An Oral History & Literary Review of Edward Blake Jr.:

Exploring the Evidence of a Principled Practice

By

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This thesis is a study of oral histories and literary records covering the professional development and works of Edward Blake Jr., ASLA, (1947-2010). The study considers Blake’s design principles via newly collected oral histories and a review of his literary record within the continuum of landscape architecture history from 1970 to 2010. Additionally, the study explores Blake’s position within the ecological design community to establish his status as a possible founding voice of ecologically focused landscape architecture practice in the Coastal Plains Region of the southeastern United States. The primary sources include a newly developed oral history collection with questionnaire-based interviews of Blake’s eight colleagues, professional mentors, and collaborators, along with various forms of project and process documentation generated by Edward Blake Jr. and his practice, known as The Landscape Studio. The study concludes with a distillation of Blake’s design principles, lexicon, and contribution to the field of landscape architecture.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work firstly to my wife Michele and daughter Petra, for their understanding and patience in allowing me to pursue my scholarly interests. Secondly, to my mother and father, Ursula and Hans Herrmann, for consistently encouraging me to know more about the world.

I offer a special thanks to my colleague and friend, Director of the School of Architecture at MSU, Professor Michael Berk, for his support and encouragement. Lastly, and critically, I thank Professor Robert F. Brzuszek of the Mississippi State University, Department of Landscape Architecture, for introducing and sharing with me the ever-expanding wonders of the Crosby Arboretum and the people who helped to see it realized.
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- Ted Flato, AIA, Principal, Lake | Flato Architects, for his interview and insights into the work Blake did at the River Camps on Crooked Creek project.
- Samuel Hogue, ASLA, former Mississippi State University Campus Landscape Architect, instructor in the MSU Dept. of Landscape Architecture, and long-time employee of The Landscape Studio, for his insight on Blake’s practice and unique way of seeing the world.
- Robert Ivy, FAIA, Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer of the American Institute of Architects. For his perspective on Blake’s work at the Crosby Arboretum and the productive relationship between Ed Blake and E. Fay Jones.

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CHAPTER I
RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

Research Introduction

Edward Blake Jr., ASLA, (1947-2010) was a leading practitioner of landscape architecture in the state of Mississippi, and the Coastal Plain of the Gulf of Mexico. His practice, known as The Landscape Studio, based in Hattiesburg, MS, received nine prestigious recognitions and/or awards during its rather short existence between 1999 and 2010. His works almost certainly provide an important contribution to the profession of landscape architecture in the state of Mississippi, however his insights, contributions, and accomplishments are largely under-recognized, as witnessed by the dearth of literary record and historical interpretation. While a literary record exists, it is confined to a relatively small sample of his work largely centered on the Eco-Revelatory Design idiom which may not be inclusive or accurately telling of Blake’s true professional intentions. His recent, and untimely, death in 2010 has left a gap in the chronicle of ecologically-focused landscape architecture (Artunç 2010). It is a goal of this inquiry to examine and, where necessary, provide a supplemental account of Blake’s works and personal theoretical directives. While this work cannot capture all perspectives of Blake’s contributions, the research attempts to chronicle those works which are believed to be most important to the state of landscape architecture production.
Methodology: Oral Histories

Through the guidance of Professor Robert Brzuszek, a noted authority on the Crosby Arboretum (widely regarded as Blake’s masterpiece) and former key employee of Blake, this research addresses five of The Landscape Studio projects. The projects scrutinized herein were noted by Brzuszek and professional peers as exemplars of Blake’s practice.

Following established research methods, this thesis using primary, secondary, and tertiary sources aims to catalog, document, and historically interpret Blake’s most recognized commissions. Oral History narratives provided by eight central collaborators and poignant figures, along with first-hand reflective writings by Blake, and the critique of work as provided by peers, form the source materials for this study.

Interviews to better establish Edward Blake Jr.’s place in the development of ecologically-informed landscape architecture of the Gulf Coastal Plains were conducted with eight key figures in Blake’s life, as suggested by his widow and business partner of 33 years, Marilyn Blake and Professor Robert Brzuszek, who was one of Blake’s professional collaborators on the Crosby Arboretum.

Professor, and author of The Crosby Arboretum: A Sustainable Regional Landscape, Robert F. Brzuszek, ASLA aided in the procurement of key personal reflections written by Blake. In addition, photography and project documentation completed by Edward Blake Jr. was sourced and made available through the combined efforts of Marilyn Blake and Robert Brzuszek. In some instances, site visits and first-hand accounts of project details were undertaken by the author.
Oral History research was undertaken to capture a series of perspectives on Blake’s works. While the literature review offers a particular set of lenses through which to comprehend Blake’s professional works, the use of Oral History research methods sheds additional, and in some instances new, light on Blake’s professional development, motives, and intentions. The Oral Histories collected, and listed below, are used in the biographical outline of Blake’s personal and professional life. Additionally, the Oral Histories are used to provide evidence of Blake’s design principles and process.

A list of ten critical figures was generated, with eight Oral History providers stepping forward to participate in the study. The interviews were conducted between 1st of June 2015 and 12th of December 2015 using the iPhone application, TapeACall™ which generates an MP3 digital recording file of the telephone conversation. This collection of Oral Histories, including typed transcripts, is available in the MSU Mitchell Memorial Library. A copy of all the interview transcriptions is also available in the appendix of this document.

The Oral Histories were collected using the standards set out by the MSU Mitchell Memorial Library and leading scholars in the field including: Paul Thompson, author of *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* and Donald A. Ritchie author of *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*. Every attempt was made to devise questions of a neutral tone and point of view to ensure little to no potential distortions in the responses offered. Due in part to the nature of Oral Histories collection methods, and the type of work being discussed, i.e. landscape architecture and design, the collected personal accounts range broadly. To assist in focusing the interviews the author devised a brief questionnaire (available in the appendix of this document) which focused on the projects
which the interviewees were involved or, in cases, where the interviewee was not a project collaborator, the questions were based-upon the interviewees critique of the project(s) in questions. As suggested by leading scholars, some questions were intentionally formulated as open-ended to allow the interviewee to speak candidly and freely to his or her more personal memories of Blake’s work. Where applicable a secondary questionnaire was used to focus on a specific projects’ design intentions, details, or conceptual framework. In all instances, the questionnaires were made available, via emailed copies, to the interviewees well in advance of the interview. Interviewees were encouraged to complete the questionnaire and return it however this request was optional and only one such set of written responses was received. This response set, provided by Robert Hogue, is available in the appendix of this document. Transcription of each interview was completed and may be referenced in the appendix of this document.

The Oral History Providers

Per the advice of the author’s thesis chair, Professor Robert L. Brzuszek and Edward Blake Jr.’s widow, Marilyn Blake, the following professional collaborators, mentors, and colleagues were interviewed. The following list is based upon the order in which the interviews were conducted. The list is non-hierarchical but simply a chronological outline of the collection sequence based upon the availability of the respondents.

1. Robert F. Poore, RLA, ASLA, is a multi-award-winning landscape designer and principal in the firm Native Habitats, Flora, MS. A graduate of Mississippi State University, Poore's most current work can also be seen at the newly opened Art
Garden at the Mississippi Museum of Art as well as the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science. Poore was a long-time collaborator working with Blake on many projects beginning with the Crosby Arboretum, and including the Vicksburg Children’s Art Park at Catfish Row and the Hattiesburg Lake Terrace Convention Center to name only a few (Poore, Robert Poore: landscape designer. 2014).

2. Marlon Blackwell, FAIA, is a practicing architect in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and serves as the E. Fay Jones Distinguished Professor at the Fay Jones School of Architecture + Design at the University of Arkansas. Blackwell collaborated with Blake on numerous projects the majority of which occurred between 2002-2010 including the Indianapolis Museum of Art Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park 100: Acres His design work has received recognition with numerous national and international design awards and significant publication in books, architectural journals and magazines (Blackwell, Profile_People n.d.).

3. Samuel Hogue, ASLA is a former Mississippi State University Campus Landscape Architect and MSU Department of Landscape Architecture instructor. Hogue was a close friend and eventual employee of Edward Blake Jr. and The Landscape Studio where he worked on design development, construction documentation and construction administration for many years.

4. Ted Flato, FAIA, Partner, and Founder of Lake|Flato with David Lake. With an international awarded portfolio and a strong reputation for his straight-forward regional designs Flato seeks to conserve energy and natural resources while creating healthy built environments. Ted Flato worked with Blake on numerous
land-development projects for the St. Joe Company in western Florida including the RiverCamps on Crooked Creek (L. J. Flato 2017).

5. Dr. Neil G. Odenwald is a former Mississippi State University professor who later served as the Director of the Louisiana State University, Robert Reich School of Landscape Architecture. Odenwald a celebrated author of numerous books he also coauthored, with James Turner, Identification, Selection & Use of Southern Plants, a staple in every gardener’s library. Dr. Odenwald knew Blake as a student and during the development of the Crosby Arboretum. The two remained close friends throughout Blake’s life (Louisiana State University 2014).

6. Maurice Jennings, AIA (Nov. 1947 – Oct. 2016) was a professional collaborator on the design and construction of Pinecote Pavilion at the Crosby Arboretum. Jennings worked with Fay Jones for 25 years becoming the first Associate in Fay Jones and Associates in 1976 (Jennings, MJWJ People n.d.).

7. Marilyn Blake, The Landscape Studio Office Manager and spouse of Edward Blake Jr. Marilyn also managed the employee’s and later served as a project manager after Blake’s passing in 2010, helping to complete various commissions begun by Blake.

8. Robert A. Ivy, FAIA, is a Mississippi native, personal friend, and former member of the Crosby Arboretum board. He is the Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer of the American Institute of Architects. Prior to his AIA service, Robert was Vice President & Editorial Director of McGraw-Hill Construction and Editor-in-Chief of Architectural Record magazine. Ivy is the

**Personal & Professional Biography of Edward Blake Jr.**

In 1947 Edward Blake Jr. was born in Bryn Mawr, an original “mainline” railroad suburb located just west of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. (Artunç 2010) Shortly after his birth the Blake family moved to central Mississippi where he attended public school in Watkins Elementary, Bailey Junior High (Figure 1.1), and Murrah High in Jackson, Mississippi between 1953 and 1965 (E. L. Blake, 2010 Curriculum Vitae 2010).

![Edward Bailey Junior High School, Jackson, MS.](https://www.apps.mdah.ms.gov/Public/prop.aspx?id=12006&view=facts&y=728)

**Figure 1.1** Edward Bailey Junior High School, Jackson, MS.

Image Source: https://www.apps.mdah.ms.gov/Public/prop.aspx?id=12006&view=facts&y=728
Date accessed: 9.9.2017
In his youth, Blake would accompany his Father, a representative of the Mississippi Farm Bureau, to the family Christmas tree farm located in Pocahontas, MS. Blake’s father reportedly had an innate love of the land, and he would spend much of his time stewarding the tree farm toward its eventual restoration as a native hardwood forest. Assisting in this work Blake witnessed firsthand the potential of nature to reestablish itself (Hogue 2015). In so doing it is reported that Blake also developed a deep respect for nature and the land as his long-time friend and collaborator Samuel Hogue recalls:

“I think his education was happening before his eyes from age whatever as soon as he could hold onto a shovel. He was working in his dad’s arboretum. The dots were there but they never connected until much later when he starts learning a little bit more about ecology and ecologic design.” “Ed used to take interested students done there, included interested faculty of course, and I was always there when I’d get invited. We’d go down on a weekend and camp out at a log cabin that they had built” “it was a respite, and just complete immersion in a natural experience. Ned [a common nickname for Blake] got great delight and his dad sometimes joined us on these journeys that he wanted us to experience. He talked to us about how he planted a tree so many years ago and look how tall it was – like he was talking about his family. So, this is how Ned grew up. This is why I keep saying it, in fact insisting that there is a lot more influence on Ned’s later life, once it finally dawned on him from that experience from growing up and having that opportunity through his dad and his dad’s project or his delight, as I call it, with that arboretum that he grew up in” (Hogue 2015).
This exposure it seems did proved to be an important lesson which Blake would later reflect upon in one of his many notebooks. “The Strawberry Farm is a return to my childhood” (R. F. Brzuszek 2014, p.36). Here Blake is referring to the land now occupied by the Crosby Arboretum which over time had transitioned from native timberland to tree farm and then a strawberry farm before being selected as the Arboretum site.

Between 1965 and 1970 Blake attended Mississippi State University as a member of the third class enrolled in the newly formed Landscape Architecture program. Graduating with his Bachelor of Landscape Architecture Blake finished in the top 9% of his class as a member of Alpha Zeta Honorary Fraternity (E. L. Blake 2010). Upon graduation Blake accepted his first professional position as an intern with Miller, Wihry, and Lee, incorporated, a practice in which he had worked as a summer intern in both 1968 and 1969. The firm, located in Louisville, Kentucky, was an interdisciplinary consulting corporation offering civil engineering and landscape architecture services for land planning and development (E. L. Blake 2010). Marilyn Blake recalls that Blake chose the firm in large part due to its location. She states, “he wanted a change from what he was familiar with and Miller, Wihry and Lee was somewhere other than Jackson” (M. Blake 2017). While there, Blake gained his professional licensure, and reported his responsibilities as “land planning and design” along with “park planning and design” (E. L. Blake 2010). While Blake’s professional life progressed well his personal life suffered a devastating loss when his first wife, Jan Sinquefield, passed away unexpectedly in childbirth leaving Blake to raise his newborn son Benjamin on his own. Benjamin was four years old when Blake remarried and together he and his new wife Marilyn, a Wichita
native, along with her seven-year-old son Matthew made the decision to leave Louisville (M. Blake 2017).

In 1973 the family moved to Wichita, Kansas where Blake accepted a position with Jack P. DeBoer Associates Incorporated (E. L. Blake 2010). The company focused on the development of multi-family housing that was produced for the southwestern and southeastern United States. With DeBoer Associates Blake handled the site planning and site design aspects of the firm’s development, design, and assembly of component built houses. Unfortunately, due to poor management, the position proved to be rather short-lived and Blake quickly found himself on the move yet again, this time taking a position with the Oblinger-Smith Corporation in Wichita, KS (M. Blake 2017). Seeing Blake’s talent early on the company allowed Blake led a design team where he took responsibility for the planning, design, and construction management of numerous public works projects between 1973 and 1977. The firm specialized in interdisciplinary consulting of urban planning, architecture, and landscape architecture. With Oblinger-Smith Blake was exposed to large-scale high profile public works projects that were often situated in urban settings unlike the majority of his prior professional experiences (E. L. Blake 2010). The experience proved enriching and it was with Oblinger-Smith that Blake won his first professional recognition in the way of two Design Merit Awards granted by the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA). The awards were granted based upon his efforts at the Heritage Square Park in downtown Wichita and the original Arkansas River Corridor multi-modal greenway plan. Thankfully both of these projects are in existence today however the greenway plan was revised numerous times until its eventually adoption in 1999. Heritage Square Park, pictured below, has since been
renamed and restored after suffering years of heavy use and vandalism to its exceptional collection of statuary (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2  Heritage Square Park Fountain and Picnic Area Just After Opening

Image source: http://www.wichita.gov/ParkandRec/CityParks/Pages/HeritageSquare.aspx
Access Date: 10.6.17

Today the park is known as Naftzger Memorial Park and it enjoys a new-found appreciation by the residents of Wichita (M. Blake 2017).

According to Marilyn Blake his time at Oblinger-Smith, while rewarding, took its toll. She recalls that Blake would frequently work well-beyond the typical 40-hour work week to ensure his projects to be exceptional. The heavy workload coupled with the task of raising two young boys prompted Blake to consider a change. It could also be said that Oblinger-Smith, along with the other firms Blake had worked with up to this point, followed a fairly traditional approach to design. This likely added to Blake’s emerging interest in moving on for the sake of gaining a new perspective and skill set. According to sources, Blake was not yet engaged in issues of ecology while practicing in Kentucky or Kansas (Hogue 2015). In an effort to better balance being a father, husband, and landscape architect of the highest caliber, Blake once again sought new employment, this
time as an educator where he would have access to the resources needed to expand his knowledge (M. Blake 2017). Samuel Hogue recalls this period and the interests Blake was fostering.

“I went to Mississippi State to teach in 1975, and then he [Blake] came along, leaving his Wichita job in ‘77 or ‘78. It was as that time that he started to develop a strong interest in ecology and ecological design. I had just some basic background. And as I said in my narratives, we spent a lot of time talking about ecological processes and basic concepts of ecology, plant systems, and human interaction with the natural environment from an ecological standpoint. That was the very beginning for him. I’m talking late ‘70s. Even though - and this is important - the dots hadn’t connected with him yet, he grew up in an ecological environment” (Hogue 2015).

In 1977 Blake left full-time practice entering the academy as an Instructor of Landscape Architecture at his alma mater, Mississippi State University (MSU). While teaching at MSU Blake carried on in professional practice occasionally undertaking consulting commissions. The schedule of an academic offered Blake the work/life balance he sought while still affording him time to pursue private practice. In 1979 Blake accepted a consulting role to work on the design of planting plans, irrigation, and site amenities for a workers’ village housing project in Jubail, Saudi Arabia. During the same period, he assisted business owners in Lincoln, Nebraska with the preparation of site plans and budgets for rebuilding their businesses in the aftermath of a tornado. While pursuing this work and teaching, Blake also began the SunHouse. A family home located in Starkville, MS, this house would be for his boys Benjamin and Matt and of course his
wife Marilyn (E. L. Blake 2010). The house was designed and constructed in collaboration with his friend and professional colleague, Arnold Aho from the MSU School of Architecture. His studio in the SunHouse eventually served as his professional office and in so doing his practice at the time was known as The SunHouse (M. Blake 2017). Blake taught by day and practiced by night out of the SunHouse. Through his colleagues and contacts at MSU Blake began consulting for the Crosby family on the project that would change his life. In 1982 as a capstone project one of Blake’s students generated the first master plan for the soon to be Crosby Arboretum. Blake continued to consult for the Crosby family until 1984 when Blake was offered, through the recommendation of his former teacher and current colleague Edward Martin, the commission which would change his life in profound and yet untold ways. Accepting the role of Executive Director of the Crosby Arboretum in 1984, Blake set out on a ten-year journey to design, manage, study, and oversee the development of the Crosby Arboretum. His efforts included the direction of planning, design, and development of Pinecote Pavilion, the 104-acre Arboretum Interpretive Center at Picayune, MS. He produced the Arboretum’s Master Plan between 1984 and 1994.

Leading up to his acceptance of the Director of the Crosby Arboretum position, Blake had served as a planning and design consultant assisting with the conceptual development of the Arboretum between 1981 and 1984. Beginning in 1981 Blake led the planning and design of the Crosby Arboretum by forming a collaboration among the Arboretum Board, Robert Poore, Carol and Colin Franklin along with Leslie and Rolf Sauer of Andropogon, and Fay Jones & Maurice Jennings Architects (R. F. Brzuszek 2014). The quality of this visionary collaboration, forged by Blake, was complimented by
professional societies in both Landscape Architecture and Architecture. As contemporaries, while Blake was being recognized by the American Society of Landscape Architects, Fay Jones was being honored by the American Institutes of Architecture’s winning the Gold Medal, the organization’s highest tribute, in 1990 (The American Institute of Architects 2017). Blake himself received the Centennial Medallion Award commemorating the 100th anniversary of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) (American Society of Landscape Architects n.y.). In 1994 Blake was also the recipient of ASLA Alfred B. LaGasse Medal for his notable contributions to the management of natural resources and public lands (American Society of Landscape Architects 2017). For his careful work at the Crosby Arboretum he, along with Andropogon Associates, was given an ASLA Honor Award in 1991, which represents the first national award of excellence received for built-work in Mississippi (American Society of Landscape Architects 2017). Through Blake’s eagerness to collaborate with the nation’s rising design thinkers he built a reputation for innovative work that pushed the mostly theoretical, ecological agenda into the realm of practical application (figure 2).
As the Crosby Arboretum became fully established Blake again sought new opportunities, first with Harvard University where, in the Fall of 1994, he taught a graduate-level Option Studio as a Visiting Design Critic (M. Blake 2017). Feeding Blake’s lifelong love of travel, he also took the opportunity to teach briefly at Auburn University, and later internationally with the European Landscape Education Exchange at Pontlevoy, France (Artunç 2010). Ultimately Blake’s desire to design and build brought about his return to full-time practice and in 1994 he began what would be known as The Landscape Studio, located in Hattiesburg, MS. He first opened the practice by renting desk space in 514 Main Street Hattiesburg, MS from his friend, and later professional collaborator, Larry Albert, of Albert and Associates Architects (Albert
Albert was very influential in getting Blake’s practice off the ground. He invited Blake to collaborate on numerous projects including the Hattiesburg Public Library. The practices shared office space until 1997 when Blake purchased his own building (Figure 1.4) in downtown Hattiesburg at the corner of Pine and Forrest Streets (Albert 2010).

Figure 1.4  The Man in the Window: Landscape Studio with Blake’s Office Light On. Painting by Michael Underwood 2013. Image source: Marilyn Blake
Between 1999 and 2010 Blake’s practice grew and contracted as work came and went. Along the way many talented and interesting individuals were brought in by Blake, who seemed to always be on the lookout for someone who knew something he didn’t. Marilyn Blake reports that throughout their ownership of The Landscape Studio Blake would let visiting interns and collaborators use the upstairs apartments down the hall from his corner office (Figure 1.5). As she put it, “there was always someone interesting around” (M. Blake 2017).

Figure 1.5  Blake’s Desk in The Landscape Studio, Hattiesburg, MS.

Image source: Marilyn Blake
During this period, The Landscape Studio pursued Master Planning, Land Planning, Site Planning, Sustainable Design, Fine Garden Design, Historical Landscape Planning and Design, Wetland Planning and Design, and Blake’s own invention which he called Plant Community Mosaic Mapping (E. L. Blake 2010). Blake reportedly relished the opportunity to learn something new and by accepting work in areas of expertise with which he was relatively unfamiliar, he would gain new insight through the many collaborations he fostered along the way (Poore, Interview 1 2015). Working with Blake at the time Samuel Hogue states, “It was just a continual process of question asking. He [Blake] absolutely thrived on it. It’s what made him tick” (Hogue 2015).

In practice Blake completed over sixty built projects, many of which were recognized by peers and institutions as inventive and important to the profession (M. Blake 2017). Included in his portfolio of works, and focused upon later in this study, are the Crosby Arboretum in Picayune, MS, 100 Acres: The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park in Indianapolis, IN, Art Park at Catfish Row in Vicksburg, MS, and the Hattiesburg’s Lake Terrace Convention Center.

Blake’s work was published regionally, nationally and internationally in titles such as, *Landscape Journal* (B. H. Brown 1998), *Landscape Architecture: World of Environmental Design* (Atrium International 1998), *100 Years of Landscape Architecture* (Simo 1999), *Ecological Planning and Design* (Thompson 1997), *Weathering and Durability in Landscape Architecture* (Kirkwood 2004). In 2006 Blake was approached by authors Beth Dunlop, Socrates Gomez and Sandow Mediato to be featured as the leading landscape architect for the state of Mississippi in their forthcoming publication, *Leading Residential Landscape Professionals* (Jaccarino 2006).
As the authors state it, “Blake created spaces that recalled the history, the prehistory, the native ecology and the essence of the individual place, evoking a sense of genius loci and reestablishing a sense of consciousness” (E. L. Blake 1998). His work was also described by Alex Krieger, former director of Urban Design at Harvard Graduate School of Design as “a powerful overlap of ecological diligence and picturesque composition. At once a visual feast and a science lesson.” (American Society of Landscape Architects 1991, p.55). This characterization led to a general conception of Blake’s work to be centered on the revelation of ecological processes and functions with forms and figures conceptualized and informed by the regional ecology.

Figure 1.6 Edward Blake Jr.
Image Source: Marilyn Blake
Blake’s life and career path are perhaps best described by the man himself, “Along the way, the rewards have been many (Figure 1.6). I’ve experienced the unity, drama, and serenity of life coalescing from its mixture of opposites. I’ve marveled at our inability to make the simplest and most commonplace of things: grass, trees, and birds, and realized that this awareness is the source of my exquisite pleasure in them. From observing nature’s ability to generate dazzling complexity by endlessly varying a few common themes, I’ve chosen to honor the aesthetics of simplicity and restraint” (Artunç 2010).

**Blake’s Influences & Mentors**

In 1960s Blake entered Mississippi State University for the study of Pre-Medicine. Within a year Blake changed majors realizing, as his wife Marilyn would put it, “Ed hated to see blood” (M. Blake 2017). The Landscape Architecture Department at MSU was only in its infancy when Blake joined the program which was under the direction of Edward Martin Jr. In Professor Martin, Blake found a key mentor and the two would later become close friends. During this period Melanie Simo, author of *100 Years of Landscape Architecture: Some patterns of a Century* notes that the profession of landscape architecture was under distinct transition with professional factions taking up polemic positions about the role and scope of landscape architecture. “By 1970, then, in different venues and moods three major concerns of the landscape architect – imaginative design, social responsibility, and ecological relationships – had been identified and championed” (Simo 1999, p.169).

It seems a variety of factors, far too many to be thoroughly and succinctly discussed here-in, conspired to shift thinking of built-environment professionals such as
architects and landscape architects. These shifts ultimately resulted in some profound impacts on the profession but to better understand them one must look back to a time of Blake’s early childhood.

Leading up to the 1950s Conservationist, led by figures such as President Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot, began to press for the efficient and careful use of natural resources. Roosevelt, a well-documented outdoorsman, formed the US Forestry Service in 1905 and appointed Gifford Pinchot as its first chief. Roosevelt went on to form the National Parks Service in 1916 after signing the Act for the Preservation of American Antiquities known as the National Monuments Act in 1906. The two men worked together to vastly increase the number of national forests and protected areas now held dear but at the time considered to be an inexhaustible resource. Speaking to this issue Roosevelt once stated,

“It is also vandalism wantonly to destroy or to permit the destruction of what is beautiful in nature, whether it be a cliff, a forest, or a species of mammal or bird. Here in the United States we turn our rivers and streams into sewers and dumping-grounds, we pollute the air, we destroy forests, and exterminate fishes, birds and mammals -- not to speak of vulgarizing charming landscapes with hideous advertisements. But at least it looks as if our people were awakening” (National Park Service 2015).

Pinchot, after serving as US Forestry Service Chief, would go on to form the Yale School of Forestry and the Society of American Foresters. In spite of his tireless efforts he was consistently labeled as a practical environmentalist by figures such as John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club. Pinchot promoted the idea that natural resources should be
used for the good of society but only if done so on a sustainable basis (Grant n.y.). He famously stated in his 1910 book *The Fight for Conservation* “The conservation of natural resources is the basis, and the only permanent basis, of national success.” His suggestion that environmental resources should be available for well-managed use rather than for pure conservation put him at odds with some Conservationists. However, it is clear that without his continued efforts the modern Environmentalist and Conservationist movements would have been significantly stunted.

