

1. Modern Talk: NW Mid-century Architects Oral History Project
2. Interview with Ralph Anderson
3. March 19, 2008
4. Interviewer: Erich Volkstorf

5. TRACK 1

6. **Erich:** So, your name?
7. **Ralph:** Ralph Anderson.
8. **Erich:** And, where, what year were you born?
9. **Ralph:** 1924.
10. **Erich:** And in, where did you grow up?
11. **Ralph:** Well basically, in the Magnolia area. Then I did go on to Queen Anne High School.
12. **Erich:** And, your parents? What did they do?
13. **Ralph:** My father was a, city fireman. And my mother was a housewife.
14. **Erich:** And did you have siblings?
15. **Ralph:** Two brothers.
16. **Erich:** And, what did they do?
17. **Ralph:** Well, my oldest brother had died and he was in heavy construction machinery. And my younger brother is a, sculptor who lives in, New Jersey but shows in New York at the Stone Gallery and is just having a show opening up now. And he, had a, there's a big ad in, what's it, the big art magazine *Art, Architectures Today* or whatever. I'm not sure what they, it's a full-page ad. The Stone Gallery in that, there's no review yet that would be after the show closes probably.
18. **Erich:** Well what influenced you to study architecture, Ralph?
19. **Ralph:** Well, first of all, I was wanting to think about being a painter. But I, I need more; that's too open-ended. I need more restrictions. And so I can focus a little more. And painting was too expansive I couldn't –couldn't handle that. So I did, settle in with architecture because it is much more disciplined and much more structured. Which I seem to have needed.
20. **Erich:** And your brother you mentioned that your younger brother is a sculptor, were, the two of you – were there other, other influences, in your family that were, interested in the arts?
21. **Ralph:** Not that I'm aware of. And, my brother didn't seem to get involved in high school but I think he went on to the Los Angeles School of Art or Design and

then he went on to the Pratt in New York and Rhode Island's School of Design for his training.

22. **Erich:** You'd mentioned that, one of your earliest influences or recognition of architecture was a house that Pietro Belluschi was building?
23. **Ralph:** Over on Magnolia. I think it's the only house that I know he did in Seattle but he may have done some others also.
24. **Erich:** What, what, why did you find that house so compelling?
25. **Ralph:** Well it was, I felt it was a perfect design. And one of the few houses in Seattle that I really liked. I didn't, well I, I lived over in Magnolia but not, not too close to the house but, I did, notice it and I was by there the other day and I still admire the house. Very well proportioned. Very well detailed house. There was something there and you could feel it when you saw the house.
26. **Erich:** And how old were you when you, noticed this? When this was going on?
27. **Ralph:** Well, I think it was built in 1939. And I may have, maybe in 1941 or so I became aware of the house.
28. **Erich:** So you were still a teenager at that point.
29. **Ralph:** Yeah.
30. **Erich:** And did your parents encourage you to study architecture?
31. **Ralph:** My parents felt we should do anything we wanted to do professionally and so they made no attempt to influence us one way or the other. It's what we chose. That's what we did.
32. **Erich:** And, tell me about the war years. You went into the army.
33. **Ralph:** Yeah, I went into the Air Force and I managed; I wasn't doing too well with the discipline of the, of the Army [laughs]. I, at that time I was not a very disciplined person. And, so, what happened to me I, and this was maybe subconscious but I kind of, was kind of carrying on a lot. Staying late at night in St. Louis and kind of raising a little hell and so I sort of broke down my physical system and I got strep throat and in turn I got rheumatic fever and, so that changed my course in the Air Force. I was put on, they didn't want to let you out so they, they put you on limited service and so I was sent down in Florida on limited service and, sort of a long vacation for me. And, so I guess I did get better. I didn't seem to have any of the effects of rheumatic fever. Although now I have a, I did have a slight murmur and I guess I still have that. But I've survived all these years so I guess it's okay.

34. TRACK 2

35. **Ralph:** And the unlimited service I had of a fairly, not much to do, and so I used to go up to the library and look up architecture which I got acquainted with; all the architectural magazines and began to become more and more interested in architecture. And, spend a lot of time at the library looking up, various architecture. When I got out of, the army, or the army, I used to say the "Army Air Force," it's now the Air Force. But, then I decided I would go to school. And the university had a fairly well known architecture school so I enrolled in the university school of architecture. And at that time there was a big surge of veterans you know going to the university and a fair amount of them are taking architecture. But I seemed to have had an advantage over some of these other students because I, a lot of them I don't think were ever exposed to, architecture or were not exposed to magazines and things so when I got in school I was some ways a little ahead of these other veterans because as I say I had been involved and I was aware of all the publications and things. So it gave me a little head start but it didn't take long for the other students to catch up or even get ahead of me so, so that gave me kind of a running start.

