one point, that in the master planning of this campus, we set out to find out what the master plan of the hundred largest universities in the United States looked like. So we had, wrote letters to them and got from them, most of them, we had sixty or seventy, all on different schedules, you know. All these damn plans and we said, "How in the world are we gonna make any sense of these things?" Well, we finally—I said, "You know, there's one thing around every one of these plans that we can use as a scale." And I said, "It's a football field. Every one of them is one hundred yards long. Now let's get audiovisual. Take these plans and reduce every one of them to where that football field represents. I want a mile and a half square on a card this big. Mile and a half square and I want it, all of them, on that size plan with the football fields all identical size, and then we will see what we have." So they did and we got all these cards back to find that Penn State had a cow barn in the middle of campus and a whole flock of things, you know, (laughter) very interesting, and so we got all these things up, and started looking at them and said, "I wonder what the environs around these places looked like?" Well this is more difficult to determine, so we had to go do some visitations, you know. I went to York University in Toronto to take a look around there to see what they were doing, and they had control over their environment. They don't let anybody come in there and just build something across the street from it. So I started to try to find out from the planning department in Los Angeles what could be done. Well, these guys were pretty helpful. They said, "Well, you know Shaker Heights in Cleveland." He said, "That is what is a controlled environmental section within the city. In California, we have what we call a Civic Center Act. The Civic Center Act permits you to protect a particular important _____(??) from being encroached upon. For instance, in Santa Barbara, it's the Mission. And in various places, for instance, they say within a quarter of a mile of this Mission, there shall not be a gas station, there shall not be this, shall not be that, and so forth. All of the things that are within a perimeter area have to be complimentary to the institution." So we took that key and decided we were gonna start trying to impose the university's will on the surrounding area to protect it. And I'll tell you, I don't know if this is relevant, of course(??). All the speculators would begin to scream their heads off and—

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JB: They bought land for specific purposes.

WM: Well, for exploitation of whatever it might be.

JB: Make a profit.

WM: Make a profit, that's right. And we were gonna stop them from doing whatever they wanted to do, and of course there's a question here, there's a balance in here, there's no question about it. I mean, what does a person, where does a person's rights end? Can they build a junkyard over there? Well, of course zoning was a protection in one sense. So what we said to the City of Los Angeles was, "Okay, you zone the property. Now we want a conditional use slapped on top of that zone." And say that, "Anything that they build on there, the plans have got to be submitted, and they would not be allowed to build until the plans have been approved as being complementary to the institution." So what happened is we formed the thing called the "College Community Advisory Board". And we let—have lay chairman, but it's basically, it was our board. We were gonna be damn sure that that board heard our philosophy, and we figured we couldn't(??) be heard because eventually we'd be able to control that board because we're there all the time and they're not. (laughter) And they changed faces all the time, so it was a fight for about two or three years. If you want to talk to somebody about it, talk to Warren Campbell.

JB: Warren and I are friends.

WM: Yeah, he's a—

JB: He's at Duke.

WM: Yeah and he can give you some information on College Community Evaluation Planning Board. In particular, the concept of protecting the environment around the institution.

JB: Are you satisfied with the results?

WM: Well I think it's about as good as we could go, helpful(??).

JB: Well, sure, it's different from Isla Vista's.

WM: Yeah, sure as hell is. Certainly, we stopped any commercial development, we don't have a bunch of hamburger stands facing us. We couldn't, it would've been ideal if we'd had our way, to have had everything from Reseda Boulevard to Zelzah, including the frontage on Reseda. That could've been a park, frontage, all along there. And had everything all the way up to Devonshire. Now, that sounds like an ambitious program, but these institutions grew like, you know, tremendous, it's unbelievable to see some of the sizes of the acreage

of the Michigan State and some of these others have control of—of course, Stanford's obvious—but let me talk about state institutions. And they still can lease it out for one hundred years or sell it under a conditional use permit and say, "We're gonna control forever what's built on this piece of property. " Even after you've sold it. It's like having mineral rights. (laughter) And so, uh, it's just worthwhile doing, I think, and that was really, we were just determined that there was not gonna be a real petition of that kind of environment for this institution.

JB: When did you start to discern signs that there was community resistance building in the expansion of this institution? I started to pick up on—

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WM: Immediately. (laughs)

JB: Immediately? I picked up in the mid-sixties in my documentary research, but it started right from the start. What form is it in today?

WM: Oh, I think the impact of traffic was almost immediately felt. Here was a quiet community out here: orange groves and squash fields and one thing and another, and people had bought homes out here of one and a half acres and two acre plots and, you know. And their first effort was to, you know, to fight the institution unless it would buy their property.

JB: Really? Then they wouldn't fight.

WM: No, of course not. Nobody fights when they're gonna pay—I'll pay you twice as much as it's worth. (laughter)

JB: And then they would move.

WM: They moved, yeah, and that's what they did. So most of the opposition moved.

JB: Really?

WM: Yeah. They were—

JB: They were bought out by the campus?

WM: Well, they were either bought out or you bought the neighbor's house and they wouldn't buy theirs and they got mad and left, you know.