From the writings on ecology by these and other early pioneers sprang the modern environmentalist movement which was fueled by the empowered post World War II consumer and their demands for a higher standard of living that included clean, safe and beautiful environments (National Park Service 2015). With the publication of illuminating books such as *Silent Spring*, published in 1962 by Rachel Carson, the public’s growing awareness began to reach critical mass. Environmentalist organizations such as the Sierra Club and Wilderness Society experience exponential levels of membership increase. Seeking a louder voice, environmentalists pursued a political agenda successfully pressuring the United States Congress to pass measures to promote cleaner water and air, culminating in the formation of the Environmental Protection Agency in 1970. The 1973-1974 oil embargo, while fundamentally raising issues of energy dependencies, also brings with it significant attention to the nations need for more efficient and ecologically accountable practices. Across a wide array of human-enterprise the country began to seek energy alternatives. Many looked to conservation, durability, and sustainably as design solutions to better organized and utilize the earth’s resources. Included in the community of professionals seeking to work in a more ecologically
friendly manner are landscape architects. While Blake was somewhat removed from these issues, studying in the conservative environment of rural Mississippi, and principally focused on simply gaining a foothold in professional practice, he was aware of their unfolding and was unquestionably taking note of their impacts. In his personal journals, he notes of numerous professionals from many disciplines which he admires for their work in the area of ecological design and holistic thinking. From Garrett Eckbo, who embraced ecological thinking but was suspect of the design process being “rationalized out” in favor of “ecological determinism” (Simo 1999, pp.168-169), to Willie Morris’s many books on the history and culture of Mississippi, Blake saw principles for inclusive and deep holistic composition in all forms of thinking and making from the microscopic to the cosmic (Ivy 2015).

Among the many thinkers of this time, three names are consistently mentioned in Blake’s personal notes, Ian McHarg, Lawrence Halprin, and John O. Simonds. His admiration of the landscape architecture thinkers is confirmed by the interviews conducted later in this study.

The ideas and design tactics of Ian McHarg, and by association Andropogon’s Carol Franklin and Leslie Sauer, who were students of McHarg, impressed Blake in a very particular way. His own education, having taken place between 1965-1970, was by no means provincial but rather typical. It largely followed the academic doctrine of the time, with a strong focus on the nuts and bolts of practice and landscape architecture centered on the fundamentals of composition and the creation of landscape tuned toward formal objectives rather than ecological goals. Sam Hogue confirmed this while discussing Blake’s insatiable appetite for understanding when he states, “If he got into
something and sunk his teeth into it, he would research it to death. I think that was part of
the interest in ecological design because there wasn’t anything on it, if you will, in the
library” (Hogue 2015).

As McHarg espoused his ideas more broadly in 1969 with his publication of
*Design with Nature*, along with numerous lectures and articles, a new design strategy and
material palette was brought into focus. McHarg would note in many of his lectures, the
work of a quality landscape architect is work which does nothing to injure nature or
natural processes. He believed all design should aid nature in its works, which he was
quick to point out as beneficial to mankind, a conception which was not widely shared at
the time. “Can we hope that man will be able to change the physical environment to
create a new ecology in which he is primary agent, but which will be a self-perpetuating
and not a retrogressive process?” (McHarg 2006, p.7).

McHarg was openly dismissive of traditional landscape architectural production
referring to it as “a fruitless pursuit which only displaces nature and the natural processes
humans depended upon” (Hoyt 1969). He argued for a new intelligence to emerge, for
regional and statewide planning and most critically for landscape architecture to be more
scientific in its role as a profession for the making of the world. He famously concerned
himself with the work of ecologists and in so doing became acutely aware and concerned
with issues of change and fluctuation over time. He criticized landscape architects means
of production and their limiting graphic representation devices. The method of overlay
mapping, now undertaken via Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software, was
pioneered by McHarg who mapped his project sites in layers as a means of better
isolating and understanding their material properties and how they affected hydrology
and biological functions. His overlay method allowed for a far more advanced system of suitability analysis. This breakthrough enabled his clients to understand the latent potential of their lands on an ecological and durational scale. By assigning land-use suitability, always referred by ecological function, McHarg revolutionized the practice of landscape architecture and land planning. The ability to envision duration-based ecological functions as individual properties of a given land area allowed landscape architects and planners the incorporate, if not focus, their design concepts so that the general public could now appreciate the broader potential of the land.

As McHarg’s ideas became more refined and informed, with regard to process and the means of landscape architects to pursue his conception of landscape architecture, the nation as a whole begins to adopt new standards and expectations for planning and design.

A year later in 1970 another of Blake’s influences, Lawrence Halprin, published *The RSVP Cycles: Creative Processes in the Human Environment*. In this seminal work Halprin outlines numerous new ideas about the design and experience of landscape architecture. Of first importance is Halprin’s system of design which calls upon the client and patrons of the landscape to engage in its conceptualization and formal/spatial strategies. Today this process would likely be associated with the notion of “participatory design” which generally follows many of the tenets of Halprin’s early model.

Additionally, Halprin introduces the notion of “landscape scoring” which is in essence a system of choreography. Critical to this design approach is the notion that people should be intentionally led, guided, and/or directed, to experience a landscape through a carefully designed sequence. This deliberate circulation circuit is intended to
unfold one’s experience for particular effect as conceptualized by the landscape architect. An architectural equivalent might be the path one follows while touring a museum exhibit which is arranged chronologically. Aside from adopting aspects of these methodological principles in Halprin’s work, one might argue that Halprin’s key lesson for Blake was his willingness to explore, and often stretch, the boundaries of landscape architecture. As Halprin put it when discussing why he likes being a landscape architect, “The definition of what a landscape architect is and does is very ambiguous … I think it ought to be kept that way, because it’s a rather indefinable profession, which makes me happy” (Halprin 2015).

Understanding the processes of McHarg and Halprin their influence on Blake’s works, including the Crosby Arboretum, Hattiesburg Lake Terrace Convention Center, 100 Acres Art Park, becomes obvious. Blake’s notion of a Landscape Journey directly mirrors Halprin’s landscape scoring system while his insistence on the inclusive and exhaustive inventory and analysis of a site’s physical attributes compliments McHarg’s own layer-based mapping.

With regard to John Ormsbee Simonds’s influence, it may be said that Simonds’s Landscape Architecture: The Shaping of Man’s Natural Environment, first published in 1961 with subsequent editions in 1983, 1997, 2006, 2013, introduced Blake to the idea of multi-variant design inclusive of environmental and ecological concerns. By multi-variant design it is suggested that Simonds’ text was among the first sources to promote the notion that a broad and inclusive set of variables was needed to create, a well-considered work of landscape architecture. “Although “rebel” might be an inappropriate term to describe such a gentle man, in fact, John was a rebel among rebels. Eckbo and
Kiley were infatuated by new modernist forms and would launch careers that would see them vie for the deanship of landscape architectural Modernism. Bur Simmonds, already anointed with Eastern thought, set out to pursue not only new design and form but, in the tradition of Olmsted, to embrace the big picture—people and the environment, man and nature—making the world a better place.” (Starke 2005, p.102). His texts, many of which were commonly used at MSU during Blake’s studies, are recognized worldwide for their visionary thinking and innovative spirit. A cursory review of Simonds’ numerous textbooks on landscape architecture illustrates this point in that his texts urge the consideration of variables such as *The Ecological Basis, Land as Heritage, Water as a Resource, Climate the Planetary Framework*, and *The Group Imperative*. Such areas of consideration, which Simonds helped to herald, were only first emerging in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Following the printing of the third edition of Simonds’ *Landscape Architecture* Blake had the honor of meeting his mentor while he visited MSU on a lecture tour. Blake invited Simonds to the Crosby Arboretum and surprisingly he agreed to make the 245-mile journey from Starkville, MS to Picayune, MS. Once there Blake introduced him to the project which had allowed for him to practice so many of Simonds’ teachings. The Crosby so impressed Simonds that he later included *The Arboretum* in the fourth edition of *Landscape Architecture: A Manual of Environmental Planning and Design*, published in 2006.

**Five Projects of Note**

As previously stated, for the purpose of this study the productions of Blake and his Landscape Studio will be confined to focus on five major commissions. These
commissions were selected through the advisement of numerous sources close to Blake. While they do not delineate the entirety of Blake’s professional oeuvre, they do represent the range and scale he worked within along with his highest professional aspirations. For the sake of clarity these projects including the Crosby Arboretum 1986, the Hattiesburg Lake Terrace Convention Center completed in 1998, the RiverCamps on Crooked Creek completed in 2003, the Vicksburg Children’s Art Park at Catfish Row completed in 2005 and the Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park: 100 Acres completed 2010 are outlined in this section to enable the reader’s comprehension of the following chapters. The projects are presented chronologically from the date of their opening.

**The Crosby Arboretum (Opened to public in 1986 / substantially completed 1998)**

Dedicated to public use in 1986, the Crosby Arboretum is nationally known for its design as an early example of ecologically derived landscape architecture. The Arboretum, which is well-detailed in Professor Robert Brzuszek’s book, *The Crosby Arboretum*, consists of 104 acres of interpretive landscapes highlighting the native species and terrains of the Mississippi Coastal Plain. Aside from the experiential delights of the Arboretum, which was incorporated into the Mississippi State University Extension Services in 1997, a strong agenda for education undergirds the Arboretum’s existence. This is best explained in the words of the Arboretum administrators who echo Blake’s earliest vision for the Arboretum. They write:

“With increasing value being placed on our natural heritage, The Crosby Arboretum is the premier native plant conservatory in the Southeast. The Arboretum was established as a living memorial to L.O. Crosby, Jr. (1907-1978)
and has expanded to become a resource for education in the region and the world. Today, it provides for the protection of the region's biological diversity as well as a place for the public's enjoyment of plant species native to the Pearl River Drainage Basin of south-central Mississippi and Louisiana. It allows us to study and learn about plants and plant products so that we may use them to their best advantage and ensure their continuous propagation in the future. Aesthetic, agricultural, scientific, and industrial contributions of native plant species and ecosystems can be examined in a real-life setting at the Arboretum.

The 104-acre Native Plant Center of The Crosby Arboretum serves as the focus of Arboretum activities and development. It includes Pinecote Pavilion and the Piney Woods Lake for display of native water plants in their natural setting. The Pinecote Pavilion and the many wooden bridges that complement the lake were designed by award-winning architect Fay Jones, of Fayetteville, Arkansas to enhance the artistic and functional aspects of the Arboretum.

The Crosby Arboretum also manages 700 acres in seven associated natural areas. Fostering the growth and maintenance of over 300 species of indigenous trees, shrubs, wildflowers, and grasses the mission of the Arboretum extends far beyond most visitor’s perception. Situated throughout the Arboretum these rare species even sometimes endangered plans are joined by common and unusual species to form a mosaic native to the coastal plains ecosystems. With each passing season, the plant communities present a new expression of life in Mississippi pine belt.” (The Crosby Arboretum 2017).
Figure 1.7   Crosby Master Plan 2014 Edition

Image source: Crosby Arboretum MSU Extension Services
The Arboretum was designed to showcase three primary habitats found along the Mississippi gulf coast (Figure 1.7). These include, savanna, woodland and aquatic ecosystems which a patron is able to engage via walking trails laced throughout the grounds. The trails, or “pathway journeys” as Blake referred to them, were designed to ensure the viewer would never have to walk back over the same exhibit during their visit. While not a one-way circuit as one may experience in certain museums, the pathway journeys offer a multitude of options for traversing the grounds. In this way, the patron is able to make some personal decisions about exhibits they choose to see while also having the experience of coming across previously unseen exhibit materials. Through this system of circulation, we see reflected in Blake’s notion of Pathway Journeys as a form of choreography that one could easily liken to the “scoring” employed by Halprin.

Figure 1.8  Slough Crossing Frog View, Photo by: Edward Blake Jr.
Image source: Marilyn Blake Image Date: 11.15.1991
Blake was reportedly obsessed with the nuanced atmospheric effects of light and shadow as underlined by his personal photography (Figure 1.8). He did all he could to welcome visitors to this dynamic expression of life and only through the prodding of his collaborators did he finally agree to incorporate written signage and description of the exhibits (R. F. Brzuszek 2014). Here we begin to learn of Blake’s strong bias toward an experience driven appreciation for the environment. It seems while Blake does aim to educate the visitor, the wish is for the education to be passively received and experienced (Figure 1.9).

Figure 1.9  *South Savanna View*, Photo by: Edward Blake Jr.
Image source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: 7.1981

The Arboretum was designed to change over time through a carefully designed and executed management and maintenance plan. Blake, in so doing, leveraged the value of change and its role in the development of a sustainable regional landscape, to offer the visitor and ever evolving experience. Everywhere Blake incorporated and designed for the eventual transformation of the Arboretum. From his interest in the landscapes’ maintenance which included controlled burns, to the completion of the exhibits of which many were only recently completed, Blake always looked far into the future when designing the Crosby. Seasonal changes were understood to be the exhibit materials and
this notion plays out to this day from the ever-changing savanna grasses to the vicissitudes of the gum pond water’s edge, nature is the exhibit.

The display and artful presentation of nature at work is one of Blake’s design innovations (Figure 9). The acceptance of nature’s dynamic display as a tenet of contemporary landscape architect education and practice is verified by the mass adoption of motifs such as artful stormwater design and landscape restoration.

Figure 1.10  *Beaver gum and pavilion reflections*, Photo by: Edward Blake Jr.

Image source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: 8.1.2007

**Hattiesburg Lake Terrace Convention Center, (Completed in 1998)**

Lake Terrace Convention Center, located in Hattiesburg, MS, and opened in 1998, was Blake’s first commission aside from the Crosby Arboretum to result in large-scale peer recognition (Figures 1.11,1.12, 1.13). In this commission, undertaken in collaboration with the Hattiesburg, Mississippi project architect Larry Albert, Blake created a large-scale work of design that resulted in a suburban exploration of many of
the ecologically-orientated principles he developed while designing the Crosby Arboretum.

Figure 1.11  Lake Terrace Convention Center in the evening


Figure 1.12  Hattiesburg Lake Terrace Convention Center Site Plan by The Landscape Studio

Image sources: Marilyn Blake
Blake inherited the commission after Albert, his then office mate, repeatedly expressed his dissatisfaction with the proposals of the landscape architects originally awarded the commission (Albert 2010). Albert recalled in his 2010 eulogy at Blake’s funeral:

“Ed kept over hearing my frustration with HOK’s resistance to build a lake because of liability and wanting the center facing highway 49. I wanted the center on axis from the intersection of 49 and 59 with a promenade from the parking. One night late Ed came and looked at my site plan sketch and said he thought I was right and making all the right moves. The next day he spent about two or three hours going over the design for the Crosby Arboretum with me. The
education I received walking through his thought process in designing this
landscape changed my way of thinking about landscape design. He then said all
of my ideas were doable and he would be pleased to take the lead of the team of
engineers for the site design if I wanted him to” (Albert 2010, Artunç 2010).

For the purposes of this project description I rely primarily in Blake’s own words.
The Hattiesburg Lake Terrace Convention Center is well-documented in the 1998 special
issue of the Landscape Journal "Eco-revelatory design: nature constructed/nature
revealed" which chronicles a national exhibit and symposium on the subject of Eco-
Revelatory Design (B. H. Brown 1998). In the three-page article Blake submitted for the
exhibition and journal, he outlines his concepts for the project including areas of
concentration which he labeled as “The Idea”, “The Land”, “The Design”, and “The Lake
Journey as Processional Experience” (E. L. Blake 1998).

As Blake states in “The Idea”, “[The convention center] serves to place its visitors
in the richly varied expression of an urban creek’s flood plain. Through choreographing
the landscape’s infrastructure of landform, circulation, and web of life, my purpose has
been to reveal the nature and origins of this place” (E. L. Blake 1998).
Blake continues on to explain his intent for “Nature to flow freely through the reference infrastructure” (E. L. Blake 1998, p.18). By this Blake is referring to his conception of the landscape as a register and means of assessment and judgement. He intentionally designs the landscape to offer a critical contrast, perhaps one could even suggest it as a foil to nature in order to bring forward the acknowledgement of man’s impacts on the land. In no place is Blake’s intent to provoke a polemic more pronounced than in “The Lake Journey” where Blake invites visitors through the landscape along his carefully choreographed one-half mile path. Along this circular journey Blake introduces and exposes the visitor to the bottomlands of the site and educates the visitor to the many
ecological communities and systems at play within the bottomlands of an urban creek flood basin. His design utilizes numerous water features including a weir with cascade, formal and informal fountains, marsh, and lake waterbodies which work in unison to offer an enlightening glimpse into the complexity of nature (Figures 1.14, 1.15).

Figure 1.15  *Early Morning at the Lake Terrace*, Photo by: Edward Blake Jr.
Image source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: 10.16.2004

In the Lake Terrace project Blake sought once again to visually explore and reveal the lands’ history and ecological function. By drawing upon the dynamic character of stormwater as a material for design rather than a nuisance to be marginalized and hidden, Blake engages the adjacent Mixon’s creek, to weave the historic into the present and future. Through the careful management of the parking lot stormwater, including its aeration at the convention center fountain and filtration while passing through the one-acre marsh, Blake sees to it that when the water returns to the Mixon’s creek it is far better than to expected. The dynamic movement of water throughout the project is meant
to mirror the general landscape of Hattiesburg, MS which is in essence a flood plain surrounded by hills and raised terraces.

Figure 1.16  *Bowline of Lake Terrace looking North*, Photo by: Edward Blake Jr.  
Image source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: 10.24.2004

Blake goes to great lengths to expose visitors to the many wetland systems native to the area (Figure 15). From the two-acre lake, which is draped below and around the south and western facades of the convention center, to the arching footbridge and meandering creek bed, Blake works to draw visitors along a transformative journey (Figures 1.17, 1.18, 1.19, 1.20).

Figure 1.17  *Bosque and Bridge*, Photo by: Edward Blake Jr.  
Image source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: 10.30.2004
Figure 1.18  *Aquatic Pastoral*, Photo by: Edward Blake Jr.,
Image source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: 8.10.2003

Figure 1.19  *Rolling Green Ground at Cascade*, Photo by: Edward Blake Jr.
Image source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: 8.10.2003
While his description of a visitor’s experience may not resonate with all who visit, it is clear that Blake understands the ecology of the place and the performative, even utilitarian, value of the convention center as a machine of commerce, exhibition, and revenue generation. Blake’s landscape, while poetically conceived and articulated, offers convention-goes and exhibitors alike, numerous places and spaces to meet, discuss, plan and strategize in an upscale yet approachable venue. The landscape is clearly intended to extend the architectural and economic agenda of the convention center while promoting big thinking and out-of-the-box planning. To these many ends Blake’s work seems exceptionally well-conceived and his inclusion in the Eco-Revelatory Design exhibition serves as a testament to his skill.
The River Camps on Crooked Creek (Completed in 2003)

Figure 1.21  RiverCamps on Crooked Creek Gate House by Lake|Flato Architects


The RiverCamps on Crooked Creek is a 1,500-acre gated community located on an 18,000-acre parcel of land in the panhandle region of northwestern Florida (Figures 1.21, 1.22, 1.23). The community was sited just across the West Bay off the Grande Lagoon of Saint Andrew Bay near the well-known resort town of Panama City, Florida. The area surrounding the RiverCamps community is renowned for its white beaches and warm gulf coast waters. While many visitors come for the traditional beachfront landscapes of this region the RiverCamps was designed to offer a very different
experience of gulf coastal plain. The environs of the coastal plains are quite varied and constituted in large part by a great deal of ecologically rich wetlands. Situated on the inland stretch of waterfront Blake set out to feature the native aquatic beauty of the Crooked Creek marsh and river landscape.

RiverCamps, being a conservation subdivision, is strictly limited with regard to the density and total area of land that may be developed for commercial and residential usage. Additionally, any development planned to take place is required to do so in a way which protects and enhances the native ecological systems. To this end the RiverCamps community charter, signed in 2003, required approximately two-thirds of the total site to be set aside for conservation.

Figure 1.22  Panama City, FL and West Bay Map

Image source: https://www.google.com/maps/place/RiverCamps+on+Crooked+Creek/@30.1848291,-85.6944574,11.58z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x889391bf18e871e9:0x97682bb6b07256fe!8m2!3d30.30265!4d-85.824423
Date Accessed: 10.15.2017
Figure 1.23  RiverCamps Home Sites and Amenities Map, courtesy of St. Joe Company


This provision enabled Blake to indulge his passion, as he did earlier in his career while working in Kentucky, for the careful management of large-scale tracts of land. The low-density nature of the community masterplan empowered Blake to introduce and extensive system of trails and paths which link households to the extensive array of amenities dispersed throughout the community (Figures 1.24, 1.25).
The amenities, designed by the award winning ecologically and sustainably focused architectural practice of Lake|Flato includes the community RiverHouse with
pool, pavilions, and fitness center. The firm also created a marina with boat ramp, pathway bridges, gate house, and numerous smaller buildings and structures for the use and enjoyment of the residents.

While very little was published about this work it is known through conversation with Ted Flato and Marilyn Blake that the projects’ design was driven by Blake’s interests in natural means of landscape maintenance (Figure 1.26, 1.27). Ted Flato, who selected The Landscape Studio based upon his knowledge of Blake’s work at the Crosby Arboretum, recalls that Blake designed a detailed prescribed burning schedule and worked tirelessly to outline the systems and sequence needed to manage the land. Furthermore, the native plant communities, pathway journeys, and home building sites were laid out by Blake to ensure each resident had access to the natural beauty of the woodland ecosystem.
Figure 1.26  RiverCamps Prescribed Burning and Maintenance Plan

Image Source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: 02.04.2003
In the architecture by Lake|Flato one sees a unique resonance with the work completed by Fay Jones and Maurice Jennings at the Crosby Arboretum. Lake|Flato seems to have also been inspired by the tall slender character of the pine forests so typical of the gulf coast plains (Figure 1.28).
Figure 1.28  View over West Bay from nature trail near the RiverHouse, Photo by: author,

Image Date: 10.5.2017
Blake’s work at the RiverCamps was one of nearly a dozen large-scale land development projects commissioned by the St. Joe Company. In this project Blake employed the lessons learned at the Crosby Arboretum while also engaging a host of architectural components, unlike at the Crosby which at the time only had Pinecote Pavilion. Blake often suggest in his writing the value of buildings and architectural components in creating a stronger landscape composition (Figures 1.29, 1.30, 1.31, 1.32, 1.33, 1.34). One could speculate this work led to the maturation of his ideology about a carefully woven human-made, nature-made and culture-made landscape. These three terms were not yet part of his lexicon however they were clearly being formulated and refined in this work.
Figure 1.29   The RiverHouse Community Center and pier/lighthouse by Lake|Flato Architects

Figure 1.30  Egret Inlet Bridge.


Figure 1.31  Egret Inlet, Photo by: Edward Blake Jr.

Image source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: unknown
Figure 1.32  *Bridge to Cypress*, Photo by: Edward Blake Jr.

Date unknown. Image source: Marilyn Blake

Figure 1.33  *View across Crooked Creek from RiverHouse*, Photo by: Author

Image Date: 10.5.2017

Figure 1.34  *Typical home site situated on a low maintenance lot*, Photo by: author

Image Date: 10.5.2017
Vicksburg Children’s Art Park at Catfish Row (Completed in 2005)

The Children’s Art Park, opened in July 2005, is a 1.5-acre urban park situated along the banks of the Yazoo River on land which historically served as the shipping wharf, known throughout Vicksburg, MS as Catfish Row (Figure 1.35). The site had long been devoid of use, aside from serving as a gravel overflow parking lot, when Blake and The Landscape Studio took up the task of designing the park. The new park was commissioned to serve as a cornerstone feature of Vicksburg’s urban renewal and tourism development campaign.

Figure 1.35  This birds eye view of the Art Park shows the relationships between the river bluff, park and Mississippi River floodwall. This drawing shows the earlier concept of terracing the bluff as an upper amphitheater space.

Image source: Marilyn Blake, Image Credit: The Landscape Studio.
Figure 1.36  The design of the Art Park at Catfish Row plan allows a variety of active and passive use spaces that take advantage of the site’s linear layout. Date unknown.

Image source: Marilyn Blake, Image Credit: The Landscape Studio.
In this urban infill project Blake returned to his interests this time to focus on the land’s history as a starting point for the design process. In his project sketchbook he states, “the streets went diagonal along the bluff, a street along the river. This area was a working gritty place with a depot. The fractal form, a Y or V, responded to context. A basic building-block” (R. Brzuszek 2010, p.3) (Figure 1.36).

Blake’s research revealed that following the French withdrawal from the region in 1762 the Spanish occupied the city of Vicksburg from 1763 to 1798 (R. Brzuszek 2010). He goes on to suggest that the Spanish had created strong geometrical patterns in the city layout “The Spanish square used triangles to block winds, lines juxtaposed with one another” (R. Brzuszek 2010, p.3). As it would come to pass, Blake utilized the diagonal and triangle as motif throughout the park, paying a subtle homage as often used in modern landscape interpretations of historic areas, to this little-known period of Vicksburg’s history. But while Blake was careful to incorporate historical references he was resistant to the creation of a pastiche of old river town theme, which he referred to as “nauseating nostalgia” (R. Brzuszek 2010, p.4). Instead, as collaborator Robert Poore put it, “There are forms and shapes creating new spaces still using historical information, forms, data and objects. But it’s abstract and colorful and not like the old days” (Poore, Interview 1 2015). It seems Blake sought to create something new from something old as a means of promoting Vicksburg’s future (Figure 1.37).
Acknowledging and playing off Vicksburg’s famous floodwall murals, Blake positioned five-foot-tall sections of concrete wall along the pathways where children could display their own artwork (Figure 1.38). The walls, which are broken along their
long axis to allow for movement to and from their broad sides run parallel to the riverfront. These breaks in the wall are horizontally accented with what Blake referred to as “River Lawns”. The resulting effect is a rhythmic pattern of horizontal surfaces which, at a distance, appear to make the park seem quite linear in nature (Figure 1.39). In addition, Blake utilized the elevation change present across the given site to allow the visitor to arrive from above and move to below. The elevated station works to present the “river lawns” in plan-view. One could argue that Blake’s intent for the river lawns was to echo the famously braided landscapes of the Mississippi Delta with its countless strands of ever shifting riverbeds (Figure 1.40).

Figure 1.39  *Art Walls & River Lawns Passing Among Them*, Photo by: Edward Blake Jr.