And another thing that happened when going to school towards our junior, towards my junior and senior year, two fellow students, Anker Molver and Bob Marquette and I decided we'd build houses during the vacation. And, I had seen a housing development--very simplistic houses that were selling for eight and nine thousand dollars. And I think that got us kicked up that we, we could do these things and, and we did. I think we did everything, we did some of the plumbing and some of the electrical but I think we had help with electricians and plumbers to complete it off. But it gave us a very good basic understanding of construction. And so we started at the bottom [laughs]. And I think this was a very good, one of the best parts of my education was learning the, the building from the down, from down up. And as I said we got involved in all the activities there including I was good at digging septic tanks. And my, some of my partners were maybe in some ways more experienced in building than I was but I learned I think fast enough. So we did complete one house and, proceeded to sell it for I think nine hundred and fifty dollars. Houses were very, very reasonable [laughs] in those days. Building under ten thousand dollars. And we did manage to sell that. And, so, Bob Marquette and I decided we'd, I think Anker got a little tired of it so, or tired maybe of us.

So, we decided to build another house. And, a very, again we'd keep them very simplistic, straightforward. This was a post and beam that were in fashion at that time with architects and with the university also. So we built the second house and we were able to sell it fairly shortly. So this in turn got, at least got me some other jobs and that, so I started out almost immediately when I graduated I think I only part-time worked for Paul Kirk for a brief period of time and then I was able to kind of start off my own with referrals and, we also got involved with a little community out in, you know it's now Innis Arden. It was the old Boeing

estate. They had managed to chop most of the trees down unfortunately. But, I and some friends decided, I decided I would build my own house out there. And, Anker and Bob Marquette were going to build their houses out. It was on a little lake called Hidden Lake. And then some of our friends decided they would build there. So a whole community developed almost kind of automatically around this little lake and, that in turn got me more jobs so I gradually eased in to architecture with only working for one architect briefly--Paul Kirk. I did respect very much. And, so that's how I started.

36. **Erich:** And the, so you had built

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38. **Erich:** The two houses before you actually graduated from...

39. **Ralph:** Yes.

40. **Erich:** College,

41. **Ralph:** Yes, yeah.

42. **Erich:** From the university. What was it, like, when you were at the University of Washington? You were, there were a lot of influential architects at that time, Wendell Lovett, Spike Pries. What was it like, when you were there?

43. **Ralph:** Well I, at the time Spike was a little getting old. And, and he was getting a little cranky I guess. I think he got one episode to which I wasn't exposed to where the students were playing a radio, probably some contemporary and he got very angry and just threw it out the window. And I guess that upset him but he was, they, there was some article that said he was fired because of his homosexual attitude. But that's not true at all. No, no one paid, everyone knew he was a homosexual. No one paid any attention to it. It didn't have any impact on his, on his, teaching. He, did his own house which we, in Laurelhurst which we all admired. He did some other houses. He did one over on Hood Canal which was quite, it's an okay house. And he did a couple of more. Or he did more that I probably was not aware of. But, he built the big house in Laurelhurst that I wasn't very fond of. So he was kind of a little uneven about what his architecture. But he did, have some moments of brilliance in his work. So, which was very inter- and when I was going to school Wendell Lovett was teaching and I thought he was the best teacher that I had. Although he went off on a very independent style of architecture which was kind of his own thing and I always had kind of respected that. And he did have an influence in me. Although both of our works went [laughs] opposite directions. I still respected his work. I don't know what he thought about mine. I have no idea.

44. **Erich:** And how, how did, Pries's work or Wendell's work how did that influence, your, your work, your style of architecture? Did they have much influence?

45. **Ralph** Well it was, I thought Wendell was doing good architecture. So of course I think it had some, although he, he went totally on a different vein than I did.
46. **Erich:** In what way?
47. **Ralph:** Well, his were very individualistic. There was only one Wendell Lovett doing that type of architecture. And he was noted for it, respected for it and, had built up a very good reputation. And I had got off when I first graduated I was into the simple glass house type of thing that was real hot when I was going to school. So I got out of school; I started building a house in this group that we developed out on, Hidden Lake. And, so my jobs, I was able to get jobs from the work that I had or the work that we had when we built the houses. So it was a good, I got a good start and as I say I did work for Paul Kirk. And, that was an influence on me.
48. **Erich:** How did Paul's, I know he, followed, Japanese modular architecture, how did he influence you?
49. **Ralph:** Well, his discipline was, somewhat similar to mine. And, [laughs] when I was working for him I was trying to pull a little tucker house went out [inaudible, laughing] and he said, "No, no, we're not going that way." So I straightened up and, and did some post and beam houses for him. Which was, he had been doing a lot of that work and that was more compatible with his work than my approach. And so, of course he continued on. His vocabulary that he had established and established a very good reputation and was very well known. And I kind of, moved in a, a little different direction. And went on in that aspect.
50. **Erich:** When you graduated from the University of Washington it was a pretty exciting time for architecture with people like Richard Neutra, Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, did they influence you at all?
51. **Ralph:** Yeah I think, Breuer and Gropius I think at the time I was going to school I think I was influenced and then I, when the minute I got out of school I built a, my little studio house out on the lake and it was mostly all glass and post and beam. And, after living in that I kept wanting to warm it up and crawl into corners with all this glass. And I decided that wasn't really quite me. So then I moved into, in the more comfortable cozy New York, post and beam style that my first house was at. And several other houses that I had done were in that vocabulary also. But as I said I wasn't comfortable in this all glass house. So I, tried to warm it up a bit but that wasn't really too successful. So then I, our family, started growing and that little studio house was too small. 'Cause that's where my office was as well as, it was only nine hundred square feet and two small children didn't seem work too well. So I, had been, I was familiar with this big house out on Arroyo Beach southwest Seattle because I had, done a house out there. And, I proceeded, anyway I got very, the house wasn't, the studio