JB: Condemnation ever?

WM: Oh, well, condemnation—

JB: Unless it was on Zelzah, was it?

WM: I think you're—let's, uh, terminology. The state never acquires land without condemnation. Now, condemnation does not mean eminent domain. They're two different things.

JB: Okay.

WM: Eminent domain is never used. There's always been a, an amicable settlement between buyer and seller.

JB: I see, I see.

WM: So, but people think of condemnation as being eminent domain, and it isn't.

JB: I did know that, at the moment I asked the question, as a matter of a fact, because I talked with an attorney who was responsible for litigation for a part of the campus. One of the things this campus has done most successfully—and it's one of the things that is least perceived by our students, for example, (??) by our faculty colleagues—is grow. You're not locked in like Columbia, you're not locked in like Cal State LA, you're not locked in like Stanford's becoming, for example, like Berkeley is.

WM: Although Stanford's getting that way is their own damn fault, because they had about ten thousand acres. I don't know how much they had—

JB: The farm was a lot of land.

WM: Yeah, a lot of land.

JB: You had to sell this to the state, all these acquisitions passed one hundred sixty—

WM: That's what Prator said, he says, "Your job is get that," he says, "I know you build these buildings, but I want you to get that land." Now, of course, I had all these other things to do as well. I was in charge of the budget, accounting, the plan operations, the police, the whole shmeer of everything except the student services construction. Now, that's the bookstore, the cafeteria, and everything else.

JB: So everything plus land acquisition.

WM: Plus, yeah, plus—land acquisition, basically, was a case of selling it to the legislature, and getting the money.

JB: So you were on the plane all the time all the way to Sacramento.

WM: Oh yeah, Sacramento, I got so tired of that.

JB: This is before the system was actually established as a system or did it continue—

WM: It continued afterwards; we finally were a block, we were—I was always getting Prator into trouble.

JB: Because of this?

WM: All because of this, because I was always up there logging and stirring up things, you know, and the chancellor did not like that. And they had a guy by the name of Muchmore.

JB: Don Muchmore?

WM: Yeah, but we called him "Mushmouth".

JB: (laughs)

WM: He was really, he didn't know what in the hell he was doing. He should've stayed at the state fair there and so any rate, he was really brought on because he had contacts with the legislature and people up there in Sacramento. And presumably, normally, if he'd known anything about what he was doing, I think he would've been an asset. But their tendency in the Chancellor's Office—we used to call it "Imperial Headquarters"—was to try to direct things over something with a group of people that had never worked in an institution. And Dumke of course had, but for the most part many of those people down there, what they had, were glommed onto from various sections of the state government. Department of Finance, the guy that they made—all their financial people came out of the Department of Finance in the state of California. Well, what the hell? They all made it think it was control, control, control, control—they didn't know anything else. That's what they'd been brought up with and that was not what we were going to put up with, you know. And consequently, we were in riding them all the time, making them mad as hell, you know? Finally, they call Cleary, they called Prator and I down there and read the riot act to us, Luckman and Dumke, and that old Prator, he said, "Well, if doing something, if trying to build an institution that will serve the people of the San Fernando Valley and do it well, if that objective is foreign to your desires, then the job isn't worth having." That's exactly what he told them.

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JB: Did they cave in at that point?

WM: Uh, well, Luckman said, he says, "Well, I recognize where you're coming from. But we're trying to get some equality. You people out there have gone up there and run off with all our money," so to speak, which we did. (laughter) And so we were getting more than our share, he says, "You're getting more than your share." And, "You got more than your share. All we're trying to do is to say that we want to allocate these funds to where they're most needed in the state as we perceive it. Because you get so much legislative power in there and your system is working these people, the governor is just mad as hell. This was Brown Sr.

JB: Senior. We were simply too effective then.

WM: Yeah, I guess so. Apparently, too effective for their liking.

JB: Yet Devonshire Downs still lay ahead as a formal acquisition.

WM: And that turned into donnybrook.

JB: How was that done? What happened?

WM: Well, I was always—one time I was on vacation in Colorado and I got a phone call through the sheriff's office in Telluride that there was gonna be a hearing on the Devonshire Downs in Sacramento, and to call Jim, Cleary, so I called Cleary. Cleary Says, "You know I'm due in Washington D.C. at the same day this damn thing is happening in Sacramento. I'm really afraid that they're going to take it away from us. Can you go up there?" I said, "Sure." So I jumped in the car and drove to Sacramento. And here I am, I've been out fishing and everything, I've these old clothes on, no suit or anything else, so went into this hearing and I said, "I want to apologize for my appearance. I was just in Colorado with my family and my son, he lives there, and we went hiking and one thing or another. I told them exactly what happened: you scheduled this hearing without, we didn't know it was gonna come about. And the chairman of the committee was a Democrat and our representative was a Republican and he was against us, at least that's what used to burn the hell out of me.

JB: Our representative was opposed to us. Was it Wilkinson?

WM: No no, Wilkinson was his counselor(??).

JB: Okay.

