

MILLER: open the door. But . . . and that's why we were trying to use all the new tools that we could find to determine what was coming, you know. And that's why Lincoln Quadrangle came along. And the Lincoln Quadrangle also won several design awards.

But it got a most interesting award one time as being one of the most humane buildings that had been designed. It has a scale. We're thinking again of scale . . . of the fact that people could be on the third floor and looking down and recognize and see friends and talk to them. You know. And there was a security angle there, too, that was very good because you can . . . you enter all of those off interior courts, and that was a concern that came up in the '60s. You know, how do you prevent people from rioting through. It's funny how these things that we don't think about now that we're into the '80s . . . how really difficult that period was of '68 to '72 where we were trying to adapt buildings with big glass windows to this new phenomena that we hadn't thought about, you know.

JH: Were those the last dorms that were built at Indiana State -- the Lincoln

MILLER: Yes. Yeah, those were the last ones.

JH: Those are on the north end of the campus really.

MILLER: Yeah.

And then much of our effort was transferred to the beginnings of the Evansville campus, and we don't need to get into that discussion here. But it was a chance . . . I'll just say this in passing, that probably one of the most marvelous things that I had happen to me in the architectural world was to take 300 acres and really come up with a total concept and set the whole tone and the style of the buildings down there.

JH: And this you could do at Evansville?

MILLER: This I could do at Evansville, and that does have a very logical plan, although the whole growth rate now of universities is so muffled that it will never really get beyond where it probably is now as a small commuter school of 2,000 and 2500. And, of course, Indiana State, which was scheduled in many

MILLER: people's minds to be going for 25,000, is going to be for the next 10 to 15 years and probably forevermore at somewhere between 10,000 and 14,000.

JH: Well, now in the meanwhile though, was the library the last building you put up here?

MILLER: The library . . . well, it wasn't the last. I think maybe the nurses' education building was after that. But I think that probably the library is the best building that we did, frankly.

JH: Oh, do you?

MILLER: Yeah. That has a handsome classic form. It's an abstraction arranged within symmetry. Now technologically, that is really quite different, too. Because all of those exterior panels including the windows in them can be removed and changed and repositioned on the front of that building, all the way around. If the interior modifies so much . . . because they didn't know where libraries were going or whether we were coming into the zippy-zooty age of all entirely electronic retrieval of information, (why, no one knew what the future was) so that building can be absolutely gutted out on the inside, a new plan established, and then we can go back and unbolt all of those panels and move them around to fit a whole new semblance of a building. And it still remains, though, a classic form of building; and all you're doing is, you're rearranging the abstractions around the outside.

END OF SIDE 2

TAPE 2-SIDE 1

MILLER: All you have to do is rearrange the panels within the formal facade and what you have is still a formally-organized building and you've rearranged the abstractions.

JH: Was this an innovation architecturally?

MILLER: Oh, yes, I think it really was. It was a major innovation because what we learned on the residence halls is that we got in trouble pre-casting these exteriors when we split them at a window. Then we had to come up with a material that would weather-proof the window all the way around when the water was running down the joints. So we incorporated the

MILLER: windows directly into the panel, and this makes it much easier to control that kind of technology. It's a . . . to my mind, it's a formalist building. It has a classic simplicity and it really deserves fronting on a park.

Our style is changing a little bit here. We're getting away from some of the informalities that we were trying to bring into my early work, for example in the home economics building, which is a relatively informal little building. It looks like an academic building, but it's the scale and the way you sort of hide the entrance a little bit and the use of materials are . . . I think it just has . . . and its relationship to the street and its maximum of heights. It doesn't have any grandeur to it. And it was meant . . . we were in a period in which we were getting away from the beaux arts concept of buildings, and we were trying to be informal and friendly. Much of our impetus was then coming from the Scandinavian designed percepts that were set in this way.

JH: Well, now the library does face on a park. Were you able to achieve this through pressure?

MILLER: Well, this was planned. Yes, this was planned into it at the time. It took time for that to develop, but it is sort of . . . because Alan Rankin also felt that the library was the statement of the University. We wanted a building where the mass and the breadth of the building carried it as an important building. And you get that best by being more formalist.

JH: Well, now, in the meanwhile, that little Bowman building has been remodeled into a little theater. This is past your time.

MILLER: This was past my time . . .

JH: Does this fit with your thinking?

MILLER: No. (laughs)

JH: I see.