wasn't big enough and kids were not, not a good idea to have the kids in your office [laughs]. So I'm, there had, as I said I did a, house out in, Arroyo Beach southwest Seattle and, there was a big old, mansion for sale on the water. And it had been run down. The people that owned had gone broke. So the house kept going down, down, down. And so I said, "Well this would be a good challenge. I could go and do some work on it." So I was able to buy it at a much lower house, a lower, lower price than it had initially been priced at. And, so I sold the other house immediately. In fact, I had two people kind of fighting over it so I was able to get rid of that at a good price. So it enabled me to buy this, this old, run down Spanish villa and so I started, I think it was you know painted canary yellow inside and, peach, those sorts of colors are fairly strong in those days. And it was heavily draped. So I went in and started cleaning it up and, had a lovely circular stairway and, it was sort of a cord baluster that I didn't like so I took that out and it had this hexagon entrance hall, very tall with this winding stairway, so it had some good architectural features to it. So anyway, I started, cleaning it up, painting the walls white, meaning I had, was doing most of the work [laughs]. And, cleaning it up quite a lot. And, but it was, not a very livable house. With two little kids and about almost four thousand square feet and, anyway I cleaned it up and painted all the interior off-white and, there was kind of an exciting hexagon ceiling in the entranceway. And there was some design up there. And I simplified it and, it looked much better. And, we were trying to live in that big house and, it had a big boiler heating system [laughs] which was fairly expensive. But anyway, I cleaned it up and, then, and I was storing a lot of paintings for architect, I mean a painter friend of mine. And, along came Richard White who had seen the ad before that I had bought it. And I think I paid forty four thousand for this house with a hundred and twenty feet of waterfront. And, he wanted to know if the house was still for sale. I told him no, that I had just bought it. But I might consider [laughs] something. And, so he wanted to do something there that, to do a kind of a garden and he bought the hundred and twenty feet and another hundred and twenty feet of waterfront and doing kind of a Butchart Garden. But the road was just a two-lane road but it was dead end, dead-ended there. And the local people were not interested in having a commercial thing down there. So he was not able to get a permit but he did buy the house and I moved next door to a little house that was quite run down. And I moved there with the idea that I would build a new house. And that was over in the Arroyos, Arroyo Beach which was just a little south. And I, bought a lot, a very steep two lots and very steep and I decided I would design my family home there. And so I proceeded to buy the property and the hundred and twenty-two lots, a hundred and twenty feet and on a very steep lot and build my house. And then I had this other little house next door that I had really, was really kind of a mess and I had kind of cleaned it up and put new windows across the view side, put a deck on, added a carport, all for the tune of around six thousand dollars in those days. And the house became quite livable. But, then I was proceeded to start building my house. But –and I, we just about finished the remodeling and I

put up the house for sale. And at that time the market was really down. They kept waiting and waiting trying to sell it so I could finish my house. Well anyway I did get the house finished. And finally I was able to sell the, this little remodeled house for six thousand more than I paid for it. That's exactly how much I put in the remodeling and I did a lot of work myself. But anyway I did sell the house. The market I say was way down and I was able to finish the old, the old house.

52. **Erich:** And what year would this have been?
53. **Ralph:** This would have been in the '60s. Early, maybe 1960 or '61 right in that area.
54. [Conversation about taking a break, they decide to break for a moment.]