Image source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: unknown
Figure 1.40  Mississippi River Early Stream Channels Map

Along with the playful use of the “River Lawns”, Blake incorporated a bit of first-hand site history in the form of smoke stacks which he used to full-effect in articulating the landscape and again pay homage to the site and cities history. The 20,000 pound Sprague stern wheeler steamship, known locally as the Big Mama of the Mississippi, was tragically destroyed by fire in the 1970s and left to decay on the park site. Drawing inspiration from its remaining sections of ironwork including the stacks, clits, vents, and capstans, Blake repurposed elements and made reference to others with playful interactive features throughout the park. Blake stated, “this was a dynamic place of movement--trains, tugboats, and lights on boats. The stacks also pull the park up into the air and add a larger vertical scale” (R. Brzuszek 2010, p.7) (Figures 1.41, 1.42, 1.43).

Figure 1.41  Steamships lined up along the wharf, each noted for the difference in smokestack decoration.


In the Vicksburg Children’s Art Park on Catfish Row we learn of Blake’s ability to interchange the hierarchy of his design principles. While ecological issues are not
explicitly present in this work we see him drawing upon historical references and functional devices to generate a landscape that is very much about experience and physical enjoyment. The dexterity of his thinking also suggests a clear awareness of the client’s agenda and goals for this work which he seems more than comfortable to reconcile with design principle that align with the large schema.

Figure 1.42  *Catfish Fountain and water jets are a popular feature on a hot day, background Art Stacks and Prow Deck in upper left*, Photo by: Edward Blake Jr.,

Image source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: unknown
Figure 1.43  The intersecting lines of steamboat ‘stacks’ are a game of color patterns that playfully abstracts what the area may have resembled when the site was still an active Mississippi River port.

Image source: Marilyn Blake, Image Credit: The Landscape Studio.
The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park: 100 Acres (Completed 2010)

The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park: 100 Acres is an outdoor component of the Indianapolis Museum of Art (IMA) which opened in 2010 (Figure 1.44, 1.45, 1.46). It features a 35-acre lake along with an extensive set of landscape environments, such as wetlands, meadows, a river, canal, and woodlands. The extensive grounds, among the largest of such in the United States, feature an ongoing temporary exhibition of site responsive works. In Park also features the Ruth Lilly Visitors Pavilion designed by Blake’s personal friend, and renowned award-winning architect, Marlon Blackwell of Marlon Blackwell Architects (Indianapolis Museum of Art 2017).

Figure 1.44  Be Playful sidewalk signage, Photo by: Butch R. 14 April 2012

Image source: https://foursquare.com/v/100-acres-the-virginia-b-fairbanks-art--nature-park/4ba43e47f964a520608f38e3?openPhotoId=502821abe4b08f94e6078111, Date Accessed: 10.4.2017
Figure 1.45  Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park Installation Artist Legend

Figure 1.46 Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park Map and Legend.

This commission, opened in 2009, was one of Blake’s last major works. It was completed in collaboration with Marlon Blackwell, NINEbark, and noted environmental artist Mary Miss (Mary Miss 2017). Here again Blake found himself working in a familiar area, the flood plain.

“Situated in a floodplain that is defined by the distinctive curve of the White River on one side and the straight form of the man-made canal on the other, its landscape is shaped by the dynamic character of the water that runs through it. As a floodplain, it is a place of constant change, as the lake rises and falls through the seasons, in accord with the river’s flow. As a tributary of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, the White River is part of the nation’s largest watershed, which stretches all the way from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico” (Indianapolis Museum of Art 2017).

As was Blake’s method, he studied the site’s history and found that the site had undergone many changes. Originally it was a woodland cleared around the 1900s and used for farming and as livestock pasture until the 1970s, when the land later transitioned again to become gravel mine supporting nearby highway construction. Upon completion of the highway project the land was again abandoned and regrew to a woodland (Green 2010). It remained relatively untouched until the 1990s when it was given over to the control of the Indianapolis Museum of Art Horticultural Society who eventually partnered with the city’s Indy Parks Greenways and Indianapolis Water Company initiative, to develop a nature trail, art and nature park (Indianapolis Museum of Art 2017) (Figures 1.47, 1.48, 1.49, 1.50).
In making some decisive moves with regard to the nature and character of the park the IMA wanted to create, the decision was made to stray from the typical model of a well-cultivated and manicured landscape-as-frame for largescale sculpture approach.
The organizers wanted the landscape “to provide a space for looking at art and also for experiencing it in relation to the distinctive environment in which it is inextricably enmeshed” (Blackwell 2015).

The commission for the project was offered through invitation to a number of design teams, generally made up of an architect and landscape architect. Blackwell was approached and he immediately contacted Blake, whom he had worked with on smaller-scale projects in the past. Blake accepted his invitation to partner and together the two generated a proposal which they presented to the IMA board in two parts. As Blackwell recalls in his lecture titled “Figures and Edges” presented publicly at the IMA, that the board was first toured around numerous examples of Blackwell’s projects in Fayetteville, Arkansas (Blackwell 2012). The following day the board arrived in Picayune, Mississippi where Blake toured them around the Crosby Arboretum and deliver his proposal for the landscape portion of the project. The board, who had interviewed multiple teams, was taken by Blake’s proposal but favored a different architect and asked Blake if he would consider teaming with the alternative architect to complete the commission. Blake refused, stating that he started with Marlon and he would stay with him. The board, apparently unwilling to lose Blake, relented and the team was officially selected to undertake the project (Blackwell 2015).
As the project was initiated, the team was joined by Mary Miss and structural engineer Guy Nordenson upon the suggestion of the IMA. Together they conducted a thorough inventory of the site and found numerous mounds of construction debris of differing size scattered in the floodplain. The team choose to engage these mounds and “carve” from them a series of hollows with landscape feature and stormwater control structures. In 2008, with the economic recession reaching its zenith, the IMA announced that the team would need to significantly reduce the size and scale of features in the park. Going back to the drawing board the team adjusted and Blake remade his plans for the park with a new entry sequence and without the extensive raingardens and built features he had planned. In addition, he worked with Blackwell to develop the Ruth Lilly Visitor’s
Pavilion, by resolving the tricky site condition which was located five feet below the floodplain. Blake reconsidered his original raingardens and replaced them with a plaza, he also minimized the Toe Paths and a number of bridges needed to create his desired effects (Blackwell 2012).

Figure 1.49 100: Acres Nature Trail, Photo by: Jedediah J 9 May 2011

Image source: https://foursquare.com/v/100-acres-the-virginia-b-fairbanks-art--nature-park/4ba43e47f964a520608f38e3?openPhotoId=502821abe4b08f94e6078111 Date Accessed: 10.4.2017
The version of the park that was ultimately realized has far less landscape design intervention than Blake had originally planned. However, here again we witness Blake’s design and planning dexterity at work. Marlon Blackwell explains that Blake had strategically designed what was built to be supplemented by future works, functioning as an armature to support the necessary function but capable of being later enhanced. He was confident that the funding would one day return, and rather than design a project for the given situation he designed a project to evolve over time, enforcing his principle of holistic design approach (Blackwell 2012).

Figure 1.50 One of the 15 *Bench Around the Lake* installations by Jeppe Hein, 2010

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE & PEER CRITIQUE

Review of Literature & Peer Critique

As a method of generating a clear overview of Blake’s standing in the field of landscape architecture this chapter attempts to outline and categorize the existing literary record of publicly accessible commentary. The chapter is organized to follow a two-part framework. The literary record of Blake’s life and work is bifurcated, primarily falling into two categories of literature including self-generated and second party critique, as offered by peers and contemporaries. This first section considers the peer generated literature, mostly dedicated to exploring and interpreting Blake’s contributions to the development of Eco-Revelatory Design. The remaining record is an assemblage of relatively brief, popular media-based reviews and varyingly descriptive abstracts highlighting the qualities of Blake’s projects.

Unfortunately, very little public record exists of the jury comments and critique provided as part of the ASLA awards program recognitions. It should also be stated that ERD was not, according to sources close to Blake, a central focus of his practice. Blake was simply invited to participate in the ERD exhibition based upon the works of his practice and the title was applied to his submission as a requisite of inclusion.

Edward Blake Jr. As Defined by His Realized Works

In this section of the study all pertinent literature that offers a record of Blake’s work as critiqued by others is discussed. The section is organized chronologically to
enable the reader’s understanding of Blake’s maturation process and growing reputation within the field. Prior to the early 1980s it is difficult to determine the nature of Blake’s design thinking and production based on the existing literary record. The majority of published literature accounts for the period after Blake’s departure from the Wichita area.

The first significant entry was made by Landscape Architecture magazine when it published an article in 1984 called The Horticultural Reconnection. Author Mac Griswold characterizes Blake as a “New Regionalist” in this work, which emerged shortly after Blake began the Crosby Arboretum project. Griswold explains New Regionalist designers to be focused on the native ecologies above abstract design thinking. He goes on to state that this band of thinkers were, “born of the fear that we are losing all our distinctive native landscapes” (Griswold 1994, p.46). The article begins to outline some of Blake’s upbringing, telling of his early probes into land stewardship and ecological design on the family tree farm in Pocahontas, MS. The commentary tells of he and his father spending thirty years meticulously and methodically returning their depleted sixty-acre family farm into the native sweetgum and loblolly pinelands that were once typical. “I had seen what happened at Pocahontas” Blake remarks in considering the restorative work to be done at the Arboretum, “That gave me faith” (Griswold 1994).

When describing the methods applied to developing the Crosby Arboretum, Blake states that it was a case of, “gardening with nature in the sense that we are managing nature towards specific purposes” (Griswold 1994, p.49). Griswold’s article also recounts Blake’s more pointed works in horticulture acknowledging his work in the development of the first taxonomy of woody plants for the region. Leslie Sauer of Andropogon
Associates concludes this look at Blake’s work stating, “[Blake represents] a set of ideas about changing attitudes towards horticulture” (Griswold 1994, p.50).

Following the 1984 national exposé of Blake and his involvement with horticultural thinking and design development, the methods discussed in the article bore fruit in the form of a 1991 ASLA Centennial Medallion for the Crosby Arboretum which was publicized in Landscape Architecture magazine. The 1991 article, by David Dillion, suggests Blake and Andropogon’s design to be innovative and uncharacteristic of the work of that period stating it to be among the first of the southeast region to explore a new set of ideas about arboretum design. Within the descriptive text of the article one finds a very complimentary quote provided by Alex Krieger, who later invited Blake to teach a studio at the Harvard GSD. Krieger expresses his intrigue with Blake as a designer remarking that his work is both “ecologically didactic and experientially picturesque” (American Society of Landscape Architects 1991, p.55).

Approaching the mid 1990s, after years serving as the Director of the Crosby Arboretum, Blake was ready to engage a new set of issues. As Marilyn Blake suggests, “Ed was not interested in managing The Arboretum’s daily operations, finances, and funding raising” (M. Blake 2017). In 1994 Blake accepted Krieger’s offer and begins his guest teaching role at the Harvard GSD. In the same year, he is recognized one final time for his work at the Crosby Arboretum in the form of the highest honor of his career, the ASLA Alfred B. LaGasse Medal. As stated by the ASLA, the medal is granted in recognition of individuals who, through professional practice or utilization of landscape architecture, have made notable contributions to the management of resources, the management of public lands, or the management of other lands in the public interest. This
recognition must have surely pleased Blake as one of his supreme mentors, Ian McHarg, had received the LaGasse only a few years prior (American Society of Landscape Architects 2017).

In 1998, on the heels of these major awards, Blake’s work at the Crosby Arboretum was critiqued in *Landscape Narratives: Design Practices of Telling Stories* written by Matthew Potteiger and Jamie Purinton (Potteiger 1998). The text outlines the Crosby Arboretum’s systems of narrative portrayal focusing on the use of ecology as the means to generating what the authors refer to as an “open-narrative”. Credit is given for the effective deployment of moisture. The authors describe the means by which Blake and Andropogon use the creation of the Beaver Pond, and subsequent “moisture gradient”, to “set it all in motion” thus beginning of the project narrative or the myth around which the remaining composition is tied (Potteiger 1998, p.52). Repeatedly comparing the Crosby Arboretum to the Villa Lante for its ability to create its own context, the authors discuss the means by which the Arboretum tells a story about the former landscape and the succeeding stages of ecological development that once occurred on the site. Emphasis is placed upon the work of Fay Jones and Blake to create a mimetic contextualism through the highly tectonic detailing used in defining the Pincote Pavilion and Arboretum grounds. This critique of the work seems appropriate as Blake at one time consulted with a Japanese garden designer and Fay Jones, disciple of Frank Lloyd Wright, was also known for his interest in Japanese miniaturization and design. As the authors summarize the Arboretum and the narrative it attempts to support they claim, the story is about connecting to a larger frame of reference. (Potteiger 1998, pp.61-64). In so doing they help to underscore Blake’s notion that “architecture is larger than the subject
of architecture”, an ideology which Blake promotes throughout the remainder of his career (E. L. Blake 2004).

Following the Harvard appointment Blake restarted his professional practice in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. While he began with only a single rented desk in Albert’s architecture studio, Blake was able to grow his practice into a nationally regarded firm within a decade. Blake’s 1998 invited exhibition of the Hattiesburg Lake Terrace Convention Center in the *Eco-Revelatory Design: Nature Constructed/Nature Revealed* exhibition hosted by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, surely aided in the advancement of his reputation. The exhibit, subsequently publicized by *Landscape Journal* as a special issue, included fifteen unique projects. The projects were categorized to fit within six themed tracks including: *Abstraction and Simulation, New Uses / Deeper Caring, Signifying Features, Exposing Infrastructure Processes, Reclaiming, Remembering, Reviewing and Changing Perspectives*. The Journal included the first publication of a formal ERD lexicon used in the definition of Eco-Revelatory Design. The lexicon was established by the exhibition committee including: Brenda Brown, Terry Harkness, and Doug Johnston. The committee defined Eco-Revelatory Design as, “landscape architecture intended to reveal and interpret ecological phenomena, processes, and relationships” (B. H. Brown 1998, p.xii). The journal also includes numerous interpretations of ERD as defined within the eight critical essays developed by a select group of thinkers in the field. Essayists include leading landscape architecture theorists and practitioners, Susan Galatowitsch, Richard Haag, Catherine Howett, Carolyn Merchant, Patricia Phillips, Robert Thayer, and Frederick Turner. The published essays recount the exhibition and offer critique of the projects as they understand them to relate
to the exhibition theme of ERD. Additionally, The Journal included Blake’s own written
description of his project straightforwardly entitled: *Hattiesburg Lake Terrace
Convention Center* (E. L. Blake, "Hattiesburg Lake Terrace Convention Center" 1998).

As stated previously this exhibition forms the bulk of the literature produced in
direct critique of Blake’s work. One may speculate that the academic nature of this
exhibition provides the greatest insight to Blake’s standing among the national landscape
architecture community. That would be however, a reading of Blake’s work based upon
only a single project. In addition, a careful review of the exhibition will disclose that
Blake’s work was among the only built-project exhibited. These factors all work to
influence opinion and the reading of Blake’s work. One should use caution in relying on
these critiques alone as they are limited in scope and historical overview as it relates to
the full scope of Blake’s completed body of works.

In this section of the literary review a selection of pointed critiques is used to
outline various interpretations of Blake’s Hattiesburg Lake Terrace Convention Center
project. Blake’s description of his project eludes to an emerging theme which he later
refers to as *landscape-culture* inclusive of the *human-made* and *nature-made*, history,
and functional attributes of the land (Blackwell 2015). Blake suggests that the land may
once again serve humanity by bringing to visitors a “richly varied expression of an urban
creek’s flood plain” (E. L. Blake 1998, p.18). “Through choreographing the landscape’s
infrastructure of landform, circulation, and web of life, my purpose has been to reveal the
nature and origins of this place” (E. L. Blake 1998, p.18). Blake goes on to speak of the
need for people to know their place “Cognition, or knowing, comes to us through living
life. We get to know places by living with them. The design is a means of facilitating
learning by revealing this landscape’s structure panoramically and sequentially” (E. L. Blake 1998, p.18).

Brenda Brown, Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Manitoba, offers the first critique of the Hattiesburg Lake Terrace project. Brown suggests the project to represent landscape based on associations of soil, water, and plants. She goes on to state “It [Lake Terrace] is a miniature reconstruction of the characteristic, strongly water-dependent habitats and botanical communities of the Mississippi lowlands.” (B. Brown 1998, p.57). She argues that Blake’s project, like other water-focused works, “are energized by the act of uncovering and subsequently celebrating that substance usually hidden, abstracted, and simplified” (B. Brown 1998, p.57). In this commentary, we see Blake emerging as a pioneering figure with regard to the use of stormwater as a primary design element, a commonly deployed strategy in contemporary landscape design.

Carolyn Merchant, in reference to the character of the design exhibition, opens her critique of Blake’s work with a quote from her own 1996 book, Earthcare: Women and the Environment reciting “the greatest good for the human and nonhuman community is to be found in their mutual living interdependence” (Merchant 1998, p.69). Merchant states, “The new ethic supplants older self-interested and human-centered ethics.” (Merchant 1998, p.69). Her belief is in a new ethic, a “Partnership Ethic” that requires the equitable exchange among nature and man. She uses this notion of a “Partnership Ethic” to recount the careful attention paid by Blake to allow nature to become “conscious of itself through design” (Merchant 1998, p.70).
“The effort to extract the essence of the mother landscape is certainly a worthy eco-revelatory goal” claims Richard Haag in his article *Eco-revelatory design: The challenge of the exhibit* (Haag 1998, p.75). “The challenge of observing, adapting, and abstracting archetypes from the eco-ethos has had a long and unbroken (until recently) history in Asia. This challenge is seldom answered in our culture, although notable exceptions do come to mind, including Jen Jenson, A.E. Bye, Larry Halprin, Terry Harkness, Darrell Morrison, and Grant Jones” (Haag 1998, p.75). The references provided by Haag associates Blake’s project with the works of two professional mentors Blake admired, Lawrence Halprin and Grant Jones. Furthermore, reading into Haag’s quote regarding the observation, adaptation and abstraction of archetypes from eco-ethos, aligns with Blake’s emerging design principle of following nature’s lead and framing, sometimes abstractly such as in the Lake Terrace weir cascade structure, particular moments of nature’s work as a means of re-presenting something we take for granted in a way that helps one to appreciate the intricacies of nature’s processes and structures (Haag 1998, p.75).

Susan M. Galatowitsch opens her essay *Ecological Design for Environmental Problem Solving* by first pointing to the necessity for humankind to approach the issue of environmental degradation from a design point of view as opposed to that of a regulatory stance. She suggests, “Incentives [to protect and rehabilitate the landscape] likely to be more durable are those that increase appreciation for environmental quality, either directly through experience or indirectly through education (Schroeber 1996, in part). This mode relies on people experiencing places, understanding their relevance and wanting to have more places like them. Ecological design is, in large part, about creating
the places to think about, appreciate, and advance environmental quality. (Galatowitsch 1998, p.99)” Galatowitsch goes on to compliment Blake’s attempt to reveal ecological performance through the lens of human desire and appreciation for place. Galatowitsch uses an interesting, and appropriate set of terms. Human desire and appreciation of place, seems to align perfectly with Blake’s interests in allowing people to enjoy their environment first and only then, through that enjoyment, do they appreciate the particulars of nature that he has carefully framed. Here again, we see what may be considered a design principle. The strategy is at the very least, one that Blake repeatedly deploys in his work.

In Patrician Phillips essay, Intelligible Images: The Dynamic of Discourse she makes the assertion that “Many disciplines are intent on making the formerly invisible apparent. Sometimes this objective is critical. Inscrutable processes are disclosed and openly interrogated.” Phillips continues, stating “With a generous range of scales and situations, strategies and solutions, eco-revelatory design is about intent rather than result” (Phillips 1998, p.109). These words seem appropriate as Phillips makes numerous comparisons between the conceptualized pulse of visitors to the convention center and the pulses of floodwaters coursing through the projects wetland areas. “In its challenging and changing character, the landscape evokes the programmatic diversity of the [Hattiesburg Lake Terrace] convention center. Like the changing rosters of visitors at the site, subjects and ideas circulate freely in the design” (Phillips 1998, p.115). Here again we see an insightful critique, as Blake promotes on numerous occasions his interest in making present, through intensification of the native, the processes of nature which are often hidden in plain sight.
Offering a less complimentary critique, Robert L. Thayer, Jr. author of *Landscape as an Ecologically Revealing Language*, he summarizes the concept of Eco-Revelatory Design as “visual ecology” (R. L. Thayer 1998, p.118). He states that for a project to be fully ecological it must work first to regenerate the land. This assertion is witnessed in his critique of Blake’s project which he refers to as “an elaborate landscape metaphor in the grand modernist tradition” (R. L. Thayer 1998, p.122). Thayer suggests the waterfall element of Blake’s design to be non-regenerative and exceedingly commercial, “one questions what kind of healing is being done beyond the chamber-of-commerce, grand design marking of a region” (R. L. Thayer 1998, p.123). Thayer elaborates on his commentary sarcastically questioning if Halprin’s Auditorium Forecourt Fountain in Portland is Eco-Revelatory Design? He declares, “Blake’s design is highly successful as traditional landscape architecture goes-even revelatory in a certain experiential way by employing the momentum of professional tradition towards the metaphor of region” (R. L. Thayer 1998, p.123). Thayer closes in stating that he “want[s] more from this plan…”, however-more in the way of healing and regeneration than is offered by a fancy fountain, expensive tile patios and elaborate seating walls, and hidden electrical pumps and filters” (R. L. Thayer 1998, p.123). His essay advocates for more responsible and quantifiable engagement on the part of landscape architects. He outlines the need for designers to *present* not *represent* ecological function (R. L. Thayer 1998). This is a key criticism of Blake’s project submission however in no way unique to Blake’s work as landscape architects are not biologists. Furthermore, he writes that the objective of ERD should be to *heal* above simply *reveal*. Importantly, with regard to Blake’s design philosophy, we see here yet another reference to the works of Halprin in relation to Blake’s design. While
perhaps not flattering, they reference is insightful. For Halprin the ERD idiom did not
eexist until well into his career. Halprin’s design principles are challenging to characterize
especially given the broad range of design goals he often had to meet. From commercial
projects to environmentally focused projects and many combinations between, as a
practitioner it seems one’s principles and agenda must be reasonably accommodating.
Similarly, one might suggest Blake’s design principles to be flexible as none of his
projects were predetermined products of a tightly defined ERD design paradigm.
Thayer’s critique seems naively rigid, in that most of the other projects exhibited were
not built works. Designing to meet the ERD agenda within an idealized project, client,
site, etc. is very different from the reality of reconciling ERD with the issues typical to
project realization. While Thayer’s critique is valid with regard to the purity of Blake’s
ecological agenda, he does seem to hold an ecological-purity/function bias when
measured against the other essayists conception of ERD realization. Considering the
project from a more local perspective, the notion of a convention center program being
realized with any degree of concern for ecological and environmental restoration seems
far reaching for both the time and location. Outside of a few highly progressive cities, for
such a project to be built in Hattiesburg, MS seems a credit to Blake’s conviction and
skill to inculcate ecological function with commercial necessity.

Rounding out the critical essays that accompany the Eco-Revelatory Design
exhibition is A Cracked Case by Frederick Turner. Opening his essay, Turner speaks of
the common human tendency to try and hide acts of environmental aggression citing the
East German secret law declaring certain environmental “sacrifices” to be a state secret.
His words seem to suggest an interest in healing as the means of landscape articulation.
Additionally, he uses the lens of *ritual performance* to characterize Blake’s project. “The Hattiesburg center diverges somewhat from the general move [referring to the progressive circuitry like circulation design of the great garden of Stourhead in England] of these exhibits toward an open and unplanned synergy; everything here seems planned to the last detail. But there ought to be places where humans have given the initiative over to other species.” He continues, “old and new genres of human performance-the garden as aristocratic moral pageant and the garden as futuristic terra-forming epic-are combined in this very interesting American arcadia” (Turner 1998, p.134). Turners critique is compelling in that it declares Blake’s work to be a variance. The exception suggested refers to the directed and intentional nature of Blake’s circulation choreography. One must question this statements origin. In doing so it is possible to conclude that the other projects may lack such characteristics due to their scale. Perhaps because the majority of the projects were hypothetical they simply lacked definition, or a specific architectural program. Whatever the case here we see another reference to RSVP Cycles and Halprin’s “scoring” method, Blake’s “Lake Journey” is without question a descendent of Halprin’s earlier convention.

Concluding the review of the literature devoted to the Eco-Revelatory Design exhibition it is important to note that a short list of recommendations for increased success of ERD was generated. The list includes the following directives for future ERD practitioners: *increase visibility of ecological function, enlarge the scope of functions, integrate scientific research, and provide for the human experience*. These recommendations were drawn from the essays and assembled as a general consensus.
In the years to follow the ERD exhibition between 1999 and 2009 Blake would
give twenty-three major lectures around the country from the Harvard GSD to the
California State Polytechnic University, he crisscrossed the country talking about his
ideas. Curiously little however was published by Blake who was perhaps more involved
with his practice than the academic pursuits of publication. Furthermore, it is clear that
the work Blake was pursuing was in large part devoted to largescale planning and
development which in general does not lend itself well to awards submissions, let alone
publicly available review. Between the turn of the century and the economic recession,
which ran from approximately 2007 to 2010, Blake completed three of the works
considered in this study. The Vicksburg Children’s Art Park, RiverCamps on Crooked
Creek, and the Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park. While RiverCamps is a
privately held gated subdivision for clients who tend to prefer discretion, the Vicksburg
Children’s Art Park is a public amenity which could easily have been submitted for
award or other forms of peer recognition. Sadly however, no record exists of its
submission or reception of an award.
A publication of note that was published during this period came in the form of an academic study titled, *Visitor Perceptions of Ecological Design at the Crosby Arboretum, Picayune, Mississippi*. The study written by Robert F. Brzuszek and James Clark, was published in *Native Plants* journal in the summer of 2009. In the study, the Crosby Arboretum is examined for its compliance, or lack thereof, to five principles which were said to be critical to the positive user perception of an ecologically focused work of landscape architecture. The five principles are neatly summarized by Louise A. Mozingo in her article *The Aesthetics of Ecological Design: Seeing Science as Culture* published in the Spring 1997 *Landscape Journal* 16 volume 1. In this study, the authors suggest Mozingo’s five principles to offer a valid set of metrics by which to measure positive visitor experience. Via a visitor survey the authors test for the presence, intensity of expression, and perceived value of the five principles, including *Visibility, Temporality, Reiterated Form, Expression, and Metaphor* (Mozingo 1997, pp.50-57). The resulting data reveals that Blake and Andropogon had, to varying degrees, successfully incorporated all of Mozingo’s identified principles in the design of the Crosby Arboretum. Importantly, one should note that Mozingo’s identified principles had not been outlined prior to the Crosby Arboretum’s planning and design. Suggesting that Blake and Andropogon’s work at Crosby, in part, may have helped to inform those who developed the accepted principles (Mozingo 1997). According to Brzuszek and Clark’s research, the work of the Crosby Arboretum predated the principles outlined in Mozingo’s article by as many as nine years (R. F. Brzuszek 2009). It seems that Blake recognized the potential in his early work at the Crosby Arboretum as he continued to clarify his design principles following a version of them throughout his later works.
In 2010, following the completion of the IMA Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park: 100 Acres a new set of external critiques emerged. Due in part to the publicity and importance of this project numerous national media outlets offered announcements and reviews of the park and its design. Reviews were issued by The New York Times, Metropolis Magazine, The Dirt, by the American Society of Landscape Architects, Architectural Record and The Architect’s Newspaper who reported the new art park to be a “hybrid of art, landscape, and architecture” (Betsky 2010). Describing the project in more detail they write, “Blake’s work in itself is a lesson in what (landscape) architecture can and increasingly does do: It is an act of recuperation and subtle adjustment, wherein he removed most of the non-native “blow-ins” and planted trees and bushes to define larger and smaller spaces, winding paths through the park to connect it all together. Spaces appear and sequences evolve, what can be is preserved, and the new appears as a comment on or in contrast to the old” (Betsky 2010). It seems this quote aligns with Blake’s general approach of making history, and the passage of time, a very present and tangible phenomenon within his work.