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WM: This was a guy that's no longer in assembly. He was a jerk, anyway. But he was supposedly an accountant and a Republican—Harvard(??) Republican, but that doesn't mean anything. (laughs) This guy was still terrible, you know. So I got up there and I said, and they started indicating what they were going to do and what was being proposed and they wanted to turn it back to a fair district and I said, "There's nothing that would be more absurd." I said, "Are you really thinking that we're going to continue to have 4-H and (??) on the pigs and animals in the San Fernando Valley? Have you been down there in recent years? That is—" Now, this guy was playing up to a constituency, you see, that he perceived was very powerful. Well, of course you know how people with children who are raising pigs and animals, to have a little agricultural fair, that this was important to them and they, and

those mothers and their wives can get in there and raise a lot of hell. Way far beyond what was reasonable, but nevertheless this guy was beholden to them for some reason.

So I got there and I just testified that that is not going to be what is going to happen in the future of this—I said, "You're either gonna have a bunch of commercial stores and the usual thing, strip development again, along Devonshire, or else going to be developed in a way that can be a credit to the community and eventually of some of the plans like—the plans of this hypothetical development up there, you know, (??), big theater and a stadium and a whole bunch of things that could be leased out to the community and for community use, for high school, ballgames, and track and field events and all kinds of things, you know. And I had an argument all ready up there and that sort of thing. And so this was impressive to this committee. They'd never seen these plans before, and how far we'd gone with architectural drawings and this sort of thing, and so this guy got so damn mad because he'd never seen these. And I said, "Hell, you never asked." So he got so mad, he fell off the rostrum and onto his back. (laughter) And these guys, these guys from legislature, and this guy fell out of his chair. What he'd done was a rare backflip(??), you know, the damn thing went over and there was a step back there and so, hell, he was a great big man, powerfully built man, and he rolled out there and had to get up and—. (laughs)

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JB: So you say "You never asked," and he hits the floor.

WM: Well, it was almost in that sequence, not quite exactly that way. But he was so exercised, that he just couldn't restrain himself, you know. Then, the senator, who is still your state senator here, Robbins, comes in, and appeals to the—well, he was in there by that time—and he appealed to the—this was an assembly committee—that this matter be laid aside. And so they were quick to jump on that, said, "We will postpone this hearing indefinitely." And never bring it up again, never; that was the end of it. But those are the kinds of things that you got to do.

JB: Meantime, you'd come out of Colorado, practically in your hip boots to testify—

WM: To testify, yeah, and you know that had a positive effect on—

JB: Is that right?

WM: They said, "If you've come all the way from off your vacation to this hearing?" I said, "Well it's important to our institution, you know?" It's what you do.

JB: Somewhere in this pile there's a Dan Bailey fly fishing catalogue. You might appreciate it.

WM: (laughs) Dan Bailey?

JB: Dan Bailey.

WM: Dan Bailey. Oh.

JB: Restored my—

WM: Okay, there's that one. Alright, well. That one's a long story, too. But you've got the idea of the environs and all that sort of thing.

JB: We're doing very well, and, let me, let me ask you, just generally, more broadly: Between your arrival, and Ralph Prator's arrival, the decision to expand this campus—it wasn't gonna be one hundred sixty acres, it was gonna be more, uh, and the acquisition of finally Devonshire Downs as North campus—pieces of land were acquired.

WM: That's right. Piece by piece.

JB: Piece by piece.

WM: Yeah.

JB: And I have a pretty good record of when those were acquired.

WM: Yeah.

JB: But it looked to me as though the acquisition went easier at first, both price-wise and acquisition-wise.

WM: Oh yeah, it costs more and more.

JB: Later, speculators would move in—is that about the way it went?

WM: Yeah, instead of appropriating enough money to do it at one time, it probably, I don't know what the total cost of this thing is now, I can't—I mean, it's on the books, on the plant books of the institution, of course. It's a matter of asking the accounting office.

JB: Sure.

WM: But, my guess is we were paying, we started out paying about forty-five hundred , as I recall, or five thousand dollars an acre, something in that realm. And we were paying a hundred thousand or more an acre for land toward the end.

JB: Is that a function of speculation, people buying close by, expecting it to move?

WM: No, I don't think so. I don't know, I can't answer that for a factually. I don't know whether they changed hands several times in the interim period. I just don't believe it was. I think that there was primarily acquisition of small private homes, that the process of appraisal by the state is to have independent appraisals, as well as their own, that tell them what the highest and best use of this land is. We can have some argument over use of public funds to buy land, that's all the highest and best use basis, because that use may never happen. That probably it'd be better if they bought it on the current use. But that's not for me to argue with, because that's the way they do it, and that's the probably the way the law was written. So consequently, as a community develops, the use of the land as zoned, or as potentially zoned, becomes a critical factor, and so the thing that used to, that bothered me so much was in arguing with the state director of finance and other people in Sacramento, they always came back with the argument, We're not in the land acquisition business, we're not in the real estate business, and I said, "Well, that's too bad," and I cited some of the planning that was going on in Europe where areas had decayed, they had bought these—

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