55. TRACK 4

56. **Erich:** Okay.
57. **Ralph:** Go again?
58. **Erich:** Yep. So at this time how was your work evolving? You've gone from the post and beam lots of glass to,
59. **Ralph:** To more of what we call the Northwest with the pitched roofs and big overhangs, lots of windows on the view sides and most of our houses, our custom houses were on view lots. It's people that had looked around and they, a lot of them, people were from out of town and maybe a lot of them were World War II veterans but, and a lot of them came from the Midwest and East and they were looking for something different than the little salt boxes they had in the Northeast and North, and mountain states. So, they wanted something different. They were, basically a fairly educated group and as I say a lot of them settled in the Northwest and they want to be kind of part of the Northwest. So they became one of my major clientele. From, they were some of them doctors, lawyers, other merchants, other professions. Mostly highly educated people. So I, again moved into the, most of the houses were pitched roof, shingle roofs, large overhangs and, lots of windows facing views but not glass houses. And, they became very popular. Especially with the people moving in from the West, I mean from the East. And so my clientele built up very fast. I have probably done more custom homes than any other architect in the area other than some mass programs that I wasn't involved in them. So I, lots of houses were built on this sheltering Northwest Style and they became very popular. And they were kind of, as I say people were waiting for this Northwest Style and not too many people were involved in it. Belluschi was the first. Paul Kirk got involved. Paul Thiry, a little each one of them.
60. **Erich:** And did they have an influence on, on your style? Were there other architects at that time that were influencing your style?

61. **Ralph:** Well, I would say that Paul and Paul Thiry both had an influence. They kind of moved into a more Northwest Style of architecture, well, Paul at one time was doing post and beam like that remodeled house you mentioned. And, so I was influenced by them and of course influenced by Belluschi who I consider the master. He could bring something into a house, you know, some spirit and Kirk could do that as well as Thiry. And that was what I was kind of interested in doing. Sort of a vocabulary. And, that was, fed into our environment, our, top, setting and our vegetation and opened up to our views. And this seemed to be a style that became very popular with the, upper middle class who I seemed to be serving most.

62. **Erich:** And, and these, tell me a little bit about your relationships with these clients. Did they come wanting a, Ralph Anderson house? Did they come to you?

63. TRACK 5

64. **Erich:** Wanting specifically a Ralph Anderson house?

65. **Ralph:** Yeah, most of them did come with that in mind. First I did a couple of post and beam houses but then after that I moved into the sloping roof type of house that seemed to belong, fits in the environment, fits in with the vegetation, with the contours and, becomes part of the total environment. And as I say the people, especially people that came out here wanted that feeling and so design-wise took off very rapidly. I did an awful lot of houses in that vocabulary.

66. **Erich:** And I know that at, Hidden Lake, for instance the Jans house there has, seems to have some Japanese influence on it. Did you go to Japan and study some of the Japanese architecture?

67. **Ralph:** Well I've been...

68. TRACK 6

69. **Ralph:** To Japan two times but, just on trips. And of course, and then I considered the Belluschi house, which was very, kind of, very Japanese influence also but very simple and straightforward. I consider that, that's by far the best house in Seattle. I'll still place it there. And, so that had an influence. In fact it was for sale for once and I was, after we had bought that big Spanish house which I didn't keep long. I sold, and started, and we were living in that little remodeled house next door. Then I, had, started my, the big house, and that in turn got me some, quite a few jobs and then the houses after that just kept getting me jobs and jobs so the, it kind of grew and grew with hard, well as I say I was just working for Paul Kirk a short period of time. Which again I was influenced by him.

70. **Erich:** And how did you, when you work with clients, how do you work with clients? What's your style?
71. **Ralph:** Well I try to find out what they want in a house. Is it a, most of them were, had young families and, most of them seemed to want to fit it in with our environment and so we, or else I was hired because of my sort of, of wooden houses and they felt they fit in. And I also said a lot of out of town professional people seemed to like that idea.
72. **Erich:** And were these people that were fairly educated architecturally or did they...
73. **Ralph:** Well, some of them were. And some of them just liked what they saw. And but they seemed to move towards that environmental impact that I was very much interested in. So we all kind of got to, got along quite well.
74. **Erich:** And how much, I guess influence would you have for instance if somebody was, making a choice or wanted something that you disagreed with from a practical standpoint would you, how would you deal with situations like that?
75. **Ralph:** Well, if I needed work real badly [laughs] I would try to reach some, you know, compromise you know something that I, they would be happy with and I would be proud of. But sometimes it didn't work out too well. [Laughs]
76. **Erich:** Excellent. And how are you doing? You want some more water or?
77. **Ralph:** [Drinks]
78. **Erich:** How are we doing on time? Where are we?
79. **Voice:** [In booth] we're good. We've been at it for about forty minutes or so.
80. **Erich:** Okay.
81. **Ralph:** How are we dealing on time?
82. **Erich:** Good. Good, we've been at it for about forty, forty minutes.
83. **Ralph:** I see.
84. **Erich:** So, you want to take a break? Maybe a ten-minute break? Walk around stretch your legs?
85. **Ralph:** No, I can go on. Take another drink of water.

86. TRACK 7

87. **Erich:** So one of the things, in your career we've talked about the Northwest Style, the honest and honorable structures with natural materials. Those buildings that are part of the environment, that's kind of given away to a lot of,

glitz, in residential architecture today. What's your feeling on architecture that you see today?