In His Own Words: The Writings of Edward Blake Jr.

This portion of the literature review includes personal quotes, correspondences, and self-reflective writings by Edward Blake Jr. The work was collected by Professor Robert Brzuszek in large part from the personal collection of Marilyn Blake. The inclusions are distilled to highlight some consistently used themes and design tenets as noted previously in this study.
The turn of the century ushered with it a very productive period for The Landscape Studio and in 2009 Blake was invited to contribute to the book, *Becoming a Landscape Architect: a guide to careers in design*, written by Kelleann Foster. In the book Blake offers his definition of Landscape Architecture stating, “Landscape architecture is planning and designing the structure of the land, human-made and nature-made. Nature-made is a green infrastructure of living things, including plant communities and their landforms. Nature-made infrastructures are remade by where and how we place them. Human-made constructions are things we design or place. They form a mosaic of circulation corridors, both animal and machine, buildings for shelter and gathering, utilities and familiar site amenities that grace the communities where we live” (Foster 2010, p.4). While the book is meant as an introduction to the profession for high school and freshman college students it does reveal a bit about Blake’s lasting design principles. His definition once again suggests the need for holistic thought and the role of the landscape architects as the person who balances the many needs of any project to yield the maximum effect. His reference to human-made and nature-made reflects is commitment to the revelation of the land’s history as a design tenet.

As the book unfolds Foster asks numerous questions of her contributors such as, “What does it take to become a successful landscape architect?” to which Blake responds, “a love of people, because a very important thing that we do is help others realize their visions for the places they want to be. The only way that we can understand their vision is to get to know them and feel very comfortable with them like you would a good friend” he also adds “Persistence, persistence, persistence. In our work, it often takes so long to be realized” (Foster 2010, p.17). These responses reflect Blake’s careful nature. As a
practicing landscape architect Blake, unlike many of the ERD contributors was faced with the sometime limiting and even harsh realities of a clients’ “must have” list. Within this additional set of “must haves” Blake seemed to be able to remain focused on the values that mean the most to his way of thinking while helping the client to appreciate those values as well. In describing his process, he states, “At the front end we work very hard to develop the conceptual framework of the design based on understanding a place-the cultural structure, as well as the biological structure” (Foster 2010, p.34). Here again Blake returns to his principle of making what is already a part of the site the starting point for what will become the new landscape.

Responding to another of Foster’s questions, “Which aptitudes and skills do you see in most landscape architects?” Blake offers a response that seems to embody his signature as a design thinker. “The most important thing is an empathy for nature- a sense of knowing that if you’re going to shape the home of people, plants and animals, you do that in an empathetic way.” “I go back to an old seventies expression, “think globally and act locally” (Foster 2010, p.35). Really learning the place [in which] you live and understanding it as community, and then working from that understanding” (Foster 2010, p.35). This way of thinking is echoed throughout Blake’s mid and later works where he intently derives design response from the material at-hand. For Blake, this motto resurfaces again and again as in the Catfish Row Children’s Art Park where ruins are remade or the RiverCamps project where the river and native patterns inform and define Blake’s work which acts more as an intervention than invention. “After working outside of Mississippi…” Blake recalls, “I looked at my native land with new eyes. It’s probably fair to say that I saw it for the first time” (R. F. Brzuszek 2014, p.36). Returning to the
fundamental themes of Blake’s work this quote helps to illustrate that Blake underwent a
transformation. From his early years of practice to his later works, Blake seems to find a
new interest in the value of place and slowness (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1  *Pavilion Clearing.* Photo by: Edward Blake Jr.,
Image source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: unknown

Upon accepting a position in the Landscape Architecture Department at
Mississippi State University in 1977, Blake constructed his passive solar home known as
SunHouse. “Here [in the SunHouse], I became conscious of human-made structures
expressive of nature-made ones. Senses informed intellect and lived experience-
strengthened erudition. My teaching came to reflect this.” As Blake writes, in his
personal notebook, his attentiveness to the patterns of the sun, much like the winds, rain,
and natural cycles seems to have been heightened. This revelation can be understood to
have influenced his professional design work as in this phase of his life he was becoming
involved with the Crosby Arboretum, a self-declared seminal work (Figure 2.2).
“At the Crosby Arboretum, in Picayune, Mississippi, I listened for and found my voice” (E. J. Blake n.y.). Blake continues his reflection of place, “Genius loci and sense of place became important qualities guiding my perception of landscape’s architecture.” (E. J. Blake n.y.). Blake’s careful turn of phrase Landscape’s Architecture, gives a possible clue to his intent for landscape architecture to be about re-presenting and framing what is already there rather than importing something foreign or new.

Looking ahead to his Hattiesburg Lake Terrace project one see’s that the landscape, in Blake’s eyes, was already existing in the ancient floodplain, his job was merely to frame it using the necessities of human dwelling as the edges and bounds that gave appreciation and revelation to the ecology and natural beauty of the site (Figure 2.3).
“During my tenure at the Crosby…” “I gained insights of how landscapes are perceived from all who interacted with this place” (E. J. Blake n.y.). Here, Blake considers the occupant, humanity and the illusions and apprehensions that the individual carries into any work of design. Blake, through his efforts to reveal and inform the patrons of the Crosby Arboretum, seems to have learned significant lessons of inclusion and generosity. His writing expresses a deep interest in the needs of people. His work follows suite, bending from the sternly held geometries and composition of his early 1970s education to allow for a degree of ambiguity and inclusiveness. The idiosyncrasies of the occupant are transformed into the joys of the participant as Blake accommodates people considering them now as a part of a place. “Exploiting the boundary between agent and medium, so that each is seen more clearly, is our purpose of site-specific intentions.” “I began to see the land as culture-nature signatures of time and place” (E. J. Blake n.y.).
Regarding the IMA 100: Acres Art & Nature Park Blake published *Placing Nature as Art Park: Genesis of a landscape’s architecture* in the *Public Garden Magazine*. In the short article, published in 2007, Blake explains that: “The Park will be made into a place where art and landform are conceived and placed to reveal origins” (E. L. Blake 2007, p. 18). Blake outlines the landscape’s history and place in relation to the dynamic actions of the White River and its role in creating the resulting landscape. Here again we see Blake discussing a timeline which links the project site through thousands of years. The notion of story-telling and the revelation of historical change and ecological shift emerges quickly as the principle materials for Blake’s design conception. He continues on to speaks a great deal about the act of exploring the *Landscape Journeys* he created throughout the Park. He suggests that “Exploring these journeys one senses the parallel reciprocities of one’s self and one’s place” (E. L. Blake 2007, p. 20). He outlines his intent to place and place by immersing the visitor among the sensuous elements of nature previously inherent to the site but under-appreciated for their value. He also explains that the design relies upon a different approach to the convention of “refiguring place to express an idea or tell a story” in that “the genesis of the Art and Nature Park is the story” (E. L. Blake 2007, p. 20).
CHAPTER III

Oral Histories & Edward Blake Jr.’s Design Principles

Oral Histories & Blake’s Design Principles

In a stroke of luck Blake’s personally defined design principles were unearthed by Professor Robert Brzuszek while he was doing research for his book, *The Crosby Arboretum: A Sustainable Regional Landscape* (R. F. Brzuszek 2014). It is unclear if, or to what extent, these principles were in existence prior to 2004 when Blake made the list included here, however the list does provide a clear outline of what was important to him at a point in his career where he had reached full maturity, as suggested by Marlon Blackwell who states, “When I worked with him he was already starting to stretch his practice, he was hitting his stride” (Blackwell 2015).

It should also be noted that these principles may not be universal, and may in fact have been project specific. Given the date of their recording they were likely composed in relation to the ongoing design of the IMA Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park.

Edward Blake Jr.’s Design Principles 2004 (Figure 3.1):

- Privilege qualities over quantities, phenomena over pictorial, spirit over efficiency.
- Expand the perceptions of user’s relationships. More visceral than intellectual, more evocative than literary, more chant than melody.
- Architecture is larger than the subject of architecture. Understanding through the sense of what things are, not what they mean.
- Organizations revealed through time.
These notes below Blake’s principles help to inform his methodology and the means by which he aimed to achieve the principles he devised. As Marlon Blackwell put it when asked what single issue was most important to Blake?

“the importance of the process, you know, observation, careful interpretation of a place, to expand upon it or intensify it. That was super important to him. This was something he took a long-view on. To him, it was really important to whatever he made for it to be an extension of the process that was already there.
He thought that was really important. It was very critical to him, that design came out of careful observation. To him, it was more of a bottom up process, more inductive, not exclusively but the way he often looked at things. He was very interested in particulars” (Blackwell 2015).

While regrettably, this direct evidence of Blake’s thinking about design principles came to light after the oral histories collection was conducted for this study, their discovery is useful in informing the value structure of Blake’s work. The oral history questionnaire and interview, was intended to indirectly solicit information about what design principles Blake followed. With his design principles personally provided, the oral histories are used herein as a means of measuring the degree to which Blake’s stated design principles were perceived and achieved in view of the oral history providers. Wherever a reference is presented within the oral histories transcripts these passages are tied to Blake’s stated design principle(s). It should be noted that some degree of interpretation was required, if correlations exist among the oral histories and/or that which has been written of Blake’s work, as provided in the literature review, then a clear demonstration of the principle is said to exist. For the sake of clarity, Blake’s design principles are considered individually beginning with his first stated principle.

The First Principle: Privilege qualities over quantities, phenomena over pictorial, spirit over efficiency

Blake seemingly worked hard to privilege qualities over quantities and phenomena over the pictorial. In reference to the IMA Art & Nature Park Marlon Blackwell explains, “The experience was first for him. He wasn’t a trend setter in that way. He didn’t get caught up in trends or the fashion of the day. Form came out of fact of
what he was trying to do experientially” (Blackwell, Marlon Blackwell Interview 1 2015). This sentiment is mirrored in the critiques of the IMA Art & Nature Park where critics such as Julianna Thibodeaux of nuvo.net describes The Art Park as a relatively untamed woodland which challenges the neighboring formal gardens as a more appropriate means of supporting art as a component of the art rather than a backdrop for it (Thibodeaux 2010). This critique also aligns with Blake’s personal desire for The Park’s role and reading as an unobtrusive yet supportive landscape. As Blackwell reports, “He often said, when it’s all done it should feel like I was never here, he really wanted to be seamless with the setting. He was always just improving on it, intensifying it.” (Blackwell, Marlon Blackwell Interview 1 2015). Samuel Hogue confirms Blake’s interest in this idea over the range of works he did from large to small-scale. Hogue describes, “he strove for passive enjoyment much more than active kinds of spatial organization” (Hogue 2015).

With regard to the other component of this principle, Blake’s dictum of seeking *Spirit Over Efficiency*, numerous sources speak about his tireless work ethic and drive to ensure that his designs were correct above finished. Longtime assistant Samuel Hogue recalls: “He had to break with some clients – he was big on doing alternative plans with full cost estimates and with all that you can hear the cash register … So, several projects fell apart, potential projects, fell apart because they thought he was spending too much time, showing them too many different ways to do the same thing” (Hogue 2015).

Blake’s thinking is often described by his collaborators as web-like. Many struggled to respond to questions which requested them to characterize Blake’s areas of focus. Robert Poore recalls, “Ed would come in, sit down with the flooring person, and
tie his paving outside with the paving and flooring inside. That detail that Ed was willing
to go way beyond to do. Ed could see the interconnection of everything” (Poore,
Interview 1 2015). It seems Blake was unwilling to make hasty ill-informed decisions for
the sake of completion or of achieving a false sense of resolution even in the face of
continually reduced project budgets. In one example, the Virginia B. Fairbanks Art &
Nature Park: 100 Acres, Marlon Blackwell recalls Blake’s willingness to rework his
design time and again to accommodate the shrinking budget triggered by the economic
moved to a strategy of phasing in which he would plan to return to the project when
funding would return. In so doing he never accepted the notion of an easy solution for the
sake of doing something, he simply reworked the design to function within the given
budget but remain open-ended to accommodate the supplemental details he envisioned all
along. “He never got to realize this [the original plan] because they kept hitting him with
cost reductions, because they just didn’t have the money, or they would put it toward that,
so he came to the point that I’m just going to make the best of what I have here, and we’ll
just build on it over time, he had that kind of long term approach” (Blackwell, Marlon
Blackwell Interview 1 2015).

The Second Principle: Expand the perceptions of user’s relationships. More visceral
than intellectual, more evocative than literary, more chant than melody.

Relating to this design principle Marlon Blackwell, who embodies the sentiment
of many of the oral history providers, states the following about Blake’s capacity for the
generation of projects which transcend typical objectives to support a larger agenda. “I
think Ed was one of those unique landscape architects that had the ability to work at
multiple scales and he was especially good, I think, strategically at looking at the large scale. He could really zoom-in on the design of a gate, or the design of a waterfall, or something of that nature. So, he had a great agility to think in eons, and minutes, and seconds” (Blackwell, Marlon Blackwell Interview 1 2015).

Robert Ivy confirms this ability by stating, “I had literally called him Cosmic Ed … he could talk about, you know, expanding a grid out into the cosmos and what would that mean and how that could then be reflected back to earth. He was thinking down to the particular of where a Pitcher Plant was located and where that Pitcher Plant related to micro site, to macro site in this case, the whole arboretum, and then out into the world and beyond that to what I call a cosmic view. He really looked and thought concurrently with this sort of broad view that is most unusual in any designer” (Ivy 2015).

Reading further into Blake’s stated principle, he seems to be favoring the act of experience over the intellectual consideration of the landscape’s architecture. This aligns with some of the criticisms offered by Robert L. Thayer a critic of the Eco-Revelatory Design Exhibition who suggests Blake did not go far enough to push an agenda of pure ecology and environmental regeneration but rather he focused on human enjoyment (R. L. Thayer 1998). Here we may see that Blake was in fact more interested in the artistry of the landscape’s architecture than its ecological function. Both Robert Poore and Samuel Hogue make similar suggestions about Blake’s artistically focused principles, especially those promoted towards the end of his career (Poore, Interview 1 2015). Robert Ivy however hints that this may have always been Blake’s agenda when, in discussing the Crosby Arboretum he states, “he [Ed] did carry the whole ecological agenda forward but not at the polemical level. This was not what he was trying to convince other people what
he was doing was displaying it and showing it so that it's an appreciation of the reality of the landscape and any landscape architecture as a human construct” (Ivy 2015).

It may be argued that Blake was consistently torn between the artistic and ecological aspects of the landscape. He seems to have been adept in managing the careful balance of ecological exposure and artistic appeal. Marlon Blackwell offers the following regarding this question and how Blake employed the ecology of the IMA Art & Nature Park “It’s one thing to say it and another to see it, he did not have a heavy hand, he tried to extend or expand our ideas” (Blackwell, Marlon Blackwell Interview 1 2015).

Stepping nearly twenty years backward in time, while at the Crosby Arboretum when he was learning how one might incorporate ecological aspects of the landscape into the design process, Maurice Jennings confirms, “that was a very important thing to Ed. That the site become a showplace for that ecological capacity. And that the plants, that we're talking about, that grow in one elevation and not in the other and in the savanna where we have the reduction in trees what happens under the trees and such, ah, it was very, very, important” (Jennings, Maurice Jennings Interview 1 2015).

Robert Poore, speaking about Blake’s design agenda only days prior to his death states that Blake told him “Art was more important to the way he saw the aesthetics than the ecology. He’s known as an ecologist and for furthering ecological design, for good reason. He was able to merge the two, not everyone could do that” (Poore, Interview 1 2015). Poore also suggests that Blake was returning to his more primal motives, his love of art and composition, which remained with him throughout his career but seemed to fall to the background on certain projects as Blake attempted to supplement his knowledge of ecology (Poore, Interview 1 2015).
Blake was in fact a lifelong painter and photographer who studied composition and light with great enthusiasm. Both Blackwell and Poore attest to Blake’s fascination with the effects of light in their discussion of Blake’s artistic interests. A lifelong photographer, likely picked up from his father’s interest, Blake seemed to use light as a way of casting and creating effects within his landscapes that helped to foster the visceral and evocative (Hogue 2015). Beginning in his work at the Crosby Arboretum Poore recalls, “one morning I was out at the trailer working on a project for the Crosby and he called me early in the morning, about 4 o’clock, got me up, told me as soon as the sun came up go to a certain area in the savanna and take photos of the light and study the light” (Poore, Interview 1 2015).

Ted Flato confirms this fascination with light and composition in his descriptions of the “grass lakes” of the RiverCamps, which Blake created by carving voids and inserting “plant mosaics” into the dense pine forest of the Florida panhandle landscape. In doing so he strove to allow light to penetrate the forest floor and, working in harmony with the controlled burning management strategies, foster the ever-shifting blooms of native plantings. As Flato put it, “everyone got what Ed was trying to do, and the beauty of RiverCamps was the [existing natural water’s edge] landscape, it already had a really pretty edge. It ended up having a really beautiful middle, which is what I think was Blake’s big contribution to that project” (T. Flato 2015).

**The Third Principle: Architecture is larger than the subject of architecture. Understanding through the sense of what things are, not what they mean.**

Within this design principle Blake seems to be returning to his interest in the here and now as well as the holistic approach to design thinking. The promotion of enjoyment
of the landscape for what it physically is and supports above what it is expected or reported to be doing or meaning. This, in a way, seems also to be a rejection of the Eco-Revelatory Design agenda in that it discourages the notion of re-presentation. Blake doesn’t strive for representing an idea, he simply wishes for the landscape to be present and supportive of human enjoyment. In this case it is inferred that human enjoyment is meant to include a host of attributes including historical/romantic understanding of place, physical pleasure, and abstract association. To better understand this proposition for Blake’s agenda we could return to Potteiger and Purinton’s Landscape Narratives. The two suggest “The Crosby Arboretum uses the indeterminacy of ecological process to create an open narrative that develops over time. (Potteiger 1998)” Within this description the authors reference Umberto Eco’s reference to the notion that every text, or in Blake’s case landscape narrative, is “a lazy machine” asking the reader to do some of the work. As Eco puts it, “In building a world that comprises myriad events and characters, it [the narrative] cannot say everything about this world. It hints at it and then asks the reader to fill in a whole series of gaps” (Eco 1994).

Eco’s description of narrative may serve as an appropriate stand-in for what Blake suggests in him statement “Architecture is larger than the subject of architecture” (E. L. Blake, Design Principles and Design Process 2004). The universal or open-narrative seems to be what Blake aspires to create in his work. This perhaps may help to understand what he was seeking when he claimed to be returning to art (Figure 3.2).
One may classify this as a very practical agenda, which Blackwell seems to support in his discussion of Blake’s general outlook on the design of the IMA Art & Nature Park. However, the term practical in much of today’s discourse would likely leave
out an important set of parameters. For Blake, the practical was inclusive of sophisticated narrative structure. He consistently incorporated these themes in his work regardless of a client’s explicit direction. As numerous oral histories providers suggest, Blake used everything to define his work (Figure 3.3).

Robert Ivy characterizes his work by stating “his practice was to place human beings in an environment that spoke to a larger truth about reality.” He continues, “it's less an artificial construct then it is a deliberate act of will. To place people in a relationship to the larger world” (Ivy 2015).

Figure 3.3  *Align* by Type A, Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park, Photo by: Leo A, Image Uploaded: 25 March 2012.

Image source: https://foursquare.com/v/100-acres-the-virginia-b-fairbanks-art--nature-park/4ba43e47f964a520608f38e3?openPhotoId=502821abe4b08f94e6078111 Image Accessed: 10.04.2017
The Fourth Principle: Organizations revealed through time.

With design principle number four we see Blake's love of complex systems, which Dr. Odenwald, Robert Poore, and Sam Hogue all attest to in their descriptions of the manner in which Blake would embrace learning and discovery. Dating back as early as 1965 “Ed stood out as a very inquisitive student. In other words, even as a young person, you know, he was a very inquisitive and wanted to know more and he had good, you know, good work ethic as a student” (Odenwald n.d.). Working on the Crosby Arboretum and later the Vicksburg Children’s Art Park at Catfish Row Robert Poore states, “he studies wherever he goes, everywhere he goes. When he has a project, he studies it to such a high degree and never was there a project he had the opportunity to study as highly as the Crosby, but he did that in all of them” (Poore, Interview 1 2015).

Blake was reportedly obsessive when it came to understanding a new subject. In the case of the Crosby Arboretum the early Arboretum Board seemed to favor ideas for a design and development strategy which promoted the use of native plants and natural management systems. To this end Blake recruited numerous consultants, including Andropogon and Robert Poore, to gain an in-depth understanding of ecology and ecological design. According to Sam Hogue, Blake was known to travel far and wide in search of examples and expertise on issues he was addressing in his works (Hogue 2015). He amassed a remarkable personal library, now a special collection at Mississippi State University, which he used heavily throughout his professional career. This library is said, among other things, to have helped inform his historical overview of the projects he undertook. As Robert Ivy suggested in his nickname for Blake “Cosmic Ed” the lineage of a site was critical to one’s appreciation of the site. Here Blake goes so far as to create a
theory inclusive of three distinct elements of a site’s condition. Marlon Blackwell recalls them to be the “Man-Made” history, “Nature-Made” history and “Culture-Made” history which is a combination of the two previous histories. “To him it was really important to whatever he made for it to be an extension of the process that was already there” (Blackwell, Marlon Blackwell Interview 1 2015).

“At IMA he was very concerned with the wetlands which were manmade and how to supplement that through water garden & bio swales adding another layer between the wetlands and the lake that would filter the water. He understood the ecotones. He spent a lot of time with the client talking about the disturbed landscape with lots of invasive [plants], how to clean that up. How to develop these ecotones in the pathways journey would crisscross these ecotones from one type of ecology to another that existed on the site. He was very mindful of edges where things come together, that’s where the most diversity is.” “he was trying to construct a logic you know? From millions of years ago to the present and, you know, how we understand where we are at now, as an extension of all these processes” (Blackwell, Marlon Blackwell Interview 1 2015).

Following the patterns common to his design process Blake would embrace the notion of revealing systems over time at many scales and speeds. Ted Flato recalls a detailed component of Blake’s RiverCamps design which called for the seasonal burning of the “grass lakes” to create landscape effects. He states, “you would see all these pictures and its constantly a changing place … He did us all a favor and set up his system … if you followed some of the management you would see it … go out in the spring and
take a picture of that field at a certain time that’s when it’s going to be crazy and great” (T. Flato 2015).

Maurice Jennings was witness to a similar example where Blake also relied upon seasonal burning to activate and maintain the landscape. “The burning of the [Crosby] Savanna at times all of those were very important to have it reach its potential” (Jennings, Maurice Jennings Interview 1 2015). In this we see Blake’s understanding of the landscape as a dynamic system. The potential for change, and the deliberate presentation of resulting change illustrates the process of Blake’s system and the depth of his resolve for landscapes to foster a sense of appreciation among occupants (Figure 3.4). Here the notion of making places for people to be a part of, and identify with, above simply looking at as passive observers, seems to once again be evident.

Figure 3.4  *Funky Bones*, 2010 art installation by Atelier Van Lieshout, Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park, Photo by: Stephanie F., Image uploaded: 7 July 2013

Image source: https://foursquare.com/v/100-acres-the-virginia-b-fairbanks-art--nature-park/4ba43e47f964a520608f38e3?openPhotoId=502821abe4b08f94e6078111 Image Accessed: 10.4.2017
With regard to the question of design principles it seems clear that Blake has evolved his process over time with largest single evolutionary step coming between 1984 and 1994, during his involvement with the Crosby Arboretum design and management. It is impossible to contribute all of his principles to any single source but it does seem clear that Carol Franklin and Leslie Sauer deserve a fair degree of credit. His formal MSU education informed by the strategies of Simonds, seems to have set him on a path of lifelong learning which positioned him to endlessly reevaluate what was important while never falling into a dogmatic design paradigm. Perhaps this is why a label, reliant upon a fashionable term such as Eco-Revelatory Design, was never used in Blake’s writings. In spite of the ERD proponents attempts to include Blake he seems to transcended any single design paradigm. Considering the situation more closely one recalls that he was invited to exhibit his work. It seems likely that his Hattiesburg Lake Terrace Convention Center was merely the project he had recently completed and not a project developed specifically to address the ERD exhibition and its tenets. None of the oral histories collected or examined writings suggest that he, or his collaborators, ever employed the term Eco-Revelatory Design when discussing The Landscape Studios’ agenda. The principles outlined seem simply to be the principles Blake chose, through experience and knowledge, to promote throughout his design efforts.
RELEVANCE TO THE FIELD OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

& CONCLUSIONS

Relevance to Field

This chapter is intended to articulate Blake’s Design Principles in a way that offers broad application for future designers while also positioning his work in the field of landscape architecture. Blake’s principles are also assessed for their association with “successful” ecological design. The assessment relies upon a close reading of the primary criticisms of ecological design, as outlined in Louise A. Mozingo’s, a co-exhibitor with Blake at the 1997 ERD exhibition. Her well-respected 1997 Landscape Journal article *The Aesthetics of Ecological Design: Seeing Science as Culture* includes detailed research which has been heavily cited throughout the years. Within the Mozingo article five criteria, including *Visibility, Temporality, Reiterated Form, Expression, and Metaphor* are said to influence the positive generation and user perception of an ecologically-based work of landscape architecture (Mozingo 1997, pp. 50-57). Mozingo’s five criteria, are used in this section of the study to further articulate Blake’s design principles. To begin the interpretation of Blake’s relevance to the field, it is important to also consider the prior research of Brzuszek and Clark. The 2009 *Native Plants Journal* article, *Visitor Perceptions of Ecological Design at The Crosby Arboretum, Picayune, Mississippi*, explores the means by which Blake’s Arboretum design aligns to the five criteria outlined by Mozingo (R. F. Brzuszek 2009, pp. 98-101). In their article, Brzuszek and Clark suggest that Blake’s design inherently addresses Mozingo’s criteria (R. F.
Brzuszek 2009, p. 98). Given that Blake’s work was completed many years prior to Mozingo’s article, the evidence also suggests Blake had already considered the possible criticisms of ecologically-based landscape architecture. In so doing, Blake et.al., may have designed the Crosby Arboretum to withstand potential criticisms while going even further to ensure the work to be transcendent, perhaps one might even suggest it to be an attempt at the creation of a timeless design.