MILLER: No, not really at all. The other side of the park to the north where the Bowman building is is a happenstance. It's another thing where the economy's not there. All of a sudden universities are without

MILLER: money, and it was better done that way than not done at all. But it's a building that has little speaking for it in the way of either a sculptural form It's not a very good building of its era. And it sits off to the side as a sort of a common piece in what could have been really the development of a major statement for the university up there because the fine arts center was to go to the north of that park. If that could have been done in also a performing arts center and a fine arts center . . . if that could have been done in that same rather classic contemporary thing, it would have given a whole new breadth to the campus, I feel.

JH: However, that building sits lower, and it doesn't intrude . . .

MILLER: Doesn't too much. Now . . .

JH: . . . too much.

MILLER: Well, it's not a building that has very much to say, (laughs) so it can't intrude too much.

JH: Well, so therefore it . . .

MILLER: Yeah.

 The other thing that I think is very good -- and it's particularly good because it welds the urban fabric into it -- is the round tower that is a supplement to the student center that serves as the gate. We had no place to sort of enter the University. The streets ran through it, and it wasn't practical to try and put gates at places, you know, or to ring a wall around it in that way.

JH: So, now you're back up on Mulberry . . .

MILLER: I'm up on Mulberry and being right across from what is sort of "church row" in the city. I think that that has a nice dignity to it. Again, it's in the latter period of my work, and it has a more formal statement to it.

JH: This is the so-called "link" building?

MILLER: This is the link building between the Elks, which is a part of the Student Union now It's a very simple form. We had limited all of our

MILLER: work on that campus after my first experiment with the blue porcelainized wall, which I . . . I don't think was a mistake. But I don't think it was . . . it wasn't a piece of technology that was very important then. I think I used it once or twice after that and decided it was one of those trashy kind of things that I shouldn't have been involved with to begin with. But we limited our materials to the brick that was predominant on the campus and to limestone. The limestone had been in the initial brick buildings and had been used around the bases of many of the buildings and in the steps. And when we went into the pre-cast concrete, why, we took the limestone and used that as the aggregate in the pre-cast so that it came out looking like limestone.

Now, the link building is actually slabs of limestone. The economy changed and pre-cast became more expensive, and they had learned at that point how to really cut limestone very thin /to/ reduce the weight. That's an interesting little transfer that happened /which shows/ how all of these forces play so much on architecture.

I guess really we ought to quit talking about the campus and sort of talk about the town and its relationship.

JH: What were the influences that shaped the changes in the town, well, during your period of time in Terre Haute, which is within your experience? What was Terre Haute like when you came here?

MILLER: Well, Terre Haute when I came here . . . Wabash Avenue was the main shopping street. It was the center of all activity in the community. It had survived the changeover from mass transportation to the automobile. It hadn't survived it very well but it was still there. And it was clean in comparison to how I remembered it as a young man or a boy when I would come here and visit in the coal-burning era.

JH: Yes. Don't you think that was the soft coal?

MILLER: Oh, it was a dirty town when I was here, and I could understand why people moved out and into the suburbs. But on the other hand, it was now cleaned up and it was pretty pleasant that way, and people

MILLER: were sort of scrubbing their buildings and doing a few things like that.

JH: Now, your offices then were in the old Opera House.

MILLER: We were in the Opera House building.

JH: On North 7th Street.

MILLER: Unair-conditioned space, and you'd stick to the drawings in July (laughs), and you'd freeze in that radiator system in the winter time, and the theater was downstairs. My uncle had been there for years. They tore down the Opera House building, and we moved over to the Tribune-Star Building and took the entire top floor. Then when my uncle left the firm . . . Al Vrydagh retired, by the way, in 1960. So the three of us practiced together for five years, and then he decided that he wanted to go to California to be closer to his children and spend his last years with them (he's still alive to my knowledge). And Warren, I think, left the firm in about 1964 and lived to be 83 and passed away in the '70s.

We then built our own buildings on South 3rd Street because of what was taking place in urban renewal. We could get a piece of land, and we thought we were going to be here forever; and so we built a building that we could expand into because by this time we had quite a national I had quite a national reputation in university work, and we had opened an office in California. I really did see that Indiana State at some time was going to stop, and Terre Haute wouldn't be large enough to continue the kind of quality of firm that I wanted. So we had opened an office in California, and we were doing we did the master plan for the University of San Diego, and we were doing work on the east coast. So our office really was quite a hubbub; we were up to 60 people, and we were traveling everywhere (laughs) at that point in time. And it was at this time in my life when I became a consultant for Ford Foundation and was going back and forth in the late '60s and early '70s to South America to consult with universities being designed in the South America area.

JH: What changed this?

MILLER: What changed this? Like Hamlet, it was sins of omission rather than commission.

MILLER: We had a mayor in Ralph Tucker, who couldn't see beyond the door of City Hall. He just could not conceive really. He had no ability to futurize. He was, as we both know, personable.