88. **Ralph:** Well, of course it's, I think it's blown up too much. Too big, big, big. And, people seem to love that now. Even if they [laughs], so anyway, I thought that was, and then, they're moving towards that bungalow style that actually the house I was, was born in over in Magnolia was a typical bungalow style house. They've since, with the big [noise], overhangs and that's nonsense. And, it was a nice looking house. One of the oldest houses on Magnolia but of course it was remodeled to look like a '50s house and then later on it was torn down so they could build a big mega-house there. Following the sort of path that was going on in those days. But I'm not too happy with the pseudo-bungalow styles now that they're, and of course most of them are built not in view lots. They're just built row after row with all the activities on the front, front porch. And we were always trying to locate the view and center the house on the view. And most of the time that was on the back of the house. So, I'm not sure that's a good influence at all. Although I don't know if architects are designing all these houses or maybe builders are. I don't know.

89. **Erich:** Well I, I think Paul Kirk had mentioned in an article that I read that he deplored how the living rooms and living spaces actually looked out onto the street.

90. **Ralph:** Yeah, porches. And I guess maybe our, all our custom houses were usually done on view lots so we always you know had to orient towards the view. And quite often it was in the back, in the back of the house. For privacy we didn't go into this front porch living type of thing. Which is very predominant now.

91. **Voice:** [In booth] Hey Erich,

92. **Ralph:** But then again,

93. TRACK 8

94. **Ralph:** but I don't know, I don't know if a lot of those houses are designed by architects or not. Have you talked to any architects that are into that sort of,

95. **Erich:** Well, I know there's, somebody named Lane Williams who does a design build, there's a lot of this design build, stuff that's,

96. TRACK 9

97. **Erich:** ...too complex.

98. **Ralph:** Yeah.

99. **Erich:** So how did your work evolve over the course of your career? Did you find that your houses you mentioned that you went from, the glass box, the kind of Miesian architecture to more of a Pietro Belluschi influenced, Northwest Style. Did it continue from there and
100. **Ralph:** Yeah and then I got involved in an awful of town houses. Particularly on Queen Anne. And because of the height restrictions we got into flat roofs because we had to utilize all the vertical space we could because the lots were quite usually small. And so we got into a lot of flat roofs because of that which are most, mostly seem to be on Queen Anne hill. But flat roofs were kind of forced on us.
101. **Erich:** So, as far as, materials did you find that your materials changed, did you prefer different types of siding or, less glass, more glass as your designs evolved?
102. **Ralph:** Well, of course if we had the outlook and view we would frame it in glass. And that, and we, so some of our homes had a fair amount of glass but they weren't glass houses. Because in the other, my glass house there was glass on the view side, glass on the street side you know. There was, but I did plant enough trees on the street side [laughs] so you're only looking on, you're looking on glass covered by trees.
103. **Erich:** Well, I know the Jans house there at Hidden Lake looks out to the, to the lake but there's very little glass. I think some clerestories on the street side on that house.
104. **Ralph:** Yeah, there's very, yeah it's all on the glass, actually there was a little glass, glass pavilions. A glass living room, a glass dining room and the rest go back into conventional windows.
105. **Erich:** And, that of course has a flat roof as well. The Jans house.
106. **Ralph:** Yeah.
107. **Erich:** So then from there you evolved to, to more of the peaked roofs like, the one that's next to the Miller Pollard, the Jack Miller house. I can't remember the name of the original owner, there on Hidden Lake.
108. **Ralph:** Aah. Well, I designed the Jack Miller house.
109. **Erich:** Uh-huh.
110. **Ralph:** Aah. It's one of my first houses. Still a little in, [laughs] beams and flat, flat roofs at that time but that was very early.
111. **Erich:** So as far as architecture as it's being taught today...

112. TRACK 10

113. **Erich:** Do you think it's as effective and exciting as it was when you were in school? It seems like when you were in, in studying architecture that, there was a lot of, new sort of radical ideas,

114. **Ralph:** There was. I took the magazine, *Architectural Digest*, no not *Digest*. *California Magazine. Architecture*,

115. **Erich:** *Arts and Architecture?*

116. **Ralph:** Yeah *Arts and Architecture*. That had, and they were doing the Case Study houses. At school I had a, I had, I was one of the few students that did take the magazine. And that was influencing me also. The Case Study houses. Which I guess are now being rediscovered and restored and, and considered quite precious in California now. And people are totally restoring them and treating them as a work of art which I think is very good.

117. **Erich:** And, as far as architecture as it's being taught today, some of the young architects that are out there designing what do you think of the work that you see?

118. **Ralph:** Well, I think, for example I think Gehry is a genius and a sculpture and his art, his architecture is sculpture. And it's, he does a very good job of it but a lot of people are trying to copy him don't do that good a job and so sometimes they end up kind of messy. But with a, you're dealing with a genius. He can get away with that.

119. **Erich:** And, what examples of your work are you most proud of?