What is key to the reading of Mozingo, Brzuszek, and Clark’s work, is Blake’s prescient comprehension of the issues said to be central to the creation of a successful work of landscape architecture, be it ecologically-based or not. Mozingo outlines Visibility as a key component in the successful creation of an ecological work when she states:

“The landscape designs rely on the power of selected and clearly delineated viewpoints to convey their fundamental aesthetic concept. Landscape design structure relies on sequence, pathway and in particular, contrast to heighten the experience of city, garden, or open space. We expect this sort of manipulation, indeed enjoy it, whether in Prospect Park or Washington D.C. The concept of seizing time and experience in an orchestrated sequence in contrast to a broader, often less comprehensible context is not unique to designed landscapes. It’s common to literature, music, and most human rituals.” (Mozingo 1997, p. 50).

Citing Hough, Thayer, and Nassauer, Mozingo suggests that for an ecologically-based design to be appreciated it must be made visible through an appreciable contrast. This suggestion is reinforced by Thayer, Hough, and Nassauer who propose that ecological designers are incorrect in assuming the ecological value of a landscape to be
self-evident or autodidactic. They also propose that ecologically-based landscapes are often not necessarily capable of replacing or superseding the typical aesthetic experience in the minds of the landscape occupants (Hough 1995) (Nassauer 1992) (R. Thayer 1989). The claim is made that should a condition of contrast not be achieved, the work of design often blends with the surroundings or fails to reveal itself as a work of intentional design (Mozingo 1997, p. 50). Within the suggestion of this criterion one may see Blake’s second principle, “Expand the perceptions of user’s relationships. More visceral than intellectual, more evocative than literary, more chant than melody” (E. L. Blake 2004). When Blake states that landscape architecture should expand the perception of users, it seems he may be arguing for the landscape to hold a critical contrast which drives the occupant’s perception of the ecological functions as intentional elements of design. Blake often writes and speaks of the value of architecture and the nature-made / human-made relationship resulting in what he calls the Culture-made landscape (Blackwell 2012). Perhaps what he is suggesting is the intentional contrast Mozingo describes, which helps to illustrate and illuminate the subtle functional and/or dynamic aspects of the ecological landscape. Numerous oral history providers also noted Blake’s use of formal compositional methods such as the grid, axis, and datum which offer a contrasting accent to the often dimly visible dynamics of an ecologically-dependent design. Considering that many of Blake’s ecologically-based works are situated in rural or suburban areas, it seems reasonable to assume he was required to generate the necessary Visibility within his projects rather than being able to rely on neighboring properties. While Brzuszek and Clark offer a valuable portrayal of the Crosby Arboretum’s adherence to the notion of Visibility, later projects such as the IMA Virginia
B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park also rely heavily on the contrast created among the Art, Architecture, natural and man-made landscapes (E. L. Blake 2007, p. 20). Blake, in describing the IMA 100: Acres project, describes his thinking on the subject by stating the following.

“The interpretive concept guiding the placement and design of the Park’s human-made structure focuses on how humankind makes its mark on the land to reveal Nature conscious of itself as Art. As both human-made and nature-made building, the Park is a structural mosaic of landform, art site, communities of plants and animals, human gathering places and movement corridors, amenity and utility and service infrastructure.” (E. L. Blake 2007, p. 20).

Blake’s work at both the RiverCamps on Crooked Creek and the Hattiesburg Lake Terrace Convention Center clearly also rely upon the condition of contrast to make visible the role of ecology in the landscape’s architecture. At the RiverCamps we see Blake deploy a series of paths and structured bridges. Similar in approach to those used at the Crosby Arboretum, Blake designs the RiverCamps bridges to serve as angular foils to the sinuous edges of Crooked Creek and the marshlands of the West Bay (Figure 4.1, 4.2).
Blake’s use of *Visibility*, as a derivative of his second principle, is also apparent at the Hattiesburg Lake Terrace Convention Center where he introduces strikingly sharp lines and edges in the three-dimensional space of the stormwater management lake. The *Lake Journey*, a walking path which encompasses the numerous environs of the project, links and bisects architectural hardscape elements providing a sense of frame and deliberate *re*-presentation of the functional landscape features (Figure 4.1, 4.2, 4.3). His
use of a weir, with a highly geometricized cascade, works to accomplish a series of visualization effects aimed to make present man’s manipulation of water and its eventual reconciliation with natural systems (Figure 4.4, 4.5) (E. L. Blake 1998).

Figure 4.3  *Aquadic Pastoral*, Photo By: Edward Blake Jr.
Image Source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: 8.10.2003

Figure 4.4  *Diagonal View of Weir*, Photo By: Edward Blake Jr.
Image Source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: 3.70.2004
In the case of the Lake Terrace project Blake uses the parking lot generated stormwater to make visible the merging of human-made environmental conditions with the adjacent nature-made Mixon’s creek. The waters path also serves Blake’s metaphorical agenda, another of Mozingo’s identified principles, by serving to articulate the proposed movement and professional activities, i.e. meetings, one-on-one discussions, large gatherings, presentations, and casual socializing, typical of a convention center exhibitor/visitor’s agenda (Figure 4.6, 4.7, 4.8).
Mozingo describes the value of *Metaphor* to the positive definition of an ecological landscape as, the means by which the landscape is imbued with greater meaning, “transforming them from artifact to iconography, from materiality to spirit. (Mozingo 1997, p. 55)” She argues that ecological designs typically avoid the use of metaphor for the sake of purity of ecological function. The suggestion that an ecologically-based work of landscape architecture often does not possess metaphorical value may be linked to the oral histories considered earlier in this study (Poore 2015). As noted, Blake consistently expressed a desire to incorporate artistic and metaphorical value within a landscapes’ design, thus fostering among visitors and occupants a greater appreciation of ecological function (Blackwell 2015). The notion that such a combination would be successful is supported by Nassauer who states: “To see the ecological landscape as a place for the “aha” allows it to be, not just ecologically valuable, but socially valuable and recognizes that the two are inextricably intertwined.” (Nassauer 1992, p. 246). Through Nassauer’s description of metaphorical value we begin to more clearly understand Blake’s meaning when he states his third principle: “Architecture is larger than the subject of architecture, understanding through the sense of what things
are, not what they mean” (E. L. Blake 2004).

Figure 4.7  *Bosque Landform Shadows*, Photo By: Edward Blake Jr.
Image Source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: 10.03.2004

![Bosque Landform Shadows](image)

Figure 4.8  *Bridge Reflections at Weir Precipice*, Photo By: Edward Blake Jr.
Image Source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: 12.25.2002

![Bridge Reflections at Weir Precipice](image)

The association of Blake’s second and third principles with Mozingo’s descriptions of *Visibility* and *Metaphor* help one to also see the way by which Blake manipulates the historical content of project sites to benefit the reading of ecological, and by extension, other four dimensional, i.e. time-based, aspects of the landscape’s architecture.
Howett provides a critique of Richard Haag’s Gasworks Park in his, *Systems, Signs, Sensibilities: Source for a New Landscape Aesthetic* (1987), which speaks to the value of metaphor to bring forth recognition of the past. He states, “What Is most powerful about Richard Haag’s Gasworks Park is its celebration of the history of the site as an industrial landscape while it is unquestionably settled in its immediate use and configuration. This landscape was seminal in its acceptance of site history and the metaphorization of its historical artifacts.” (Howett 1987, p. 9).

Blake’s writing, and the testimonies of various oral history providers, offers evidence that he was consistently working to consider, and bring forth, elements of the site’s history as a component of his landscapes. Similar to Richard Haag’s approach, Blake pulls forth aspects of Vicksburg’s industrial heritage in the Children’s Art Park at Catfish Row. As outlined in chapter 1 section 5, Blake calls upon the rhetorical form of the steamship chimney and bisecting diagonal, to make metaphor and imbue a deeper value structure. While the Children’s Art Park was not designed as an ecologically-focused work, Blake clearly demonstrates his understanding of the potential value of *metaphor* in generating an appreciation of place.

In addition, with the Children’s Art Park we see Blake’s understanding of the potential of *Expression*, another of Mozingo’s terms. Describing *Expression*, she states: “Expression and the desire to evoke feeling have always been integral to landscape design … We know too that there is a commonality of biophysical response to landscape-prospect refuge theory-which designers intuitively or consciously exploit” (Mozingo 1997, p.54). In this description, one could argue Blake’s first principle “Privilege qualities over quantities, phenomena over pictorial, spirit over efficiency” could be
situated. In Blake’s work at the Vicksburg Children’s Art Park at Catfish Row the *expressive* potential of water is harnessed to generate a dynamic environment focused on the generation of physical enjoyment and pleasure. The water features, central to the Art Park’s composition and function in the sub-tropic temperatures of Mississippi, offer a visual signal to visitors that this landscape is about fun and enjoyment. The embodiment of joy, and leisurely promenade, is presented by Blake’s inclusion of operable *Art Walls* along with decorative *Smoke Stacks* and interactive *Splash Pad Fountains* (Figures 4.9, 4.10, 4.11).

![Elevated View Down Night Walls](image)

Figure 4.9  *Elevated View Down Night Walls*, Photo By: Edward Blake Jr.

Image source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: 3.6.02
Figure 4.10  *Fountain North with Cypress*, Photo By: Edward Blake Jr.

Image source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: 6.9.09

Figure 4.11  *Catfish Fountain and Art Stacks*, Photo By: Edward Blake Jr.

Image source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: 6.22.06
Mozingo outlines another concept which could be said to exist in Blake’s Art Park. In her article, she speaks of *Reiterated Form* as the means by which the ecological designer might bring compositional and visual logic to a design which appears, due to the unkempt aesthetic of ecological plantings, as disorderly or even poorly designed (Mozingo 1997, p. 53). She explains, “Through design history, a vocabulary of forms, reiterated across time, space, and cultures, characterizes iconic landscape aesthetics. Perceptions of repeated forms schematizes an incomprehensible world.” (Mozingo 1997, p. 53). Mozango references the work of Rapoport in asserting that aesthetic patterning is not reconcilable in pure ecological design (Rapoport 1990, pp. 137-176). Rapoport’s research indicates that environmental design phycology supports the notion that the environment is more successfully enjoyed when it functions as a mnemonic device dependent on culturally understandable cues. To accomplish the form of comprehensible communication suggested by Rapoport’s research and Mozingo’s suggestion, the ecological designer must present a landscape that is evolutionally linked to accepted traditional details and forms of landscape architecture. Ecological design must, in effect, speak the same language in order to be heard and appreciated. In Blake’s work the notion of *Reiterated Form* seems less linked to the presentation of ecological function and more closely aligned with artistic intentions and the creation of a unified design composition. In part because many of his works have few build architectural or hardscape components but also because many of his works were large-scale works unlike the small parks or urban landscapes noted in Mozingo’s article.

Looking to contemporary works one may observe elements of Blake’s first principle in scores of ecologically, and aesthetically–focused projects. If the stipulation
holds that Mozingo’s notions of Visibility, Reiterated Form, Expression, and Metaphor are encompassed by Blake’s first and second principles then one may recall the means by which Blake converted so many of his project sites from denuded and disturbed tracts to accessible cultural artifact. From his work at the Crosby Arboretum to the Vicksburg Children’s Art Park and IMA 100 Acres Art & Nature Park, Blake pursued a method of design which did not seek to erase the past but rather celebrate it as a source of cultural pride. This form of landscape design has become relatively common. However only a few examples of such an approach, including Richard Haag’s highly celebrated Gas Works Park in Seattle, WA completed in 1975, preceded Blake’s work at the Crosby Arboretum in the early 1980’s. More recently we see projects such as Landschaftspark, located in Duisburg-Meiderich, Germany and designed by Peter Latz, as a contemporary example of a similar approach to landscape design (Figure 4.12).

Figure 4.12 Landschaftspark By: Peter Latz + Partner, Landscape Architect

This post-industrial landscape, similar to the Crosby Arboretum’s post-agricultural landscape, is designed to foster and appreciation for the recent past. The work begins a narrative which is inclusive and open, allowing visitors to pull multiple meanings and values from their time spent in the park. As Latz states in describing the experience, "It gives people the opportunity to interpret the land in their own way." (Lubow 2004, p. 3)

Latz continues adding, “Landscape is Culture” in much the same way Blake refers to his landscapes as a combination of the human-made and nature-made resulting in the Culture-Made (Lubow 2004). While the Landschaftspark does hold a sublime
quality, it would likely not be considered classically picturesque. It seems intended to promote the experience enhanced through careful metaphor and productive visibility above all. With the quality of its details and the play of old and new working to bring visibility to its ecological agenda, the park exerts a spirit of dynamic change and temporality consistent with Blake’s principles and Mozingo’s terminology (Figure 4.13).

Figure 4.14  High Line Park, New York, NY Image source:
http://www.archdaily.com/24362/the-new-york-high-line-officially-open

Photo by: Iwan Baan, Photo Date: 9.2.2009, Access Date: 10.10.2017

One might also consider the work of James Corner and Diller Scofidio + Renfro on New York City’s Highline Park to be a similar contemporary example of Blake’s first principle (Figure 4.14). In both examples, form is the result of process and historical impact to the site. The works present practical challenges with regard to technical realization but the resulting artifacts offer a substantial reward to the occupant’s enjoyment of the work. Managing the challenges of working into the situational context,
rather than pursuing a design agenda intent upon the minimization of the site’s feedback, often results in a richly layered landscape that could not be achieved on a greenfield site. This methodology relates to Blake’s continued interest in understanding, and where appropriate, revealing the historical and ecological ancestry of the landscape’s architecture. The architectonic detailing by Diller Scofidio + Renfro utilize material expression to help program the park’s surfaces while James Corner’s planting strategy brings metaphor to the ecological aesthetic and functional agenda.

When considering Blake’s second principle: Expand the perceptions of user’s relationships. More visceral than intellectual, more evocative than literary, more chant than melody, one might conclude that Blake agreed with the assessment of the Crosby Arboretum as offered by Potteiger and Purinton in Landscape Narratives: Design Practices for Telling Stories. Their commentary asserts that “The story is about connecting to a larger frame of reference” (Potteiger 1998). In this it seems Blake’s approach of the micro reflecting the macro to a well-established design trope, similar in spirit to Mozango’s notion of Metaphor and Expression. Both posthumously and contemporaneously one may witness the use of such strategies in well-regarded works of landscape architecture. Examples such as Tanner Springs Park in Portland, Oregon created by Atelier Dreiseitl and opened in 2005, offer an example of a project which seeks to tell a larger story than its physical site boundaries might allow (figure 4.15). Through the tectonic details and material pallet Atelier Dreiseitl illustrates and activates
the former ecology and historical value of the land.

Figure 4.15  Tanner Springs Park, Portland, OR


The park, while less than an acre in size, references the numerous ecotones once common to the native artesian spring landscape. In the Tanner Springs project, we see miniaturization and a subtle homage to Asian landscape traditions. The project also makes use of the recent past while fostering a mode of inhabitation which emphasizes a pleasurable physical experience above all else (Figure 4.16).
Mozingo’s article also considers the condition of Temporality as a critical component to effective ecological landscape design. Within this term, her research suggests the human ambition, and appreciation, for the designer’s ability to hold static a landscape’s inherently evolutionary character. She notes, “Maintenance mechanisms function as means of preserving the designer’s initial aesthetic intent, not sustaining ecological health.” (Mozingo 1997, p. 52). In so doing, the argument is made that the tradition of landscape architecture is to promote a static representation of nature. This condition obviously runs counter to the general agency of ecological designers who aspire to reveal and celebrate the function and dynamic aspects of a landscapes’ plant
materials, ecosystems, and hydrologic function. “Conventional landscape design sees
landscape change not as a vital, imaginative force but as a frightening or disappointing
one. The desire for consistency of visual image is at odds with the fundamental force
underlying ecological design.” (Mozingo 1997, p. 52). Underscoring Mozingo’s notion of
Temporality is her suggestion that landscape designer may address this issue through the
careful incorporation of an orderly frame which signifies that the landscape is in-fact
intentional and being cared for. In this way, the ecologically dynamic elements of the
design achieve a contrasting status as figural elements intended to shift, offering
expression and suggestion of an active rational intent. The notion of Temporality, as an
acceptable component of contemporary landscape design, is said to be a gaining favor
among designers and the general population alike. In part, it seems Blake’s third
principle, Architecture is larger than the subject of architecture, relates to Mozango’s
notion of Temporality.

In Blake’s third principle one may recall the education he received while working
with Fay Jones on the Pinecote Pavilion at the Crosby Arboretum. Maurice Jennings,
speaking about the time he spent with Jones and Blake, suggested their collaboration to
be intensely productive for everyone involved. Jones was very influential in Blake’s
decision-making process as he effectively selected the Pavilion site, in so doing, he set
the critical axis by which the Arboretums’ pathway journey network was organized (R. F.
Brzuszek 2014). Jones also incorporated numerous landscape features such as a concrete
weir, decorative concrete artisan fountain, pedestrian bridges, information kiosks, gates,
fences, and more, all intended to spread the tectonic expression of the Pincote Pavilion
throughout the Arboretum site. While the Pinecote has a relatively small footprint in the
total Arboretum, the visual order and language it originates links the distant Arboretum exhibits back to a central point. The orbital nature of Jones’ architectonic elements speaks to a larger agenda of architecture and the notion of compositional logic in general (Figure 4.17). Jones writes, “Each part to the whole to achieve organic unity” as a way of expressing the idea of a larger conception of architecture (Jones 2017, p. 1).

Figure 4.17  North East Lattice Over Lantern Pinecote Pavilion, Photo By: Edward Blake Jr.

Image Source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: 11.25.1992

Blake’s later works clearly acknowledge this concept and in so doing attempts to achieve a similar effect. The way in which Mozingo’s notion of Temporality plays into Blake’s work is in the way Blake learned from Jones the potential of architecture to be enhanced by landscape and landscape to be enhanced by architecture. Blake and Jones
realize Mozengo’s *Temporality* through the relationship the Pinecote Pavilion fosters among the Long Leaf Pines of the Arboretum and Beaver Pond’s intensely horizontal datum (Figure 4.18). These relationships are cast in subtle but effective ways through the Arboretum and in so doing the “messy aesthetic” of the ecologically-based landscape is framed to be deliberate and more easily appreciated (Mozingo 1997, p. 52).

Figure 4.18  *Aerial of Pinecote Pavilion and Beaver Pond, Crosby Arboretum*

Image Source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: 10.15.1988
Blake’s thoughtful expressions of Temporality are evidenced throughout many of his works including the IMA 100: Acres Art & Nature Park and Hattiesburg Lake Terrace Convention Center which both focused heavily on the hydrologic functions of the site as a compositional armature of the grounds and pathways. When Blake states: Architecture is larger than the subject of architecture. Understanding through the sense of what things are, not what they mean (Principle 3), it also seems reasonable to also assume Blake was referring to a kind of landscape that is designed for passive use as is the case in the IMA Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park. The Park seems to promote a notion of the landscape as a kind of passive framing device upon, or through which, the active agents might be presented. Looking for contemporary examples which follow this approach Michael Van Valkenburgh, Blake’s former associate while at Harvard, created a design for the Connecticut Water Treatment Facility, which to all appearances, subscribes to such a strategy (Figures 4.19, 4.20).

Figure 4.19 Connecticut Water Treatment Facility, Landscape Project Credit: Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates

The Water Treatment Facility plays host to visitors who are asked to invent their own agenda. The landscape is an armature for activity, but it does little to sponsor any particular activity. In this way, the park is passive acting as a neutral background in a figure-ground relationship in which the occupant becomes the figure. This approach calls upon the user to conceive of the project in his or her own way while offering a conception of the project as a small component of a much larger system. Here again, the project is larger than the physical project boundaries or immediate programmatic
obligations (Figure 4.21).

Figure 4.21  Connecticut Water Treatment Facility, Landscape Project Credit: Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates


Blake’s fourth principle *Organizations revealed through time* presents a relatively contemporary design strategy first made widely public through the earth art works of figures such as Nancy Holt and Robert Smithson (Figures 4.22, 4.23, 4.24, 4.25). In these works, we see a careful framing of the passage of time. The dynamic qualities of solar and lunar cycles, gravitational pull and tidal shift are used to reveal a system in motion which we tend to lose sight of, sometimes even taking these systems for granted. A critical component of these works is their reliance to the notion of a meter, or a rhythmic
standard, which is fundamental to the reading of change over time.

Figure 4.22  *Sun Tunnels* (1973) by Nancy Holt.

Figure 4.23  *Sun Tunnels* (1973) by: Nancy Holt, Photo by: unknown

Figure 4.24  Asphalt Rundown (1969) by Robert Smithson, Photo by: unknown

Blake commonly used this theme to aid in the revelation of long-duration ecological functions. He also applied this thinking in his planning strategy for projects such as the Crosby Arboretum, RiverCamps, and 100: Acres Art & Nature Park. Blake cleverly uses the long-duration of landscape change to address the maintenance expenses and inconsistent funding structures behind many of his projects. At the Crosby Arboretum, it became clear at the outset that funding was not going to be reliable, as the Arboretum does not hold a permanent endowment. Much like the IMA 100: Acres Art & Nature Park, funding is dependent upon public donations and the occasional state funded appropriation. RiverCamps, as a private community requiring a long duration for all lots to be sold and the Home Owners Association to be self-supporting. It also required a landscape maintenance strategy that would be cost effective, ecologically responsible,
and functional with regard to the landscapes atmospheric and aesthetic effects. Blake met these conditions by devising an elegantly simple system which allowed for the projects to essentially lie fallow until the funding and will to complete their next phase of development became available.

Ingeniously, Blake’s maintenance and economic strategy manages to also meet his fourth principle through the subtle representation of these systems in featured and framed areas of his projects. In the RiverCamps we see instances of the systems at work on Blake’s “Grass Lakes” which Ted Flato describes as the means by which Blake gave RiverCamps a pretty interior (T. Flato 2015). The Crosby Arboretum benefits from Blake’s approach to Temporality and Organizations revealed through time by never seeming incomplete or unkempt. Given the Arboretum has effectively been under construction for over thirty years, opening to the public in 1986, Blake’s Temporality demonstration could certainly be considered effective (Figures 4.18, 4.19, 4.20).

Figure 4.26  *Burn Scene*, Photo By: Edward Blake Jr.
Image source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: 3.14.94
With regard to contemporary landscape architecture we see numerous examples of work being created around the expression of complex organizations revealed over time. Perhaps the most ubiquitous example is the artful design of stormwater systems. In stormwater management there has been an explosion of built application at numerous scales. Systems as large or larger than as that of Blake’s Hattiesburg Lake Terrace Convention Center present a productive and educational example of complex systems
logic being used to inform the aesthetics and function of a landscape. Similarly, eco-
systems services incorporation has become a generally expected component of many 
projects. In this, it seems Blake was also ahead of his time having worked to include such 
eco-services well before clients began to make such inclusions in their project programs.

Docklands Park in Melbourne Australia is one example of large-scale stormwater 
management system which promotes user conception of the natural processes taking 
place. Here visitors are exposed to the filtration and aquifer replenishment mechanism of 
nature.

Figure 4.29  Docklands Park, Melbourne Australia, Project Designer: Rush\Wright 
Associates

Image source: https://www.australiaunlimited.com/science/water-for-sustainable-cities, 
Date Accessed: 10.14.2017
Working at an even larger scale to address the revelation of complex organizations Shanghai’s Houton Park by Turenscape takes this principle to the next level (Figure 4.30, 4.31, 4.32). This massive 34.6-acre park was built on a brownfield site which is actively being reclaimed through integral ecosystem services. The park features a constructed wetland, ecological flood control system, and urban agriculture with reclaimed industrial structures and materials being incorporated as features within the composition. The park, which was completed in 2010, offers visitors a view into the processes of nature. In this way, the project emulates the Crosby Arboretum which similarly reclaimed the former agricultural lands through a means which brought cultural and aesthetic value to the site.

Figure 4.30  Houton Park, Shanghai, Landscape Architect: Turenscape
Figure 4.31  Houton Park, Shanghai, Landscape Architect: Turenscape


Figure 4.32  Houton Park, Shanghai, Landscape Architect: Turenscape

**Lasting Ideas & Conclusions**

Looking more closely at Blake’s work through the eyes of collaborators, promotors, critics, mentors, and his design principles, one discovers a truly multifaceted approach. From Blake’s incorporation of ecological design strategies to his long-held concerns for the meaningful reference to history and one’s place, Blake’s work cannot be easily characterized. What is critical to appreciating Blake’s work is his conception, and continued conviction, to the presentation of the land as a four-dimensional construct.

Ecological function, and the inherent beauty of its dynamic character, is a vision of landscape architecture which Blake helped to introduce to contemporary landscape design thinking.

While Blake’s first priority, ecological purity or aesthetic desire, may continue to be debated, his single most apparent conviction was his deep interest in connecting people to the land, and the land to people (Figure 4.33).

"It was my work at Crosby that made me keen to the idea of nature as an artifact, a *human-made* construction of words and the ideas and experiences... So much of my work at Crosby was about emptying my head of ideas so that experiencing a place was less filtered by thinking and more felt by sensing. If we can have a stronger *SENSE* of place, then perhaps its place will be better expressed by us via design as an expression of our intellects. In this way, we can make *Nature* conscious in ways that it cannot be without us, that is, being mindful that *We are It...*” (E. L. Blake ny)
Figure 4.33  *Marlon and Mark Walking North Honeysuckle Woods*, Photo By: Edward Blake Jr.

Image source: Marilyn Blake, Image Date: 10.23.04
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APPENDIX A

ORAL HISTORY QUESTIONNAIRE & TRANSCRIPTIONS
Oral History Questionnaire

Edward Blake Jr. Characterization Study General Questionnaire

08.18.15

1. Please RANK (1 is the highest priority) the following based upon your opinion of their importance to Edward Blake’s Design Thinking and Process.
   ___ Compositional Logic
   ___ Ecological Systems
   ___ Picturesque Beauty
   ___ Practical Accommodations
   ___ Experiential Delight
   ___ Programmatic Density
   ___ Other

2. Please RANK the following based upon your opinion of their importance to Edward Blake’s Complete Body of Work. (1 is the highest priority)
   ___ River Camps
   ___ 100 Acer Wood
   ___ Crosby Arboretum
   ___ Hattiesburg, MS Convention Center
   ___ Vicksburg, MS Children’s Art Park
3. What project(s) did you undertake with Ed Blake Jr and during what years was it designed?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

4. What **SINGLE** issue was MOST critical to Ed Blake Jr. in the project you undertook while working with him?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Why do you believe it was so important to him?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

How was it Manifested / Realized in the completed work, i.e. plan, detail, section, particular space, particular atmosphere created, particular materials used, etc…?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

5. Did Ed Blake expand your conception of the Project Scope and if so how?
6. To what extent do you believe was Ed Blake Jr. was known for attempting to supplement the projects ecological capacity and in what ways?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

7. To what extent do you believe Ed was able to affect the client’s intentions for the project?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

8. Other Points?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

9. Do you recall a period/point in Edward Blake Jr.’s career in which his professional intentions underwent a shift? Please if possible include the approx. date(s) of this shift.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

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Would you characterize Ed Blake Jr. as a *Formalist, Experientialist, or Other*?
Oral Histories Transcriptions

Interviewer: Hans C. Herrmann

Interviewee: Robert Poore, Principle of Native Habitats, multi-project collaborator

Interview Setting: Via telephone. The interview was conducted at 9:00 AM, June 13th 2015.