JH: Oh, indeed!

MILLER: And he really had a lot of people in the palm of his hand when he was in office. But Terre Haute . . . but now, you can't blame it all on him! We had no force in the society that was comparable to rising to the force that Alan Rankin and Raleigh Holmstedt brought to the University or that circumstances brought to the University. And these two men were chosen to carry that . . . to carry the banner, you know, into the field.

And appeal after appeal after appeal was made by the University for Terre Haute to get its act together and become good neighbors. And many attempts were made. There were a number of active people. Paul Pfister was young at that time (he was older than me by some ten years), but he was fairly influential in trying to get things happening downtown. Herman Becker was in that group. Let's see, I'm trying to pull names out. Now, the attorney . . . he's still alive here. Oh (laughs) . . .

JH: I'm sorry, I can't help you because I . . .

MILLER: Who's the partner of David Day?

JH: Oh, Howard Batman.

MILLER: Howard Batman was one of . . .

JH: Of course!

MILLER: . . . the older men who saw that something could be done with the downtown. But they didn't have the power, and there was no leadership in the power of things.

JH: Was there a problem within the merchants themselves?

MILLER: Oh, I think it's about the time that all the local merchants were being sold out to the national chains and the national chains were looking at the

MILLER: new phenomena of the suburban shopping center. And when Warren's plan for the arcades down the streets (laughs) never materialized, why, it was . . . it was just . . . the only place where the enclosed shopping mall could be done was out on land that hadn't been built on. It was just far too expensive to tear things down.

Valiant attempts were made when the Fairbanks building was torn down on the corner of 7th -- after the fire . . .

JH: Seventh and Wabash, yes.

MILLER: Seventh and Wabash. The Faileys -- both Biff, Sherman and his uncle -- employed us to put a 6- or 7-story parking garage there. And it was to be tied through on every floor to Sears. Well, a parking garage couldn't support itself without being open to the public generally, and Sears wanted it reserved purely for their patronage, you know, before they'd sign a new lease. Well, that would have meant even at that time, a 6- or 7-million dollar investment into a 3-year lease that they were willing to sign. And it could not have served the rest of Wabash Avenue which was important. But Sears was feeling their oats in those days as being the leader of the new merchandising. That's sort of funny to see that /since/ they're on the verge of bankruptcy now, you know, and having so much trouble. How these times change.

But they were . . . they thought that they were the leaders and that they didn't need anybody else. And, in truth, they didn't at that period of time.

There was also some very bad mistakes made. We had an urban renewal program to clean up 3rd Street, and it did take all the houses out, and we know that the married student quarters are along there and But the pressures of the established landholders in the town were so much on the city council that they restricted that area down there severely in terms of height of building and what could go into it. So Ward's is the only thing that was ever allowed to be built there. And what happened was that they set up the classic situation where the developer from out of town walks in and says, "No one's got their act together here," and he leapfrogged the whole thing and went down to Honey Creek Square.

JH: And that's really what the impetus . . . now in the meanwhile though, Meadows Shopping Center had been . . .

MILLER: Meadows Shopping Center as a strip neighborhood center had been built, and they never took advantage of it to make it into a regional shopping center. But maybe they couldn't have. I-70 was another thing that Ralph Tucker never could imagine what was going to happen with it, you know. The volume of traffic he couldn't see. And I've talked with the state highway people; and, my goodness, Greencastle has two exits (laughs) and all these little towns have so many; and we only asked for one, which was the . . . which we had to have which was the interface with /U.S./ 41 going south. (continuing to laugh) And we did finally get one up at /State Road/ 46, but we're still short about two that would relieve the pressures on many things coming into the town. One at 13th, I think, is really a necessity and . . .

JH: Well, of course, all these things . . .

MILLER: . . . and maybe one at 25th.

JH: . . . are under contention now.

MILLER: Well, nobody wants them now because the city has actually . . . the commerce district has shifted. I don't think under the best-laid plans, and particularly with the government pulling out of the business of helping developers re-develop, I think, that the downtown Terre Haute will not be more than a little shopping area for the region and for the University. The impetus that the amount of money that /has/ gone into the whole south end now is just too competitive. No one's going to pull out of there for 20 years.

JH: Of course, we also have in Honey Creek Square area this complex, disastrous traffic situation because of bad planning or lack of planning, I guess . . .

MILLER: Lack of planning, it really is.

JH: . . . just lack of planning.

MILLER: Yes, it is, just really lack of planning. Well, it's . . . of course, that will be helped a little bit by cars getting smaller. . . that they'll be more maneuverable. And, too, I suppose people /will/ recognize that that is now the center of the city as