120. TRACK 11

121. **Ralph:** Well I, I built myself a house in Kauai, Hawaii. And I consider that one of my best houses. And on, on a magnificent piece of property. I just, it's on a peninsula that juts into the Pacific with a stream going down the valley forming a waterfall and marine caves and it couldn't have been, it should have, it's almost like it was a national park or something. And I was able to, it was fairly restrictive because they put a lot of the, I think it had, well it was, it would, almost fifteen acres and a lot of that was in conservation. All the one that was bordering the water so you couldn't build right near the water. So I built up, I'll show you a picture of it, up high above. And, that, I think was my best house. [Laughs] And I had, no one could tell me what to do [laughs], I just did what I wanted to do with it. And, it turned out to be very successful and I, it was getting too much to, I wanted to, beautiful property. I wanted to landscape it. I just couldn't [laughs] do it. I didn't have enough money to bring in professionals. So, I was getting, my back was beginning to give out so I couldn't run up and down those hills again. So, I finally sold it and, it's now owned by Ben Stiller, the movie star who of course wants to make it bigger. It was about four thousand square feet. But big,

big, big, especially Hollywood stars. And so my son now is working on it to make it bigger, bigger and respecting the vocabulary that it had. So, I guess Ben likes it I hope. He paid enough for the house for it. He paid eight million dollars for the house. And it was for the setting it was worth it. And of course we sold for much less than that but he wanted the house so he paid the price to another owner and, I don't know if you, I should show you this now or later.

122. **Erich:** Oh, we can look at it later.
123. **Ralph:** What?
124. **Erich:** We, we can look at it in a minute.
125. **Ralph:** Yeah anyway. And then that, in turn I built two houses in Hawaii and that in turn got me quite a few jobs in Hawaii and, I did, well I did one teak house all teak imported from Burma. And I did, a couple of other houses which in turn got me other jobs in Kauai and, I, did, two or three more houses and then in turn that got me jobs in Kauai but when I left there and sold everything; I turned over that practice to my son. And now he's putting additions onto our old house for Ben Stiller which of course was not large enough for him. And,
126. **Erich:** What year was that house built?
127. **Ralph:** 1960, maybe '61 or 2.
128. **Erich:** Mm hmm.
129. **Ralph:** I lost a little track of time. But, that in turn I said got me more jobs over in Hawaii. It had been featured in some of the Hawaiian magazines. So in turn it did get me more jobs and, which I, once I left I turned the jobs over to my son and now he's got a very good practice [laughs] going in Hawaii. He does do work, houses here too but he's kept pretty busy over there. The last house was a ten million dollar house, not including property. So, we got into that, syndrome. And, kept getting more jobs which I turned over to my son. Now he's got a very healthy practice in Hawaii.
130. **Erich:** Wonderful.
131. **Ralph:** Which is good.
132. **Erich:** Well very good. Let's take a break and just want to see if there's, you can get up and walk around for a minute we're, I just want to see if there's anything else that,
133. **Ralph:** I'll show you these

134. TRACK 12

[Transcriber's note: Beginning in this track, a female voice can be heard participating in a part of the interview, designated as "Voice."]

135. **Erich:** Very Asian.

136. **Ralph:** And this was done with a different color of light so it's not really that color. The owner, we built it for speculation

137. **Erich:** hmmm

138. **Ralph:** And the owner, drove us crazy [laughs].

139. **Erich:** Nice tree.

140. **Ralph:** Yeah we moved that from a, from a property at another location.

141. **Voice:** Oh.

142. **Erich:** Ah. Yeah, I'm actually, I've got a, Japanese Black Pine on order because the house I grew up in, had a, Japanese garden designed by Fujitaro Kubota.

143. **Voice:** Wow.

144. **Erich:** And so I remember growing up with Black Pines so for our house I was, I've been looking for a Black Pine and they're hard to come by.

145. **Voice:** Where did you get it?

146. **Ralph:** Well this is a,

147. **Erich:** There's a place, out in, now what's his name? He's a landscape architect, he's Japanese name, and he,

148. **Ralph:** Kamor.

149. **Erich:** They have a place out in-

150. **Ralph:** Kubota? Or what is it?

151. **Erich:** No, Kubota's, they're, they're gone. Long gone. This is out, he's out in, Fall City is where his nursery is but he's located in Bellevue.

152. **Ralph:** Okay. Well, that tree that you saw was actually a juniper.

153. **Erich:** Yeah, it looks like. Yeah.

154. **Ralph:** And it had been on the property and we, root pruned it,

155. **Erich:** Uh-huh.

156. **Ralph:** And transferred to another location and then did a little trimming on it and we were able to move it back in and it lived, so.

157. **Erich:** It's a beautiful tree.

158. **Ralph:** Very happy about that.

159. **Erich:** And this is in Magnolia?

160. **Ralph:** Yeah.

161. **Voice:** Oh. Wow.

162. **Erich:** That's been published.

163. **Ralph:** A lot.