Affiliation with interviewee: N/A

Interviewer:

So what I would like to do, if possible, is try to answer these specific questions. I included five projects, as you can see, and the thinking is that they do the best to kind of sum up a lot of the different approaches that Ed took over the course of his career to different projects. I’ve invited all of the interviewees to select one in particular that they can speak most confidently about, however after speaking yesterday, you were with him on a lot of these. In some ways…

Interviewee:

All but 2

Interviewer:

Right. In some ways hearing which one you think sums up his work might actually be one of the most valuable things because…I can kind of get a good sense of which one of these projects that you think is really the piece with regard to what changed his way of thinking. Which of these projects really embodied that most clearly? Do you recall a period/point in Edward Blake Jr.’s career in which his professional intentions underwent a shift?

Interviewee:

To me, that’s obvious. It’s Crosby. His comment was he always liked telling people that he found his voice in Crosby. That’s a common statement he would make.
General Discussion by Interviewee: It’s a transition Ed went through. I looked at your timeline and I met Ed in 81 when I went to Mississippi State. Then in 82 or 83 I had him for construction and he was thinking then about processes. He taught us grading and drainage and he started out with water molecules and worked all the way up to us calculating and designing storm drainage systems. That's the way he thought. He thought holistically. He liked to know everything he could, about a place. And then the Crosby dropped into his lap and back when we found out he had an interest, he wanted to know everything he could about native plants. I had already been using them for years, I had a background in ecology and taxonomy, so we hit it off right away.

Then he left [MSU Dept. of Landscape Architecture] and went to the Crosby and I worked on my contract. I never actually worked as an employee of the Crosby. I worked under contract for the Crosby. As long as Ed was director I did work for the Crosby. That kind of ended when he left, and his thinking; me and Ed had no idea, from a design standpoint, what direction to go.

Carol Franklin came there and introduced us to process and pattern, and pattern was the key. Ed wasn’t so much an Ecologist as an Artist. Ed was highly intelligent, maybe the most intelligent man I ever met. He thought complexly about systems and, of course, nature fit right into that realm of thinking. He learned everything he could from other people, good people he brought in. Also, he would go out to the site at Crosby when it had rained, and he would go to those grid points and he would map what direction the water was flowing from each grid point. That’s how he observed the Crosby. He knew every little flux that occurred at the Crosby because he was there. He lived in a trailer. He was out there all of the time. Ed was forever a teacher and he taught me everything that he could to, that he saw. Like one morning I was out at the trailer working on a project for the Crosby and he called me early in the morning about 4 o’clock, got me up, told me as soon as the sun came up go to a certain area in the Savannah, and take photos of the light and study the light.

I went out there and did it and I still have those photos. Actually, I have them in a presentation where I discuss light and Louis Khan and Ed Blake, because Ed Blake taught me light. One thing people never talk about is Ed’s fascination with light and how it worked with nature and with all objects. Ed was just fascinated by it, but he liked teaching, he liked people to engage him. He would send me articles and want me to read them. The next day I would get a
call, him wanting to engage in conversation about those articles. He had such a high intellect and he thought so complexly and to put all these things together.

When you think about Ed as an ecologist, you have to realize, and Ed told me this after he left Crosby, that he realized that he immersed himself in the Gulf Coastal Plain, but he knew nothing about the rest of the state. That’s partially where I came in. Anything he immersed his mind into, he became an expert at. He would take all these trips with Ed Martin and travel, Ed loved to travel. He would take tons and tons of photos. Just unbelievable, thousands and thousands of slides, and then when it got digital it was stuck just thousands and thousands of images he would take. He was an artist about taking those pictures. He learned early on, me and him went on a field trip together, he would take days off once in a while. He would call out of nowhere and say let’s take the day off and go to this town or that town just prowl around. We had to go to Vicksburg that day, and go to the national park, out to the Met Spring Waterfall that I knew how to get to off the bluff. He would go out there and lay of the floor. I think its Illinois’s monument with the rotunda that has the hole in the ceiling, and was laid out in the middle of the floor just stretched out just looking and studying. All these people walking around looking at him, unconcerned, he was immersed in what he was doing. The geometry of that structure, the hole in the center, and the clouds going across. In a few seconds he raised his camera, took a picture, and got up. He took one picture, but he thought, Ed was a thinker, he thought.

The change you were looking for that occurred, it occurred at the Crosby. I absolutely have no doubt. Before that, his work does not reflect that. I can show you a job in Jackson that he did. That you won’t believe Ed actually did it. Very tacky in my opinion, it’s not refined.

The work he did after Crosby is very defined work. The first big project that we worked on together was the Museum of Natural Science. That was for the Conference Center and we did it together. He did all those spaces in the front. When you walk up front there is a planter, a big round planter, well that wasn’t meant to be a planter, it was meant to be a sundial. That wasn’t what they wanted. They wanted something very simple, they couldn’t get Ed, Ed couldn’t dumb himself down low to do it, so it ended up being a planter. You’ll see these little brick pieces coming out and if you take a compass, you’ll find out those are
Solstice points. Those remained in the plan after his sundial went away. The planting in the front, he did that himself. The planting was in a grid. He loved the grid more than anything else. It fascinated him, and I’ll get back to that in a minute where that fascination came from, he had a different plant at each grid, a native tree at one grid point, a native shrub at another grid point, he’d go to another medium sized shrub at another grid point, down to a ground shrub and then back to a tree. He gridded that area like that and put plants on that grid point. Most people don’t know that because you can’t tell that it’s there but that complex thinking that this grid is laid in there. It didn’t matter that visually when everything grew up that you weren’t going to line those points up and see that there was still a grid, or that they were ever on a grid. The point was for them to turn into a natural mass, and they did. Of course, a lot of planting was planted in between the grid and around the pergola for exhibits.

But back to the grid, Ed was always… you know the grid was something we learned in school, the first tool for organizing an element that we learned to use. One of the easiest ones to use. When we were at the Crosby we did a grant and that’s when Bob Brzuszek came and he can discuss that day when he discovered the grid. Me and Bob were laying out 100 foot grids, a 10’ x 10’ grid in a 100’ square. We were mapping the plant material. Chris Wells, a botanist, was running statistical data. Ed came out to one of the sites where me and Bob had the string grid laid out and he just went absolutely nuts. He ran around there like a kid at Christmas looking at that grid and studying that grid. And his paintings, if you look at his paintings, he started painting about that time and he started painting grids and different color arrangements within those grids. That’s how he was beginning to see the world. He’d talk, at times to me, about areas we were at by throwing a grid over it in his mind and he’s start talking about pieces of it, how one piece might relate to another piece. We discussed those kinds of things continually.

But during the Crosby he found his voice and if I learned anything at the Crosby, I learned to listen to that voice. And I learned a lot from Ed. Ed still rolls around in my head when I stumped on something. I just think, what would Ed do? Ed would back up, look at it, organize it, and re-enter the thought process again and normally I would come up with a solution. I kind of like to think that he’s sitting on my shoulder keeping an eye on me.

Interviewer:
I know Ed did some work in the Midwest prior to the work at the Crosby and teaching, do you know much about that time or the work he was doing?

Interviewee:
No but Sam Hogue would. Sam knew Ed extremely well. They took trips together, they knew each other a very, very long time, and he would know an awful lot about Ed before me. Like I said, I met him at the University, we hit it off, I worked at the Crosby, and then it all started.

We did the Art Park at Catfish Row. We worked on it and I worked on the Convention Center. That was the next thing that he did. You’ll see the artistry and the flowing of lines, but one thing you can’t see is the artistry of the aquatics and the planning of those lakes because it’s gone. There was an extremely complex system that me and him worked out for planting and those lakes. There was a flash flood and water flowed through there and washed all the terracing and everything out of the lake. They never rebuilt it. It’s just a lake. You can talk to the architect Larry Albert, in Hattiesburg. Larry worked with Ed during that period, that was his project. He said that he wasn’t used to a landscape architect coming in and engaging other people on the project the way Ed did. Ed would come in, sit down with the flooring person, and tie his paving outside with the paving and flooring inside. That detail, that Ed was willing to go way beyond to do, Ed could see the interconnection of everything. That’s what I believe, that everything is connected to everything else. I learned that from ecology, maybe that’s something that Ed learned from me? I preached it all my life, I would like to say that he learned something from me because I learned so much from him. He knew these connections and he would study and look.

The one thing Ed was not good at was playgrounds. Ed did not understand children and how they play. He really wasn’t a “children person” he was “grown-up, intellect person”. He liked engaging people he could learn from or that he could teach. If you look at the playground at Catfish Row and it’s dangerous. You’ve got those three blocks there with climbing structures, and my grandkids are great for taking pictures, I’ve got so many pictures of my grandkids on those three concrete pieces, but they climb up over those pieces and they are hanging over them. Ed just didn’t understand children, and that’s probably the only drawback in any of his work. He didn’t include children in a way that a lot of people do or that he could have. If he ever concentrated on them,
he very well could have come up with all sorts of great things, but he never did, he never had a strong interest in that. But the design, one of the things...the stacks....they came from me being devil’s advocate and saying we couldn’t get rid of the big poles on the hill. So what could we do with them? I said we could play with them and Ed jumped right into that. Then we started digging up historical references. We had already made a trip to the courthouse, which I like could never get him out of there. We never got him out of Vicksburg, he had his whole office there, me, and one guy from work. He would disappear and we couldn’t find him. He was just wandering around Vicksburg taking photos all by himself. Micheal Gamble was the project chief for Ed for that job. Jason was at the office and worked on the job also, the one that teaches. You probably met Jason, right down the hall from Bob. He worked for Ed during that period. When that was done, [he worked] on some other projects too. I’m not sure exactly what projects he worked on. I don’t think he worked there for a long period of time before he went to State to teach. What other projects on there that I work on do you ask [about]?

Interviewer:
Well let me ask you a question before we go too far from Crosby. Can you explain, if you know something about it, the relationship of Ed and Andropogon associates because I’ve never been fully clear on whether it was Andropogon project or if Ed became the project leader locally or was it Ed’s project and he brought Andropogon in. How did all that work?

Interviewee:
Ed was hired for the Crosby by the Crosby family to work on the Crosby early on. Ed became the director of the Crosby and he’s the one who found and brought in Carol Franklin and Leslie into the project. Contractually, I do not know what the contractual arrangements were. I know Ed left and went to work, I think, as the director for the Crosby. I think he was a direct employee of the Crosby and it was his idea to bring all these people in.

Fay Jones was one of those people. He interviewed several other people, Jones & Jones came down to interview. He interviewed Carol and them which was great. Carol came down and literally taught me and Ed how to do ecological design using process and pattern. Of course, that was the kind of thing that Ed would jump into. Now Carol, if you talked to Carol she can tell you exactly what that connection was.
Interviewer:
I spoke to her just a couple days ago. She’s up in Maine this summer but we’re hoping to talk at the end of the month so that should be great.

Interviewee:
She didn’t say how Colin is doing, did she?

Interviewer:
No but we didn’t talk about very much.

Interviewee:
I was just wondering. I saw him in January in Philadelphia. I actually spent the night with him. He wasn’t doing too well. He has Parkinson’s. It might be good for his help being up in Maine during the summer. She can tell you everything about the Crosby and the design of the Crosby from my standpoint she would take us out and it was literally a teaching experience not just for me but for Ed. Ed’s biggest asset was that big brain of his, it was like he had a big computer up there running all the time. He had curiosity about everything. Foremost, Ed was an artist. Last time I saw him, he was saying how he was leaning more toward art than ecology.

10. Please RANK (1 is the highest priority) the following based upon your opinion of their importance to Edward Blake’s Design Thinking and Process.

1. Compositional Logic
2. Ecological Systems
3. Picturesque Beauty
   Practical Accommodations
3. Experiential Delight
   Programmatic Density
   Other

Interviewer:
This might be a good place for me to get back to those questions that I sent you because that very first one kind of engages that issue. I don’t
know if you have those in front of you. The question “Please rank in terms of higher priority”. The first set of 10 are sort of general questions that I was hoping to have everyone respond to and then I have the project specific ones. It has the dates at the very top and says Edward Blake Jr. characterization study questions.

**Interviewee:**
I see that. I’m dwelling over the first question.

**Interviewer:**
Take your time. I’m sure knowing him as well as you do it’s very hard, to fill in those blanks.

**Interviewee:**
That’s a tough one. I’d have to say his compositional logic was the first one, his biggest asset. Ecological systems for a long time was, but it was the top. Picturesque beauty would be high on the ranking because art is so diverse that the term art in one of these questions encompasses a lot of things including picturesque beauty. You can’t define Ed down tightly, because he thought so broadly. Experimental delight. He got delight in playing with the grid. He got delight in things we’d talk about and things he’s go and do. He’d get so excited about ideas.

**Interviewer:**
In experiential delight, I was trying to tap into some of the way that he seemed to write and talk about the experience of the landscapes in particular that there was an idea of “landscape journey” and unfolding of space and experience not though necessarily a picturesque point of view but from inhabiting the place and moving through it.

**Interviewee:**
That’s what I was saying before, he studies wherever he goes, everyplace he goes. When he has a project, he studies it to such a high degree and never was there a project he had the opportunity to study as highly as the Crosby, but he did that in all of them.

Catfish Row, the park at Vicksburg. He studied Vicksburg, the history and the artistic elements, those columns that Vicksburg is famous for on porches, not the Doric or the Ionic, but the other ones. I can’t think of the name for them. There’s actually a book about columns in Natchez and Vicksburg. He would study all those types of patterns, the Earth patterns. I have a whole board that I did here on Earth patterns that I discussed them with him on the phone, then went out there and took photos. We discussed
what to look for then I would go out and look for it and study the area. Ed was the one sitting there and thinking about this in depth, then he would call for me to go out there and do the footwork, but in doing so I learned. These are hard to tell. Experimental Delight would be high on the list because that is the process he liked to use...contact with the sight.

Interviewer:
Just for the sake of argument, let’s try to put them in a rank. You think Compositional Logic would be number one?

Interviewee:
Yeah. Then Experimental Delight would be number 2 because it folds right into compositional logic.

Interviewer:
I’m going to write experimental delight in as other because the one that I have written in experiential. So, it sounds like the joy of the Experience, Picturesque Beauty, and Ecological Systems are a very close third. Does that sound right?

Interviewee:
Yeah and you’ve got to realize that he was think about all of these things at one time. That’s where his compositional logic comes in.

Interviewer:
In terms of some of the lower order concerns, Practical Accommodations and Programmatic Density, those were not some of the main topics in the office when you were working. Of course they were on the table.

Interviewee:
They were on the table when Michael was there saying “You can’t do that. We don’t have the budget. That type of thing that goes on in all projects, the monkey in the corner. Ed spent a lot more time thinking about projects than he ever got paid for, just like I do.

Interviewer:
I think that’s pretty much a sign of the best designers.

Interviewee:
I look at Frank Lloyd Wright. Look at Louis Sullivan, at all those. Great designers and thinker. They died broke. They all died the same way. Ed was broke, when he died. He figured out how to make some money with that big project in Indiana which helped a
lot. It was a 6 million dollar project but he didn’t get to finish. He only did the first phase. I’m going to be speaking with Marlon Blackwell Monday. He’s very excited. He can tell you more about that project than I can. I reviewed Ed’s concept on two different occasions because I used to stay over his office. He had some apartments up there. And after Katrina, there were no hotel rooms. He let me stay in one of those apartments. I guess he figured that if I stayed there I owed him a little brainstorm. That’s all the contact I really had with it. All the earlier ones before that, I worked with him on one way or another. We did our own thing. I saw Ed the Friday before he died. Fletcher Cox, is Fletcher Cox on your list?

Interviewer:
He’s not. My initial list had was about 30 people long and I had to try to keep it down to 10 that I could manage but he was on my longer list.

Interviewee:
Ed and Fletcher were friends. I met Fletcher through Ed, Fletcher knew him, I don’t know how. I don’t know how Fletcher knew him, I just knew that they were really close friends. Fletcher is one that’s a good thinker too. He and Ed probably had long conversations about design at the art garden early on, which wasn’t on your list either. I started it, then he became involved and he brought me back into it, and then, I finished it. Strange route but I and fletcher were with him. We had lunch and that Friday and I spoke to him in the parking lot and that was the last time I saw him was that weekend. A lot of what I do is my connection to Ed and his influence dragging me around.

2. Please RANK the following based upon your opinion of their importance to Edward Blake’s Complete Body of Work. (1 is the highest priority)

4__River Camps

5__100 Acer Wood

1__Crosby Arboretum

2__Hattiesburg, MS Convention Center

3__Vicksburg, MS Children’s Art Park

2__Other(s)
Interviewer:
It sounds like it was mutually beneficial for sure. So, with regard to some of the projects, at least the ones that I have come up with while working with Bob, came up with this list of ideas that encompassed a lot of the things that he was interested in. In that second question, in terms of trying to rank the importance of these projects, do you think you could take a stab at that? It sounds like Crosby would be number one for you.

Interviewee:
Well there’s a sequence. Each one was an improvement over the next in his concept thinking. The Crosby is where his thinking began to evolve. Then he did the Museum of Natural Science, then he did the [Hattiesburg Lake Terrace] convention center, then the Vicksburg Park together, and then he did the other two jobs. I’m not sure when the River Camp was done, I had nothing to do with it at all. I hadn’t heard of it until I saw it on this list. The 100 Acre Woods is pinnacle, I mean the end. The last one he did was on this list. There’s a sequence and I believe that sequence is progression. Ed was beginning to turn more toward art and less toward ecology.

Interviewer:
That’s interesting because I read quite a bit and looked over. There was a period when he had put the convention center in an exhibition at the University of Illinois at Champagne, the eco-revelatory design. I read everything I could on that. I looked into some of the comments and critiques that were published on that project. It seemed like there was a lot of commentary about it seeming that the project was not necessarily about ecology, but in some ways conflicted between the experience and the artistic intentions merged with ecological concerns but not really driven by ecological production.

Interviewee:
That’s pretty much a good description of Ed’s work. Ed wasn’t an ecologist. I guess that’s why he drifted toward me because I was. I knew I could tell him all these connections and all these things. He was an artist first. At the Crosby he was overwhelmed by the ecology. It always followed him. It was always there in one degree or the other. He loved complex systems. There’s nothing more complex than the earth.

3. What project(s) did you undertake with Ed Blake Jr and during what years was it designed?
Interviewer:

Just for the sake of trying to bring some uniformity to my study, could we try to get some of these other questions answered if you have the time? I would love to take a stab at them.

Interviewee:
What projects did you undertake with Ed and during what years? I don’t know the exact years for the Crosby? We did several small things. Ed set up a consulting center for the Crosby to try to generate funds and I would go out and do the design. Ed would critique them, they were through the Crosby. There were several of those done, and several little churches. There was one in Leeland using all native plants. The first big job we did together was the Museum of Natural Science.

Interviewer:
So, you did Crosby, Museum of Natural Science, the Art Park, the Convention Center…

Interviewee:
The Vicksburg Art Park, then there’s Ed’s Art Garden and the Museum of Art. I started it and Ed got into it. He brought me back into it, his influence is definitely there.

Interviewer: I was actually reading an article about that yesterday. I saw your comments and it looked like you were giving everyone else credit except for yourself. In fact, you had an awful lot to do with it.

Interviewee:
It was the last thing I could do for Ed. Me and Ed didn’t always agree, especially when it came to plant material. Art was more important to the way he saw the aesthetics than the ecology. He’s known as an ecologist and for furthering ecological design, for good reason. He was able to merge the two, not everyone could do that. I think that’s what made it strong enough to follow him all the way through his career. Who knows what he’d been if he lived, Ed did a bunch of little things too. Residences and things like that. We worked together from the beginning all the way through with Michael Van Valkenburgh on a project out in Edwards, Mississippi for John Palmer.

Did you know Ed taught at Harvard? I can tell you how that came about. I was there. Chris Rischer, do you know Chris Rischer? He taught. He was doing that in architecture. He was flying back and
forth to Harvard, he knew Michael. They were looking for someone to do that for landscape architecture. Chris recommended Ed. Ed called me. I was already working on the project with John Palmer. Quite frankly Van Valkenburgh had stiffed me out of some money, like eight dollars, and Ed called me and said he really wanted to do this but he couldn’t do this until I did it with him. I was already on site, but he really wanted to do this and meet Michael and them and he really wanted to go up there [Harvard] and teach. So that’s how he got the job. I called Michael and them back, I told her I’d be glad to and told her to send me a check for the last work that I did. They made some calls and two days later I got a check. They sent it special delivery. That’s how he met Michael and they hit it off. That was John Palmer’s property.

Interviewer:
So it was built? The project is complete.

Interviewee:
Yeah. It’s complete with a little bit of Ed’s design influence there.

Interviewer:
Is it most of Van Valkenburgh at that point?

Interviewee:
Half Van Valkenburgh and half me because John Palmer got rid of them because they were expensive. He had me finish everything and he wanted perennial gardens that Michael didn’t want. That was the reason he left. I tried to keep all of Michael’s work I could and I tried to take his patterns that he developed and carry them throughout the project. You can see his influence. They were great to work with, very creative. The people that we worked with went on and still work with him. That was a long time ago but there were several projects like that, that me and Ed worked on that most people don’t know about.

Interviewer:
Did he stay in touch with Van Valkenburgh? I feel like Van Valkenburgh had work in that eco-revelatory design exhibit. I could be wrong, I can’t quite remember.

Interviewee:
I don’t know. He was more artistic too. He didn’t know anything about what was down here. He wasn’t even in ecology. I had a whole study I did on that piece of property, a one-hundred-page
study, with a list of native plants and everything. They had a copy at the office that they never even looked at. They called me one day asking me to send them a list of native plants that would grow out there and I said well you’ve got that study don’t you and he said we’ve got something that was given to us around the office somewhere. I said there is an extensive list of every community and what species grow there. They weren’t that concerned when we did that project about ecology, that came along later. I’d be surprised if you had something then. What year was that?

Interviewer:
I want to say that was 87 or 88. I know it was late 80s.

Interviewee:
They didn’t act like they knew that much and like I said both of the people we worked with still work for him.

4. What SINGLE issue was MOST critical to Ed Blake Jr. in the project you undertook while working with him?

Interviewer:
That’s interesting, I’m going to look into that a little bit more and find out. So, back to the questions here. I think I might be able to answer some of this based on the answers you’ve given but in terms of number 4 “What single issue seemed most critical to Ed in the project you undertook while working with him so if we’re referring to just the Crosby, do you think the Crosby in terms of…I’m just trying to think of what we talked about, that was really his discovery of the importance and the potential of ecological thinking, pretty much?

Interviewee:
It’s like he said, he found his voice at the Crosby.

4b.

Interviewer:
As far as the follow up, why do you believe it’s so important? It sounds like it was a discovery for him and something completely new for him to sink his teeth into.

Interviewee:
It was and he learned from the people that came just like I did. If it hadn’t been for Carol Franklin and Leslie Sauer, I and Ed both would have went different directions. Where we would have ended
up in our careers, who knows, but they made a big impact on me and Ed both. 4c.

Interviewer:
The last part of that, how was it manifested and realized in the completed work i.e. in plan, detail, section, or particular space or particular atmosphere created or particular materials used? That’s a big question.

Interviewee:
it was a combination of everything. The Crosby was pure ecology. Everything was done for ecological reasons. So, it’s everything. Everything is connected to everything else. That was Ed’s philosophy and my philosophy. It all evolved at the Crosby.

Interviewer:
Is there any spot, it may be hard to answer, but do you think that there is one particular spot in the Crosby that sums up or does the best to kind of articulate that idea? Or is it more about the experience of walking the whole thing.

Interviewee:
It’s just the way everything ties into everything else. There’s nothing you can mention at the Crosby that doesn’t tie to something else that ties to something else. You drive a steak anywhere in the Crosby and you walk in that steak straight out and you’re going to cross through different habitats and areas and their all connected at a center point and the way through until you hit the road. Everything is connected. He loved the pavilion. The lake is the centerpiece but most of the lake was designed by Carol, the contours of the lake and the planting. Carol did most of that and it’s the center, then Fay Jones did the pavilion, but Ed brought these people together. It’s the one site where you can’t say there is one spot, and that’s the nature of his thought process and his ability to think of all these things. From the artistic gates that Fay Jones did, to the bridges, to the pavilion, then into the grasses, the pavilion, the long leaf pines. The pavilion as a reflection of a pine forest with those long slender columns.

Interviewer:
I was looking as a couple beautiful photographs, elevational photographs of the pine behind and the two things start to merge elegantly.

Interviewee:
You know those are long leaf pines and he actually went out, Fay Jones did and picked the pine trees.

Interviewer:
To be used in the structure?

Interviewee:
Yeah. I think the story was that the pine was stacked there was a delay and the pine disappeared and he had to go out and do it again. I think that was the story ask Bob.

Interviewer:
I will. I’m actually supposed to speak with Maurice Jennings as well. I don’t know how involved he was.

Interviewee:
He was heavily involved in the design and stuff. He was sort of like me. Ed was top dog and I kind of learned and sat back and watched and enjoyed his genius. He was the same way with Fay Jones. I’m sure he worked on all the details and stuff. His name came up a lot. I actually met him once out there. Fay was out there more than him but I met him once out there I know. I’m sure I didn’t meet him a couple of times.

Interviewer:
I’m looking forward to talking to him.

Interviewee:
He’s a really nice guy. I tried to get him to design a pavilion on two other jobs on the delta but it just never panned out. The economy was a bum and donation money disappeared so we never got to work on a project directly together.

Interviewer:
I spoke with his son the other day so he gave me reassurance that he though Maurice would definitely want to talk.

Interviewee:
He liked Ed. I remember him talking about Ed on the phone. Everyone liked Ed. Ed was just one of those people.

Interviewer:
I can’t believe I got into Mississippi just before he passed away in 2010 so I never got to meet him. I heard his name quite a bit and I know he was working on a project in Columbus, MS. That was when I
had heard his name for the first time. 2010 is when I started in the architecture program, that fall actually. We were doing a project over in Columbus, a fictional project, and I started hearing his name.