164. **Erich:** A lot.

165. **Ralph:** Yeah. And this,

166. **Erich:** And what year is this? This would have been?

167. **Voice:**

168. **Erich:** '60s sometime? Late '60s early '70s?

169. **Ralph:** Yeah, probably. This is the house, my house at Hawaii. Beautiful location.

170. **Voice:** Oh wow.

171. **Ralph:** Unbelievable.

172. **Erich:** Wow. Wonderful. And he wants to make it bigger and it's already four thousand square feet? [They laugh]

173. **Ralph:** Yes.

174. **Erich:** But he's a single guy. Or no he's married I guess.

175. **Ralph:** No, he's married and got two kids.

176. **Erich:** But still that's,

177. **Voice:** A family of four.

178. **Erich:** Well that's, that's a thousand square feet for any, for each one so they don't need any more.

179. **Ralph:** I don't think so but he does. [Laughs]

180. **Voice:** So, this was great, so

181. **Ralph:** There's the back you can see some,

182. **Voice:** For our, for the next phase of this project, in terms of having John photograph some of Ralph's buildings

183. **Erich:** Mm hmm.

184. **Voice:** In the area, in the region

185. **Erich:** mm hmm

186. **Voice:** If we could maybe,

187. **Erich:** Talk about some of them,
188. **Voice:** Yeah
189. **Erich:** Yeah, that's what I was thinking.
190. **Ralph:** But anyway, this house has been published all over the place.
191. **Voice:** [Inaudible conversation underneath Ralph's speech]
192. **Erich:** Right. Well, we can talk about this one.
193. **Ralph:** And you can't really do much about this one.
194. **Erich:** No, but, we could probably do this one.
195. **Ralph:** Do that one, yeah.
196. **Voice:** [Inaudible conversation continues in the background]
197. **Ralph:** And, this is in Magnolia but I don't know the,
198. **Erich:** We can, we can find it. It's actually in Modernism Rediscovered, I think, which is the book that Pierluigi Serraino and Julius Shulman did a couple of years ago because I've seen it from,
199. **Ralph:** I'm not awa-it's been on an ad for Cabot, Cabot Stains but although it wasn't Cabot Stains but,
200. **Erich:** So. Let's wait 'til we have,
201. **Ralph:** Yeah we can do this, this one it's over on Lake Washington Boulevard.
202. **Erich:** Uh-huh.
203. **Ralph:** It's about a block and a half north of the floating bridge.
204. **Erich:** A block and a half, which, which, floating, oh, the Mercer Island?
205. **Ralph:** Mercer Island. About a block and a half north on the water.
206. **Erich:** Okay. Do we have?
207. **Ralph:** But the damn owner didn't.

208. TRACK 13

209. **Ralph:** Like the color. He said it looked too, Santa Fe so [laughs].
210. **Erich:** This color?
211. **Ralph:** Well some, somewhere between these two.
212. **Erich:** This is, we painted the lower floor of our house which is the, Sinclair House on 10th, in Hidden Lake. I wanted kind of a Japanese color so we came up, like a putty color. And so we painted the lower floor which is stucco that color so it blends more in the environment.

213. **Ralph:** Yeah, well,

214. **Erich:** Because it was, it was actually kind of a gray before.

215. **Ralph:** We had, this was fairly a warm color. Somewhere in between these two and he wanted it gray. So he painted it damn house gray. And he painted out some of the woodwork which I thought, anyway he drove us crazy.

216. **Erich:** So tell me a little bit about this house.

217. **Ralph:** Now we built that. Ross and I built that for speculation.

218. **Erich:** And that was fairly recently that you built that?

219. **Ralph:** That was about, three years ago. My last house. But I think it turned out pretty good.

220. **Erich:** And how many square feet is that?

221. **Ralph:** It's about close to four maybe a little over.

222. **Erich:** And it's, Japanese influence, have you done other houses that were, very Asian in appearance?

223. **Ralph:** Well, I probably have but, well the Tucker house was a kind of Asian. And but this is probably the most Japanese I've done.

224. **Erich:** And why did you make that choice from just something different or,

225. **Ralph:** I just felt I wanted to do it. [Laughs], we have a copper roof here and a part, partially copper roof and of course copper gutters and downspouts and people won't pay for copper anymore. It's too expensive. It's gone up.

226. **Erich:** It lasts forever, though.

227. **Ralph:** Yeah. We had a hard time selling this house. I don't know why. Every, all of our friends loved it.

228. **Erich:** And tell me about this house.

229. **Ralph:** This is the Runyon House done probably in the late '50s or early '50s.

230. **Erich:** Or, late, would it have been 19, late 1960s?

231. **Ralph:** No it would be early 1960. As I say this was the most published house.

232. **Erich:** And tell me about it. Who were the Runyons?

233. **Ralph:** The Runyons were the first owners. It's gone through two or three other ownerships.

234. **Erich:** And that's in Magnolia.

235. **Ralph:** Yeah. Just off of Magnolia Boulevard on a little dead end street.

236. **Erich:** And, why are you proud of this one?

237. **Ralph:** Well, it, it, it presents a fairly strong statement it seems to have some direction to it.
238. **Erich:** Nice horizontal lines.
239. **Ralph:** Yeah.
240. **Erich:** And very honest.
241. **Ralph:** Straightforward. It's a little more elaborate here.
242. **Erich:** And, what are some of the other houses that you can think of in the, in the area that you would be most proud of?
243. **Ralph:** Let's see.
244. **Erich:** The Tucker House perhaps?
245. **Ralph:** I haven't seen the Tucker House in years. Did you go by it? Or,
246. **Erich:** No. And it's in Broadmoor?
247. **Ralph:** Yeah. I don't even know who lives in it now.

248. TRACK 14

249. **Ralph:** I don't know who lives in this house. I don't know the owner that bought this house. I don't even want to know them. [Laughs] I haven't been by there since they changed the color. Some people say it's not all that bad. But I was so happy with this warm and wonderful color. It was somewhere between these. It was a very warm color.
250. **Erich:** Yeah, similar to, our house was actually, more of a putty color. Not quite as yellow as this but, warmer than this. .
251. **Ralph:** Well, this was not, it was, and it was not this warm. Different, I don't, I haven't painted it, seen it since it's been painted. I've been purposely avoiding it.
252. **Erich:** And, for the most part you, I know you'd worked in residential structures, didn't you do some commercial, fisheries, the, wasn't there a fisheries?
253. **Ralph:** Well, I did the work up at, Friday Harbor on both the, the old lab which was done years ago and then all, a new series of, of housing for bungalows for, scholars to use. . Sponsored by, what the hell's his name? I know, it'll come to me. Or it'll go away and never come back. [They laugh]
254. **Erich:** But that was, those were primarily, that,
255. **Ralph:** This was, that was the, well the main house was done for the University of Washington. It wasn't a house it was a, it was a, center for the fisheries. Establish, establishment and, I did some housing for them and some

labs and then we did the final little. We just finished some, some, cottages. I don't think you're willing to go up to Friday Harbor to get,

256. **Erich:** Oh, we might be able to. But those were primarily the only commercial structures you did, is that correct or did you do other commercial,

257. **Ralph:** No, I've done, I've done some apartment buildings. Done Bay Shore on Lake Washington. It's one of the times they let us jut out into the Lake. They won't let us do that anymore. I don't know how we got away with that. But we did.

258. **Erich:** So are there other buildings that you ,other houses that , you're-

259. **Ralph:** I did a resort in Turkey.

260. **Erich:** Mm hmm.

261. **Ralph:** That's about a hundred and sixty units built of native stone and stucco with the tiles roofs. And so it kind of looks like it might have been there for centuries.

262. **Erich:** So I, I sense too that that would be fitting in the environment the same way your structures up here would,

263. **Ralph:** Yeah, we, we used the, they had, they had, they had lovely stone around there. And I said, "Why can't we use this?" "Oh, we never use that." "Well, you're gonna use it now." [Laughs] And so we did all these, we had all these arch fronts. We did about, how many arches did we have? Probably maybe-maybe over two hundred arches we threw which was kind of a lot of fun.

264. **Erich** And when did you build that?

265. **Ralph:** Whew. Probably towards the beginning of the '80s I think that was built. I don't have any pictures of it but I, that won't do you any good.

266. **Erich:** Well, that's all right. And, over the years did you have partners that you worked with?

267. **Ralph** Yeah, I went through,

268. TRACK 15

269. **Ralph:** [Laughing] a lot of partners.

270. **Erich:** Who would they have been?

271. **Ralph:** There was, Jerry Stickney and then there was Bill Booth. There was, Bill Booth and Jerry Stickney and Bob Coke and Bill Booth.

272. **Erich:** And how did you work with them? Did they build, were they just in partnership with you or did they, did you collaborate on projects?

273. **Ralph:** Well I was basically the designer. And then Bob Coke would get them, get the drawings, working drawings done for them. And, and that's the way it kind of went. And the third partner that was brought in because of his supposedly marketing skills and because of his connections but, so he kind of handled marketing.
274. **Erich:** This was Bill, Bill Booth? Or, that did this?
275. **Ralph:** Or Smiths.
276. **Erich:** Smiths.
277. **Ralph:** Bill Booth did some marketing.
278. **Erich:** Well excellent.
279. **Ralph:** But I, basically I was designer. Period.
280. **Erich:** Well, very good. I think that's it.
281. **Voice:** [In booth] Great. Thanks.
282. **Ralph:** That's good.
283. **Erich:** That's good. That's wonderful.
284. **Ralph:** A lot of it you can block out and things.
285. **Erich:** I think it went very well.

End of Interview