**Interviewee:**
There was a project going on then.

**Interviewer:**
A soccer-field. Some sort of big soccer field.

**Interviewee:**
Ed worked on a park over there somewhere. He may have been a student, Tennessee Williams. Bob was on the project. He did it with the park and he got student. I was involved with it. You know how Bob is. Ed was had just finished that park in Columbus I think, before that.

**Interviewer:**
I don’t know a lot of detail about it, I just know that we had presented some work project to the city engineers and they were bringing up that project and how that work could dovetail to what they were studying as students.

**Interviewee:**
Ed did exceptional work in there. He was a pioneer of the use of native plants in the state. Dwight Weatherford, he came up to me at a conference or a meeting in the early days and introduced himself and I told him who I was. He said you’re the guy that knows native plants, turned around and walked off. That’s how landscape architects talked about native plants in those days. Native plants, are you kidding? Those are weeds. We’ve come a long way since then and Bob’s biggest influence was teaching these students. There’s a big gap in there, landscape architects weren’t using native plants. They weren’t taught native plants or much about plants at all during Cameron’s time and after Ed Martin left. Ed martin didn’t teach anything but trees and shrubs that were native. Ed Blake probably had the second, Ed Martin probably had the most influence on landscape architects and Blake was probably second.

If you look at the depth of what Ed Blake did, it far surpasses what Ed martin did. Ed Martin created landscape architecture in the state. He is the father of landscape architecture in MS. Everybody treats him that way. He’s a great guy. He probably knows a lot about Ed’s history too and when he came there. Ed
was in transition trying to figure out...because the Crosby dropped in his lap he was beginning to think about these things then. Most people think if stick fall in their yards as a laziness thing, “well do I have to pick it up now? Maybe I’ll just have them in case there’s more”. Ed has this long conversation with be about how a simple limb fell in his yard and if he should wait for mow. How tidy does he want his yard? With that he coined the phrase that I’ve used all my life: “tidy nature”. “How tidy do you want nature?” is a question I ask myself all the time up front because no one had ever asked such a simple question that means so much on a project. How tidy do you want nature? But Ed did. He sat there discussed that for an hour with me. He was beginning to develop all these concepts and ideas that were beginning to pop up in his head. It was his ability to think through all these projects and come up with a logical solution.

I tell students all the time that concepts...concepts are something that I’m really good at and Bob has me come up these and talk to students quite often about concepts and one of the things is that your concept is as strong as your ability to juggle parameters. The more you know, the more different parameters that you know more about, the more that you can juggle in your head at one time, the stronger your design concept will be. Ed could juggle huge amounts of data. I think that was his biggest asset. People would ask him a question. You would have 10 or 12 people sitting around a table, they’d ask a question and Ed would just kind of lean his head back on his chair and sit there quietly, not answering the question, long enough to where people are starting to look at each other. Then he’d raise his head and he’d come back with the most exceptional answer you’d ever heard. He was a thinker. One thing I’d learned from Ed is how to listen and I’m a terrible listener. When something popped in my head, Ed was an exceptional listener. He listened to people’s ideas just like he looked at nature. I don’t know how much all this has helped you.

Interviewer:
Very helpful, as you know I never met him so I’m trying to get to know him and his influence in southeast regional landscape architecture so it’s great to hear it.

Interviewee:
Ed was great fun. You give him a few drinks. He could eat a ton of pizza. He could put down more pizza than any human being on the face of the earth. I think he packed it in his feet and all the way up his legs, all the way through his throat. He was very humorous and
funny and him and his wife would have a few drinks and play music. They would have his musical instruments on the wall. Did you know that he had a pink guitar? He wasn’t any good at it but he loved picking on it. I can’t remember what he called it. He had a name for it. Might ask Bob or Marilyn. I don’t know where that guitar went but he loved that guitar. He loved blues music. He would go to all these concerts in the delta and places. He was an exceptional human being in so many ways.

When I would have problems in my life, he was always there. He was more of a brother to me than my brother ever was. His loss was a great loss to me and the profession. What he could have done will never be known.

Interviewer:
Sounds like it was an amazing life that he led and influenced an awful lot of people.

Interviewee:
Everybody loved Ed. Did you know I wrote him a poem at his memorial and read it? Bob probably has a copy of it. If not I’ll email it to you.

Interviewer:
No, I did not know that.

Interviewee:
I wrote very little poetry but Ed loved it. I keep them in my lectures. When I had personal problems, he tried to get me to write more poetry. I know that the one thing he would enjoy me doing for him was to write him a poem, so I did.

Interviewer:
That sounds like a very fitting tribute.

Interviewee:
The memorial was very fitting. It was about the wind. Just as I was reading it the wind blew through there and everybody sat up on the edge of their chairs. He was a well-rounded person and I think as long as the people that knew him live, his legacy will live. I don’t know what will happen when they’re gone and all of us pass away.

Interviewer:
Well that’s a big part of why Bob put me up to this. He said this, needs to be recorded. These are important things for the state and for everyone involved in developing everything we have now. I’ve been talking a lot with Robert Ivy who wrote a book on Fay Jones. Robert’s very interested in this project and he’s committed to helping me. I’m doing this beginning portion as my thesis for landscape architecture as a faculty member. I hope to continue it on and put together some type of monograph or book similar to the book on Fay Jones on his work and his life. If everything keeps going the way it is, hopefully you and I will have lots of more conversations together and we can get that book out and in front of people to get you and him the recognition that you guys deserve in terms of the impact you’ve made. I’ve really appreciated your time today and start on the project.

Interviewee:
One of the things that comes out of something like this is how people see the same thing. It’ll be interesting to see, when you’re done with all of this, what other people thought.

Interviewer:
In that e-mail I sent you there is a release form, which you don’t have to sign…

END OF INTERVIEW

Interviewer: Hans C. Herrmann

Interviewee: Marlon Blackwell, Principle of Marlon Blackwell Architects

Interview Setting: Via telephone. The interview was conducted at 10:30 AM, June 15th 2015.

Affiliation with interviewee: N/A

1. Please RANK (1 is the highest priority) the following based upon your opinion of their importance to Edward Blake’s Design Thinking and Process.
   __ Compositional Logic
   1 __ Ecological Systems
Interviewee:

I would say ecological systems would be number 1. I think that it’s sort of a close one between practical accommodations and experiential delight.

Interviewer:

Okay. I can rank both of those as second.

Interviewee:

Yeah, because see, he always talked about design in a somewhat pragmatic way in terms of what it does, and part of what it does is provide the experiential delight. The picturesque beauty, that stuff, for him was always programmatic the way, I felt, like it was always kind of included in what you are trying to accomplish through the practical. Through understanding the processes of ecological systems trying to intensify certain qualities that he found. Compositional logic was important. I think it was
important again, it sort of came out of the logic so it was reasoned through his attention to these other things, right?

Interviewer:

Right.

Interviewee:

He always talked about pragmatism in kind of the William James pragmatism, where you know, it’s neither empirical or purely intellectual but a combination of the two. Every decision is making something or actions was always weighed against what it provided and you know what where the consequences right. The pros and cons of each of each aspect of a particular issue or challenge.

Interviewer:

Okay that’s interesting.

Interviewee:

Yeah so, he was very much tied to philosophical aspects of William James theories.

Interviewer:
Alright, and in terms of some of these are long shots so the idea of programmatic density that may not be anything that he was concerned with.

**Interviewee:**

Yeah, I think Ed was one of those unique landscape architects that had the ability to work at multiple scales and he was especially good I think strategically. At looking at the large scale he could really, like, zoom-in on the design of a gate or the design of a waterfall or something of that nature. So, he had a great agility to think in eons and minutes and seconds.

He started every project, I might add, he was about origins, he always was. He would begin with origins. He would start millions and millions of years ago which, you know at one point I thought was amazing and at other points made me laugh like what does this have to do with anything, but he was trying to construct a logic you know? From millions of years ago to the present and, you know, how we understand where we are at now, as an extension of all these processes.

**Interviewer:**
Okay that’s interesting, yeah. You’re not the first person to bring that up that he was really obsessed with history and trying to understand what was there before he got there.

**Interviewee:**

Right. The history that was nature made and one that was what he called culture made, so nature made and manmade.

Interviewer: Okay great. Um well we can go ahead

2. Please RANK the following based upon your opinion of their importance to Edward Blake’s Complete Body of Work. (1 is the highest priority)
   - RiverCamps (5)
   - 100 Acer Wood (3)
   - Crosby Arboretum (1)
   - Hattiesburg, MS Convention Center (2)
   - Vicksburg, MS Children’s Art Park (4)
   - Other(s)

**Interviewee:**

I think the Crosby is certainly number one in my opinion. Um, I, um, I think that Hattiesburg would be 2 and probably the
hundred acres, then Vicksburg. Uh, hundred acres because it wasn’t really fully realized and had a lot of budget challenges and stuff so there was a great sort of vision there, but it was, uh and very important had it been fully realized. Had he lived, I think, it would have grown in importance.

Interviewer:

I see ok. Is there any uh is there any kind of plan to I don’t know if he was working with anybody that sort of picked up that torch or is that pretty much ended when he you know?

Interviewee:

Well, Mark Thellonis is a, was the, I think he’s still there, he’s in horticulture you know. Head of grounds and stuff was Mark Thellonis. And he knew, even before Ed came on, the same project so he’d probably be a good person to talk to.

Interviewer:

Ok yea that’s great.

Interviewee:

I think he’s still at the museum. He’d be great to talk to and of course Eric Fuller but Eric died only a year or two after Ed
you know he sort of took over. Eric was much more of an idealist. He had a history with the museum, that wasn’t a particularly good relationship, and Ed was a bit more pragmatic, uh a bit more accommodating.

Interviewer:

Ok

Interviewee:

Ed and I did work on a variety of projects you know the 100 Acers obviously, uh we worked on the Golf Clubhouse, landscaped together, worked on a little thing called Terra, Terra Springs. A large villa about a hundred and eighty acres master plan landscape architecture project.

Interviewer:

I didn’t realize that you had done that many projects together.

Interviewee:

Oh yeah, well we worked on a few. What else have we worked on together? We worked on the strawberry plains Audubon project together that’s in Holly Springs, MS
Interviewer:

Yea sure, we actually have some ongoing projects that we are looking at going maybe for design/build some little viewing platforms.

Interviewee:

Right. Right. And kind of a visitor’s pavilion there that’s pretty cool and but he worked on a variety of approaches and different strategies for parking and planning you know so we worked together quite a bit on that. What else did we do together? Uh yeah, he worked landscape that was from Mr. Tyson.

Interviewer:

Well that’s a fantastic project. I would love if I ever made it over there of course.

Interviewee:

Yeah, the problem with Tyson is Tyson wasn’t that focused or committed to the landscape around the clubhouse but he did give opportunities to Ed. In the end, I think Ed took full advantage of them and the results I think were just deftly done, just really well done. They take care of it, looks good. Terra Springs never got realized uh I think we never went after you know we were starting to work right when he died. We were just inked contracts
together in the addition to giving calls at Washington University in St. Louis Architecture School. Then he passed away less than a week before we were supposed to start on that.

3. What project(s) did you undertake with Ed Blake Jr and during what years was it designed?

Interviewer:

Wow ok. Oh, I was just wondering which of these, your first project with him, was? And how you got to know him.

Interviewee:

Umm, I think I got to know him through teaching umm when umm Chris Rischer who was our John Wiggins professor which invited him in to come teach with us and to do a collaborative sort of landscape and architecture design studio. That’s how I met Ed so we taught together in 2000, the spring of 2000. Did a studio and I just got to spend a lot of time with him and Chris. And I think our first project might have been uh when we started working together might have been the 100 acres? I mean that was a long process. And then I got him involved with bluffing as well. There were some other things just other little things with other people. I knew I just wasn’t really involved. I can’t think of anything… there was a house… I can’t seem to think
of anything off the bat... top of my head. But he was, you know, there at that critical time for us where we began to transition from more of a residential scale to more of a public institutional scale.

Interviewer:

Yeah, that’s great.

Interviewee:

So little of what was built in Indianapolis, but so much more that we worked on everything from the experiential center to the walkway bridge, the elevated walkway bridge Mary Miss, hopefully you’re talking to her as well?

Interviewer:

She is on my second list, so yeah

Interviewee:

So, we had this amazing thing where we would go to New York every 4-6 weeks and hang at her studio and work and review and design and sketching was really an amazing time…and then everything just sort of came apart in ’08 … with the recession and the museum just wanting to get something built but really pulling back in what they were willing to invest in.
Interviewer:

I see, OK

Interviewee:

So that was unfortunate…we worked fairly actively together from about 2003, something like that, until 2010…in terms of professional relationship, talking practice and teaching was spring of 2000…and then I had him come and join up in… 2004…on a comp studio project we did in the Bayou Bartholomew. And he would come over and do a workshop or something like that.

Interviewer:

Right

Interviewee:

So, we had just a really good relationship…he was like my big brother.

Interviewer:
You are also not the first person to say that…sounded like he was very personable and everybody loved Ed…he had that kind of personality

**Interviewee:**

Oh yeah…he just had a great way of dealing with people…he kind of just really cared and he talked…about ideas mostly…Ed wasn’t somebody who wouldn’t gossip…or talk about himself a lot. It was always about ideas … to which, to me, was the sign of a big thinker. At the same time, there were times we spent, I remember, him out at a Maurice Jennings place. I remember him drinking and playing guitar, you know he played blues guitar, hang out there. I remember every time we went to Indianapolis we’d stay at the Canterbury Hotel, have dinner at St. Elmo’s and then we’d go over to the “Slippery Noodle” which is a kind of blues club and every time we went there would be someone from Mississippi playing. And he’d wind up at the breaks sitting on the stage with him and talking, cause, he was from his “neck of the woods”. He had style, he could shift from the southern gentleman in the seersucker suit to the bejeweled lizard skin boots, beret, we used to joke when I’d call him “The Keith Richards of Landscape Architecture” He had this aura about him that was intelligent but at the same time was rooted very much to his place.
4. What **SINGLE** issue was MOST critical to Ed Blake Jr. in the project you undertook while working with him?

   **Interviewee:**

   To get back on the list of questions...the single most important issue that I got from Ed was...is the importance of the process, you know, observation, careful interpretation of a place, to expand upon it or intensify it. That was super important to him. This was something he took a long view on. To him it was really important to whatever he made for it to be an extension of the process that was already there. He thought that was really important. It was very critical to him, that design came out of careful observation. To him it was more of a bottom up process, more inductive, not exclusively, but the way he often looked at things, he was very interested in particulars.
Based on the collection of notebooks & sketchbooks he just took copious notes and sketches…he was obsessed with knowing every facet of a project.

**Interviewee:**

Narrative might be a word that could stretch over all of that … understanding what the narrative is, how to extend that narrative.

**Interviewer:**

And…do you know why this was so important to him, was it rooted in some sort of past project or experience he had? Where this process became so essential to him, did he ever mention anything about that?

**Interviewee:**

No, I think what was transformative for him was the Crosby Arboretum Project. The slowness of that project and the ability to have the time to reflect on it…to really understand the processes by which that ecosystem worked …it was really important to him…this was a process to him.
When he talked about the Crosby, did he talk much about Leslie Sauer or Carol Franklin? A lot of people refer to them as major mentors in his life?

Interviewee:

The Andropogon that Carol Franklin brought to him he had a lot of fidelity to that where they might have had a more strategic approach to that he dealt with it on an everyday basis for a long time...so he became the actual steward of those ideas, those guiding principles. Then he got to live them and execute them, understand how they played out. Then he got to understand, working with Fay Jones, what he already inherently knew, the aesthetic relationship between the structure and the land. He got to understand this aesthetic and he had a really good dialogue with Fay, and he was critical to hiring Fay for that project.

Interviewer:

It’s amazing looking in his work he had a real knack for admitting when he was not sure about something and inviting expert in and listening to what they had to say

Interviewee:
He had incredible generosity, he had an ego but, everything was about the project, how to make the project better.

5. Did Ed Blake expand your conception of the Project Scope and if so how?

Interviewer:

Question #5, did Ed expand your conception of the project and its scope and how… is he the kind of architect that would come in and make the project his own or was it very client based or how did he manage the scope issue?

Interviewee:

He expanded my timeline for thinking about a place. He did get us to think much larger. It was always a kind of negotiation trying to work what we were doing into his larger strategic ideas about the place. A lot of it was being out there with him walking the place, we did a lot of that on every project. How to best site the place on every project we worked on together. It’s one thing to say it and another to see it, he did not have a heavy hand, he tried to extend or expand our ideas. I felt he was somebody I could bounce ideas off, he could be a tough critic. I remember the time I went to him on the IMA Interpretive Pavilion and he looked at it, and he looked at it, we were in Mary Miss’s
studio and she looked at it too. If he didn’t like it he didn’t say much and he sort of hemmed and hawed a bit. Finally, Mary said “you know that’s kind of been done before”! They got me to rethink the whole thing, the reasoning and the sensibility, and out of that came what was actually built. Not to abandon the whole thing, but to reason the relationship to the place and not just something I had read in a history book.

Interviewer:

Was Ed brought in on that project?

Interviewee:

We started out together on that project, we went through 1st, 2nd, and 3rd round on that project. We presented on stage together, then the board of trustees liked Charles Rose more and asked Ed if he would work with him? And Ed said no. Marlon and I are a team. If you want me then Marlon comes with me and they agreed and that’s how I got the project. That’s the kind of guy he was.

6. To what extent do you believe was Ed Blake Jr. was known for attempting supplement the projects ecological capacity and in what ways?

Interviewer:
To what extent do you believe was Ed Blake Jr. was known for attempting supplement the projects ecological capacity and in what ways?

**Interviewee:**

Not getting in the way of how things were working, and he could be somewhat corrective. Do you need to do it thought plantings or restructure the site he wanted you to maintain interest in the whole. He didn’t want you to have one place to be, it was always understood to be sort of meta project and maintaining interest throughout. At IMA he was very concerned with the wetlands which were manmade and how to supplement that through water garden & bio swales adding another layer between the wetlands and the lake that would filter the water. He understood the ecotones. He spent a lot of time with the client talking about the disturbed landscape, lots of invasive, how to clean that up. How to develop these ecotones in the pathways journey would crisscross these ecotones from one type of ecology to another that existed on the site. He was very mindful of edges where things come together, that’s where the most diversity is.

**Interviewer:**

He participated in a show on eco-revelatory designs in the late “90’s” in Hattiesburg and a number of the articles that critiqued his project said his work, while ecologically minded, was not about pure ecology and often he would supplement, make somethings happen more for the quality of the experience that for the pure ecological function. Does that ring true to you or is that false?

**Interviewee:**
He did like the light. He did sometimes want the landscape to be in the background. He understood that landscape was situational and it depended on the project where he might highlight something with a splash of color or beautiful wild grasses or the shape of the trees or something. Then as you come in the drive it might be filled with annuals and you would change that out. It was clearly artificial and non-indigenous plantings that were like a canvas that you could change, he liked mixing and matching these contrasts together if it made sense. He was very pragmatic, if there was value added he would do it, but if he didn’t think it was he wouldn’t do it. That’s where the philosophical approach to the pragmatic approach played into it. Was he a purest in that way, no! The experience was first for him. He wasn’t a trend setter in that way. He didn’t get caught up in trends or the fashion of the day. Form came out of fact of what he was trying to do experientially. He was still a student of form; most landscape architects are not particularly good at formal. It’s a different type of from, a landscape point of view.

7. To what extent do you believe Ed was able to affect the client’s intentions for the project?

Interviewer:
In regards to question 7 (To what extent do you believe Ed was able to affect the client’s intentions for the project?) it sounds like Ed was really able to excite them (100 Acre project)

**Interviewee:**

I think he did but I don’t think they really understood what he was trying to do, but I think they got it. Ed had a unique way of telling the story, and I think clients relate to that, but a lot of times they just didn’t understand because they just don’t think like that.

**Interviewer:**

It’s funny you say that because others have said that too. It would be like he would be talking and nobody in the room knew what he was talking about but they were still impressed by it.

**Interviewee:**

Ed had a way of talking, it wasn't fire and brimstone, but it certainly had a pied piper aspect to it. It could get you enraptured quickly. He once conceived a project to have students grow rye grass in a beaker then water color it as it grew than write about it. It was a way of constructing a sensibility about the project.

8. Other Points?
Interviewer:

Number 8 I’ve scratched off it is redundant

9. Do you recall a period/point in Edward Blake Jr.’s career in which his professional intentions underwent a shift? Please if possible include the approx. date(s) of this shift.

Interviewer:

Do you recall a period/point in Edward Blake Jr.’s career in which his professional intentions underwent a shift? – It sounds like that shift had already occurred when you met him.

Interviewee:

When I worked with him he was already starting to stretch his practice, he was hitting his stride.

10. Would you characterize Ed Blake Jr. as a Formalist, Experientialist, or Other?

Interviewer:

The last question (Would you characterize Ed Blake Jr. as a Formalist, Experientialist, or Other?) you have already answered it was sort of one step forward depending on the project, is that fair?

Interviewee:

He was and Experientialist, form is one of those things he struggled with. He just had to work it through a lot, he understood
aspirations and that was where we could work together a lot. He had great ideas, he understood the effect he was trying to reach and he would get there. We were influencing each other but we just didn’t have enough projects realized together to see the fruit of that.

Interviewer:
I’ll jump right into this project specific questions, do you think the concept and ideation of the hundred acres was different from Ed’s typical approach? I think the River Camps Project has some connection with (a conservation subdivision in Panama City) in terms of large scale planning I see some connection between 100 acres and that project and Crosby. I’m curious if you see any relationship between those that you have don with him (Ed) and that you may know of.

Interviewee:
I think his experience with those other projects certainly helped him with this. In terms of how to stake out a process of how he was going to handle the project, of really coming to understand it through the hydrogeology and the geology, understanding the plant life, understanding it as a system, how it worked or doesn’t work and understand what his place in all this is. That is what I
picked up from him, it wasn’t like he came in with a set of ideas. it was trying to see what ideas would emerge out of it.

Interviewer:

It sounds like he was not one to show up with a set of ideas but was one to see that he was trying to realize from project to project or to say well I’ve done it like this before we can just do that again

Interviewee:

No, No, I didn’t get that at all from him. It was always a new challenge. It’s not like he had a bucket of tricks he pulled out.

Interviewer:

The follow up to that is do you think this difference was exciting or challenging? It sounds like difference was what excited Ed something new to learn about

Interviewee:

And he was really interested in this relationship between art and nature which is what 100 Acres is, it’s a place for art and nature to coexist, for people to interact with and I think he would love the challenge of it again. He never got to realize this because they kept hitting him with cost reductions because they just didn’t have the
money, or they would put it toward that, so he came to the point that I’m just going to make the best of what I have here, and we’ll just build on it over time, he had that kind of long term approach.

Interviewer:

I’m going to put that in for number two what did he struggle most with, it sounds like the best laid plans were just never realized.

Interviewee:

And in some ways I would argue a lack of commitment by the museum to the overall vision—beyond the pathway journeys and a couple of moments it then became more like a place to sprinkle art and the investment just wasn’t there like it was on the front end of the project—that was beyond his control they loved his ideas, but the project got cut by more than 50%--but they were so excited other than Marilyn I was the last to talk to him, he had been sick but he was feeling better and the had gotten their tickets. They were flying out to the park because they had missed the opening. He was genuinely excited about going out to see it for the first time because it was not about our little structure but the whole thing. It really is quite beautiful how you approach the entry and it is really nicely done, but there was more to do. He was taking a long-term view that they are going to ask to come back and we will build this
up over time. Originally, they wanted to produce everything at once but under the terms, well, you know.

Interviewer:
Well it sounds like he was hoping it would work out like the Arboretum which was a phased project…

Interviewee:
The problem now with the museum is they have had so much turn over with the directors. They don’t know how to take care of this place, Ed died so suddenly he didn’t have time to leave any instructions. They weren’t compiled in some way that someone could follow.

Interviewer:
I just talked to Robert Poore just a few days ago and he had picked up where ED had left off on the art in front of the history museum (in Jackson) he said the same thing “I wasn’t quite sure what Ed had in mind I have a pretty good sense, and I did everything I could to finish off what he had started and make sure the place could continue on the way I thought he would want it to be” he had a number of ongoing projects but his friends have come along and tried to finish his projects, it speaks to his character.
Interviewer:

What aspects of hundred acres to think intrigued him the most?

Interviewee:

He was excited about the ecotones and how you could move people through and across the grain of those ecotones. Really seeing it as a kind of mosaic, that really intrigued him. It was a very volatile site with the water rising and flooding, he also found that intriguing.

Interviewer:

That’s interesting in how that ties into some of his earlier work in terms of the eco revelatory trying to heighten those moments and trying to make them almost auto didactic, so a pedestrian would still get some idea of the function

Interviewee:

He often said when it’s all done it should feel like I was never here, he really wanted to seamless with the setting. He was always just improving on it intensifying it.

Interviewer:
The last question I had, you sort of answered this in terms of Ed speaking about a landscape journey

**Interviewee:**

I think that early on that was important. We talked about a quote from Carl Andre where there would be no one place to be in this landscape, but multiple places, each place I’m in, offers something of an equal or greater value so I begin to understand it as a whole. I think that was a big aspiration for him, for it not to be just a single point. He wanted to provide an equal value to all the different aspects of the place, you can appreciate it for what they are.

**Interviewer:**

That makes sense especially given the –for the landscape to form a backdrop to the different pieces of are

**Interviewee:**

We wanted more site-specific art we picked up the woman who did the wheat field in New York, James Terrell, Robert Owens but the museum didn’t have the money for that level – but it was great when Mary Miss got involved—in the end it was curated so that it
was highly personal to the curator—very little of it was appealing to me as site specific art—Art in relationship to journey.

Interviewer:

Interested in construction documentation I have not seen a lot was it simple instructional (drawing and modeling) how he managed that process

**Interviewee:**

It seems more process he had a very analytical mind, I never saw pretty picture sort of thing, presentations tended to be more rough-model or sketch instead of glossy photo shopped presentation. there was an older fellow Sam, he made more technical drawings etc.

Interviewer: Hans C. Herrmann

**Interviewee: Sam Hogue, Friend and longtime employee of the Landscape Studio**

Interview Setting: Via telephone. The interview was conducted at 2:00 PM on Thursday, July 2nd 2015.

Affiliation with interviewee: N/A

(Start of Interview) See hand written responses to many questions.

9. Do you recall a period/point in Edward Blake Jr.’s career in which his professional intentions underwent a shift? Please if possible include the approx. date(s) of this shift.

   Interviewer:
Do you recall a period/point in Edward Blake Jr.’s Career in which his professional intentions underwent a shift? Please if possible include the approximate date(s) of this shift.

Interviewee:

In addition to the two experiences with him early on that I talk about with his early teachings at Mississippi State and then our meetings before that and the discussion about history, his developing interest in history and then also a developing interest with ecological design, he and I did a lot of cross country traveling together over the first years that he was at the Crosby.

Actually, I think our first trip may have started just as he was starting full time at the Crosby. And you’ll have to forgive me, years escape me. That’s the reason why you don’t get years from me on any of my answers, but he was especially anxious, having developed a strong interest in ecology, to meet some of the leaders in ecological design at that time. That was the impetus for the – I don’t know if this is the trip – it was one of the trips we took to the northeast, and on the way up there we went through Louisville which had been where his first job was and that was in the office of a Campbell Miller who was at the time either the President or the immediate past President of the ASLA.
This would have been just after he graduated from Mississippi State in ‘68 or ‘69. And then he was there in Campbell Miller’s Office. So, we looked into some of his design work there and as you can imagine the ecological blossom had not come forth yet. What he showed me: he wanted to see mostly how the plants had matured, how he was reaching a concept that he had from an ambience that he wanted to created and so we drove around several of those and it was just a classical landscape design project, well done. No hint of any ecological anything in the sense that we know him to be later. And then from there we went up into New England. He wanted to go by Dan Kiley’s Office. In the late 40’s, he [Kiley] was one of the rebels out of Harvard along with Garrett Eckbo and James Rose and Wallace Vaint. He taught at Harvard, was the classic formalism if you will, just the classic Beaux Art-ish kind of design that was taught everywhere at the time. If it was taught at Harvard it was taught everywhere else of course. They rebelled against that. Both Rose and Eckbo were Californians and Kiley, I’m not sure where he was from originally? I want to say from the east – northeast. And they rebelled and started their own direction in getting away from the formal kind of design. So, Dan Kiley was practicing at that time. As I said, this would have been his first year as director and master planner of course at the
Crosby. So, we actually were able to meet Dan and spend—of course we just dropped in on him just out of the clear blue and he was kind enough to receive us and spend some time with us. And then on that trip we visited several gardens that had a complete ecological design base.

One of those was “Garden in the Woods,” and I believe that’s in New Jersey somewhere. It was fully developed and designed as an ecological base garden. Then we went to a very formalistic garden developed by the DuPont family at one of their estates. It has a very large home with it. It has the same name as one of the large unfinished mansions in Natchez, MS. The name just escapes me, it’s just a very formalistic design, nothing with an ecological direction per say about it, but very well executed European style. Specifically, a French Formalistic garden design. And then we spent—I don’t think we spent any more time anywhere than we did in the offices of Andropogon, and I saw that you had Leslie Sauer as one of the people that you were going to be soliciting responses from. That’s what they were known for at the time. I’m not sure if they are still the same office with the same orientation or not but Leslie Sauer and a Carol somebody.

Interviewer:
Interviewee:

Yes, Carol Franklin.

Interviewer:

She’s actually the one I have been in contact with.

Interviewee:

Well she should be able to give you some good information because this is as the seed is germinating in his mind for the ecological design and they were major contributors and “inputers”, if you will, for developing thought processes.

So, we did spend a good deal of time with them and looked at some of their work around the suburbs of Philadelphia. I can’t remember that either. So, we visited other gardens, other places, but those were certainly their office’s. To spend some time with them was very a special time for him at that particular point in time. The other person we visited with was Lighty, and he was the director of the Morris Arboretum? There’s a big question mark behind all that. I think his last name is Lighty, I think is how it is spelled. I’m not sure about the first name. I want to say Robert
but I’m not sure that’s right. But the Morris Arboretum has a lot of ecological orientation in its design and displays. Matter of fact I think he is an ecologist/botanist. He doesn’t come out of a design background. It was more of a Victorian style display garden with an ecological direction to it. That proved very helpful for Ned. Matter of Fact, Ned used him like he did Andropogon as consultants as he was developing his master plan in Crosby. He had them down -as well as a number of other people several times to Picayune to visit the site and give them all a chance to share with him their reactions and their thoughts to what they saw.

And that brings up another subject and that group of consultants in general. He was very free with using consultants and in addition to that, these would be paid consultants. But also, He had a very extensive network that he built up with contacts that he made where he would just pick up the phone if he got stumped on something in the office and got stumped on a direction he wanted to head in, wasn’t sure about it or just had technical questions. He would call whoever he thought would help him. That was almost just standard operating procedure for him. I want to highlight that a little more than what I did in my narrative. Anyway, I just wanted to mention those trips and starting with this one in the northeast.
Another time we went to California. My family lives in the Sacramento area. I was making trips back and forth. I would always drive, for a couple of trips he would join me. For one of those trips we visited the Sonoran Desert museum, maybe in Tucson, I’m not sure. It’s developed fully as an ecological display garden to exhibit the plants native to the Sonoran Desert. I don’t recall that we visited with the director or any official. I’m kind of fuzzy on that. He spent a lot of time by himself and I just wandered off by myself so I wasn’t with him the whole time. But is in a desert environment what the Crosby is to the southeastern environment. Very close, even though they are very different visually. The display of native plants in their native habitat is what each one is all about. To my mind’s eye – I’m sure that Ed would say differently – that’s the closest other garden I know to the Crosby.

Interviewer:

Before we dive into the questions, it would be helpful if you could describe a little bit of your relationship with Ed. In particular, I’m hoping to learn a little more about his very early career and what he was - his educational background - in order to help understand what he was trying to escape and how he was working to reinvent himself.
Interviewee:

I mentioned in my narrative his interest in classical design at
Mississippi State, but I’m gonna come back and keep coming back
to what I think was his major influence and that was his father’s
arboretum in Pocahontas. He grew up on that site and his father –
I don’t know whether you know anything about his father’s
background do you?

Interviewer:

Just a little bit that I have been learning recently but not a whole lot.

Interviewee:

I’ll try to make it as brief as possible of what I know about him.
He was in charge of public relations for the Mississippi Farm
Bureau and had that title, that position, for a number of years.
That kind of position one spends a lot of time in before you work
yourself to a level like that. That gave him a kind of opportunity to
get to know people all around the state who had a need to
communicate with the Farm Bureau. He was kind of their head
lead man – communications with people around the State. He did
a lot of traveling in the state. He was a superb photographer, and
he was also an avid photographer and took brilliant photographs.
That’s where Ed got that. Not only that, but I’m gonna continue to say that I think his education was happening before his eyes from age whatever as soon as he could hold onto a shovel. He was working in his dad’s arboretum. The dots were there but they never connected until much later when he starts learning a little bit more about ecology and ecologic design. That was happening just after we met.

Actually, when I went to Mississippi State to teach in 1975 and then he came along, leaving his Wichita job in 77 or 78. It was as that time that he started to develop a strong interest in ecology and ecological design. I had just some basic background. And as I said in my narratives, we spent a lot of time talking about ecological processes and basic concepts of ecology, plant systems, and human interaction with the natural environment from an ecological standpoint. That was the very beginning for him. I’m talking late 70’s. Even though - and this is important - the dots hadn’t connected with him yet, he grew up in an ecological environment. His father was not in design. He had a lot of what you could call a Victorian display garden on a very large old site that he bought. It had a pre-Civil War home on it that was burned during the civil war but there was still evidence of where the home was. Foundation was still there, the chimney. It was on some of that
very rich, lush soil that you find down in the Jackson area. If you’re familiar with that particular soil type, it’s very rich and very deep. Its wind deposited soil. This is from eons ago. The bluffs out of Natchez and Vicksburg are made out of that – the bluffs that overlook the MS River, they are very stable as long as water doesn’t run over them, because they are windblown, they are dozens, maybe hundreds of feet deep. All of that with rich nutrients. That is what constitutes a lot of the site of the Springdale Hills Arboretum. It grows very lush plants, quite vigorous growth. I don’t know where his dad dug out his interest in plants. He worked at Farm Bureau so I guess it may have come along with his general work. He just wanted to have an arboretum that he could tinker with, be either taking plants that were already there and displaying them on a journey.

The word *landscape journey*, as we know it, wasn’t used. It was about the experience of the place and it was quite a place to experience. I have no idea what kind of shape it is in now. I’m sure the family still owns it, but I’m not sure if a member of the family still lives there. I’m not sure if his mother is still alive. She was in fairly poor health when Ned past. His father preceded him in death by about 2 years. Anyway, the whole thing was about experience. Ned used to take interested students done there,
included interested faculty and of course, I was always there when I’d get invited. We’d go down on a weekend and camp out at a log cabin that they had built – Ned and his brothers, along with their dad. So, we would take our sleeping bags and go down and stay there at least one or two nights for a weekend and go back to Starkville and start the week over again. But it was a respite and just to complete immersion in a natural experience. Ned got great delight and his dad sometimes joined us on these journeys that he wanted us to experience. He talked to us about how he planted a tree so many years ago and look how tall it was – like he was talking about his family. So, this is how Ned grew up. This is why I keep saying it, in fact and insisting that there is a lot more influence on Ned’s later life, once it finally dawned on him from that experience from growing up and having that opportunity through his dad and his dad’s project or his delight, as I call it, with that arboretum that he grew up in – very influential.

Interviewer:

That was perfect. I was just curious about his background and where some of this came from. I am curious – do you know much about the kind of work he did in Wichita and if he ever talked about that?

Interviewee:
I am familiar with his work in Wichita. He went to Wichita – I don’t know what caused him to leave Campbell Miller’s Office – maybe he was just bored or wanted to expand his horizons. But there was a developer in Wichita by the name of...and I’m gonna get it wrong but I’ll give you a name. Deboer, or something like that. He was trying to develop what we would call a “new town” around Wichita. This is the late 60’s now when things were really booming in that area, when there was still quite a bit of oil in the area. At that time, it was home to Boeing’s second largest operation, so a lot of aircraft industries were headquartered there. Big aircraft industry and gas town. A lot of money there. So, this Deboer fella - I don’t know anything about him other than his name which I am probably getting wrong – went belly-up shortly after Ned took a job with him. Ned had found him advertising a job for a land planner or something pretty extensive like that – to be his main land planner. That’s what Ned wanted. I think he just wanted to expand his horizons with this job opportunity and inquired. And they liked what they saw. And they hired him. So, he gets there right when the whole thing fell apart and it just so happened that the largest design firm in town – the Oblinger & Smith Corporation, that I talk about several times in my narratives – had recently had one of their landscape architects get killed in an automobile accident. So, they were frantically
searching for a replacement for that person – and there was Ned. They hired him on the spot. Then he spent the rest of his time as one of their lead designers. Again, a very young age. He was very talented as a designer all the way through. So, people could see that he was able to rise pretty quickly in the ranks of the design staff wherever he was, as he did there at Oblinger & Smith.

His first major project that I know about, and I am personally familiar with, is a site called “Pioneer Park” and it is a park in the middle of downtown Wichita, tucked up to the original county courthouse that dates from probably the 1870s, maybe the 1880s. It’s a big limestone structure. Limestone is a major building material there because is a native stone all over central Kansas – a beautiful old Victorian building. Anyway, this Pioneer Park was intent – I want to say it was the Daughters of the American Legion who sponsored the thing. The city of Wichita can fill you in on that if you need to inquire more – their Parks and Rec. Dept. That won him his first award - his ASLA Award - that I know about. It was one of their high awards. I’m not sure what level. It was one of their highest if not the highest award that particular year it was submitted. It would have been maybe 73 or 74. Again, you could check the ASLA records in Kansas if you wanted to confirm when that was. The name of it is Pioneer Park. What it did was
commemorate the early settlers who settled that area. It was quite a nice design, very inspiring. It shows an awful lot of thought, which is so typical of everything he designs. It has a beautiful bronze sculpture of a Prairie Indian Maiden which is also in a fountain, organized to look like a limestone outcrop which would be very typical of native landscape there. But pretty much a classic design kind of a layout. It had superb detailing, which is characteristic of Ned. All the way down to the finials on the top of pickets.

The other site that I’m familiar with was at the Indian Center. I believe that’s what it’s called, The Indian Center in Wichita. It’s at the confluence of the two major rivers that flow through Wichita which is the Little Arkansas River and the Arkansas River. The Arkansas River is a major River that starts in New Mexico and winds its way through most of southern Kansas and comes down south of where I live in Fort Smith and Tulsa before that. This is very sacred ground because it’s at the intersection of where the Little Arkansas empties into the Arkansas.

So, his firm Oblinger & Smith was commissioned to do several pieces of design on that site. One of which was a fairly large outdoor amphitheater. Ned designed the amphitheater. It is still
very actively used today that last time I saw it. The only time I saw it was with Ned on a field trip when I was teaching at the University of Oklahoma which I went to when I retired from Mississippi State. I spent several years at OU teaching in their graduate program. I took our graduate students up to visit some sites in Wichita and it happened that Ned was there visiting. His wife Marilyn, she is a native of Wichita. That’s where they met just after his first wife so tragically died in childbirth. This amphitheater was very special to Ned in a cultural sense because he claims to have Choctaw blood from his family.

I don’t know if you have discovered this in any of your investigations or not. I don’t know who could tell you more if you don’t already know this. Marilyn would probably come the closest. That’s not true, I don’t know whether you have talked to any of his brothers or sisters?

Interviewer:

I have not yet and I’m not sure that I’m going be able to get that far into it but we’ll see. I think Bob Brzuszek mentioned that to me. Or maybe it was Robert Poore.

Interviewee:
I think to whatever extent, it’s important. I think there is some
spin off there because when we had this site visit and I had the
students there, it was on a holiday. I’m wanting to say it was
Labor Day, and the Center was closed. The area that allowed one
to get behind the building complex, back to the actual confluence
of these two rivers, there’s a point of sorts on which is designed
and built a very handsome corten-steel sculpture. It’s the most
sacred of all the ground on the site. The whole ground is sacred to
the Indians and I can’t tell you which tribe or nation this is – it
may be several. They are obviously the indigenous tribes of the
area. This sculpture was created to commemorate and celebrate
the most revered of all the ground that they have anywhere.

We were trying to figure out a way to get back and get close to this
sculpture. Ned was very reluctant. There was a little gap in the
fence where you could get through if you really took a deep
breath. He was the last person to go through the fence and he
commented: “My forefathers are not going to forgive me for this.”
I had heard him talking about having some Choctaw blood in him.
This would come through his father’s side of the family, but he
was almost freaking out at the thought of entering this sacred
ground and entering it illegally by climbing through an area that
was locked. There’s some influence in there and that’s the reason
I’m spending the time talking about it. There were other projects that we looked at but those are the two that stand out in my mind.

Interviewer:

With regard to some of these characterization questions, would you mind if we take a look at some of these?

Interviewee:

No that’s fine.

11. Please RANK (1 is the highest priority) the following based upon your opinion of their importance to Edward Blake’s Design Thinking and Process.
   1__Compositional Logic
   1__Ecological Systems
   2__Picturesque Beauty
   3__Practical Accommodations
   1__Experiential Delight
   ___Programmatic Density
   ___Other

Interviewer:

So, the first one here - I’m just looking at your notes on this. Please rank the following based on your opinion of their importance to Ed Blake’s design process. You ranked ecological systems first and
experiential delight second. I’m just curious on some of these, if there’s anything you would like to elaborate on with any of that?

Interviewee:

It’s hard to rank these things. I’ll start out by saying that, because *Ecological Systems* and *Experiential Delight, Compositional Logic*, I would rank every one of those number one if I didn’t have to put a number on each one. It was all a web in his mind’s eye. Again, the Crosby is a perfect example of that on the trial, if you will, the journeys that he designed there. It’s all one package. It’s difficult to part a one, two, and three on those even though I did because I had to. *Practical Accommodations*, I ranked that last not because it comes last but everything else he did was so well thought out that the practical accommodations were just a natural outfall of everything else having come together so that how I play it, if you will, not that it wasn’t extremely important. In his mind’s eye, if he thought everything else through, the damn thing has to function. Now, I don’t have a clue what you’re talking about on *Programmatic Density*. What are you getting at there?

Interviewer Response/Follow Up:

I guess I’m trying to get at it seems like some designers of late are interested in turning everything into a sort of a playground, filling it up
with activity and a kind of idea about making spaces or designing through design activities and actions rather than passive enjoyment.

**Interviewee:**

That wasn’t in Ned’s repertoire at all. It was all about passive, even a site like the Catfish Row. Have you visited Catfish Row yourself?

**Interviewer Response/Follow Up:**

I have not been there, no. Not in person.

**Interviewee:**

It’s an art park, first and last. It’s as much for adults as it is for kids – and now this is my opinion – because it’s just full of visual delights and visual surprises. It has a very active ornamental fountain which is really the centerpiece of the design. Water feature is a better way to say it because it’s not a fountain in the sense that it’s got a big sculpture in it. Everything is flat on the ground and it has big water jets that encourage kids to come and jump and play around. But it’s still a passive space. The kind of thing where adults could set back and watch the kids play. I call that more passive than active even though the kids are there hooting and hollering in the water. I would have to say in my
mind’s eye that he strove for passive enjoyment much more than active kinds of spatial organization.

Interviewer Response/Follow Up:
That’s helpful. I know everyone I have spoken to have had a hard time with the idea of ranking these. They have all said basically what you have said and that’s that all these things were considered simultaneously. It’s hard to say that any one was dominant. It’s interesting to see which ones people start to put towards the top. And in particular the experiential delight versus the ecological systems because it seems like those two and consistently the two that rise towards the top. I asked the question also because of some of the research I have done on when he put the Hattiesburg Convention Center up for Eco-Road Design Exhibition. I don’t know if you know much about that. There’s a good bit written about that. Some of the critiques about that project were suggesting that it was not as much about ecology as it should have been. It was ecology but in service of experiential delight. I think that’s probably fair to say about most of his work. I don’t know for sure but I think it was never purely about the ecological machine or trying to meet that as the only goal.

Interviewee:
I would say yes, and I’ll point to the Crosby again because I think that it’s his hallmark piece. If it wasn’t for the architecture that Fay Jones created to add the final visual and experiential exclamation points to ones’ experiential journeys of those trails on that site, it would just be another piece of Flatwoods. I don’t care how many sculptural trees there are. Ned understood what objects of art – which is what Fay’s work is there – meant to giving an ultimate meeting and identity to the place. That’s how he viewed art in his larger compositions. Not to the extent that the art overwhelms the ecological experience. The ecological experience is first and last, the most important thing. I use the term exclamation points because that’s really the way I see that he saw, and that Fay Jones saw, the role of the art – the man-made art – on the site should be - anywhere from the signage to the entrance gate to the Pinecote Pavilion. No more, no less.

12. Please RANK the following based upon your opinion of their importance to Edward Blake’s Complete Body of Work. (1 is the highest priority)

3__RiverCamps
5/NA_100 Acer Wood
1__Crosby Arboretum
2__Hattiesburg, MS Convention Center
Interviewer:

In terms of the second question, please, rank the following based upon your opinion of their importance to Edward Blake’s Complete Body of Work, it sounds - I see your list here: Crosby Number one, Convention center two, river camps three, Vicksburg Park four. Hundred Acre Wood - if you’re not familiar with that one…

Interviewee:

As you read on through the narratives, I know it as the Indianapolis Museum of Art, Art Park. The name may have been there but I worked very little on that project but I worked very little on that project. That name just threw me. That’s why I have a question mark on that. I really couldn’t rank it, although it’s been getting a lot of accolades I have heard about. I did a lot of project management for ongoing construction projects. I spent a good deal of time doing that which was really a separate entity from everything else going on in the office in the landscape studio. A lot of the time I was in my own little world, managing ongoing construction projects.
Sometimes there were two or three projects going on at the same time. At times like that it would literally take every hour of my day and then some, just doing those. I was out of the office a lot because of that. That was what was going on for me. What happened on that Indianapolis Project was that they were just getting cranked up. They had chosen Marlon Blackwell and Ned, who had submitted their proposal to do this enhancement of the grounds. Those are my words, not theirs. It was going to ultimately result in this art park which involved a new trail system around the river side of the museum, and then there’s a backwater something- or other like an Oxbow lake that was the center piece of that low valley area next to the river. They were in the process of doing various alternative designs and I worked a little bit on different iterations, design alternatives with some basic cost estimating for different iterations on the trail system. It was mostly, I’ll call it gopher kinds of work, where I wasn’t involved at all in the philosophical discussion that Marlon was having or that Ned was having with the art museum people except what I heard over the telephone. I really didn’t know what they were talking about because I didn’t know the basic issue to begin with.

The point I wanted to make on that was that they were just getting into what was going to become the nitty gritty of moving forward
with that project when the recession hit. This was early 08 I think. Their funding people – their sugar daddies if you will – were pulling their money back so they just had to put a halt on the whole project. That lasted for a while, several months, maybe a better part of a year before some of the money started getting released and started trickling back in. They had to cut way back on what the original concepts had been in both offices – Marlon’s office and Ned’s office. More for Ned than for Marlon I think.

Interviewer:
I actually spoke with Marlon Blackwell already and he gave me a really good overview of how that project unfolded. And it was exactly as you suggested.

Interviewee:
He knows. He was right in the middle of it. He can give you all the nitty gritty. I’m sure he could tell you about this time lag with the money. It was just getting cranked back up as I was about ready to retire. I just really never had any involvement with it.

Interviewer:
As far as some of these other questions, It sounds like you were with him through the point of transition as far as going from what he knew
to what he wanted to know. It sounds also that the Crosby was really where he was teaching himself, where he was exploring these ideas.

Interviewee:

It gave him another chance to test his ideas that he was developing is another way to say that. I’m going to come back to Springdale Hills as an opportunity to finally exhibit his developing and understanding of what he had grown up with, with an opportunity to actually do one in the Crosby. In my mind’s eye, that overrides every other thing with his developing ecological interests.

Interviewer:

When Ed starts talking about the idea of a landscape journey, do you associate that with the Crosby? When did you first hear that?

Interviewee:

The first time I associate – and the term landscape journey – I’m gonna have to say that we had been talking and we all enjoyed visiting landscaped, designed, environments. That may have been part of our discussions. I don’t remember it being that big of a deal – to the extent of that being used now. We may have talked about it. I’m saying all that to say I’m sure he used the term, but it was so natural for us to add landscape journeys everywhere we
went that the term *landscape journey* never stuck with me. When did I first hear it? I can’t tell you. I can tell you that the journeys at the Crosby are kind of the culmination of what he would do if he could do it with a totally ecological bent. And he did. I told you I didn’t remember the first time I heard the *landscape journey*. I heard it over and over again as it could be developing. If I had to say when I first heard the term *landscape journey* being used, it would have to be with the developing master plan and the site, the trail system at the Crosby.

Interviewer:

As far as the Crosby, I think I have a good understanding of how he won that project and how all that began. It sounds like from what you said – with regard of what intrigued him the most about that – it seems like what intrigued him most about it was what he didn’t know and how he sought those answers.

Interviewee:

That would be typical for Ned on just about anything that there wasn’t too much information available on. i.e. somebody else having already done it. Those are the kind of projects that just turned him on. I mentioned that he was the most intellectually curious person I have ever known. You’ll see that comment - the
very last comment I made – in my narrative. I mean that literally. If he got into something and sunk his teeth into it, he would research it to death. I think that was part of the interest in ecological design because there wasn’t anything on it, if you will, in the library. I think that had a lot to with his dogged research and trying to educate himself by contacting others who were doing that kind of thing, like these kind of early gardens, that I talked about, that I visited and he visited and separately others. He was very quizzical, this spans back to his intellectual curiosity. If he had a question, he would ask any and everybody he thought could add an element of enlightenment to whatever that question was. We got answers to that, and that would obviously open up other questions. He asked to pursue those. It was just a continual process of question asking. He absolutely thrived on it. It’s what made him tick.

7. To what extent do you believe Ed was able to affect the client’s intentions for the project?

Interviewer:

Do you know whether his way with clients – in terms of, I can imagine instances where the client has no information about ecological design or any kind of issues. They just know what they need from a practical
point of view. How did he bring these issues to them? Do you think he expanded the scope of the project? Or just formed a foundation for the ideation of a project on what happens one way or the other? Did he find that clients became believers in that kind of thing?

Paraphrase: To what extent do you believe Ed was able to affect the client’s intentions for the project?

Interviewee:

Those that wanted his design or him to design for them already knew of his reputation as an ecological designer. That’s why they came to him. It was almost like preaching to the choir. A lot of his clients, but not all of them by any means. I mentioned some of the residential projects; I didn’t talk much about them. He would get involved with clients on some of these residential projects. I saw firsthand on these projects he would get in Hattiesburg – most of these were people who could afford to do a lot from a financial standpoint. Some of them could care less about the ecology aspect of design. They just wanted a nice design around their new swimming pool, which is what a lot of clients want.

He had to break with some clients – he was big on doing alternative plans with full cost estimates and with all that you can
hear the cash register. Its time and he has to charge for it. He has that in his proposals. People read through those proposals and it doesn’t ring with them until he starts ringing and billing them. So, several projects fell apart – potential projects – fell apart because they thought he was spending too much time, showing them too many different ways to do the same thing. There were several that fell apart because of that. These were not the ecology oriented clients. These were just people who just wanted nice designs of their backyards. He had all this in his proposal but no one ever received a proposal from a designer like that before so they couldn’t really understand what he was talking about. He wasn’t the best person in the world for setting them down and walking them through how he operated. If he had a weakness in regards to interpersonal relationships with clients, I would have to say that was it. He would put everything down in writing and it was very thorough and very specific. Most clients would just look at the bottom and see how much it would cost them. That’s about how much they would read. And they would start getting these bills and that’s where things would fall apart or get modified, pulled back on – if you will – in the scope of services. We’ve done enough on alternatives we’re gonna just do this thing. Several of them did that; they stuck with him but they didn’t give him a chance to do the investigating before he got a perfect match for them – or what
he thought was a perfect match for them. But he wouldn’t set
down and talk to them very much except at the front end. He
would talk to them forever about programmatic things. He
wouldn’t show them how they would get billed or how many
hours, or how much this is gonna cost. I never saw him spend
much time with a client in an office going over how the charges for
his time – for the offices time – was going to add up. Most of his
clients could afford to do pretty much whatever they wanted to do,
so if they wanted to afford it bad enough there would never be
questions.

There was this couple in Louisiana whose names I can’t
remember. You really need to find their names. They could really
provide some insight. They are really bright people, Marilyn could
give you their names. They live in a town in northeast Louisiana.
They have dozens of acres. They are the people I mentioned in my
narrative that had both a wetland, a physiography on their land.
They had mesic slopes, they had uplands. Those were the main
components to any major ecological system, at least when you get
to the eastern deciduous forest. They were members of the Crosby
board, or he was. Or maybe she was. So, they knew the Crosby’s
concept and the Crosby onsite as well as anybody. They were so
inspired by that, they wanted to build that kind of arboretum on
their home site, and they did. We spent God knows how many hours working out iterations for design of this or that, it was not an issue. They paid the bills and everything was fine. Even though everything was written down in contractual form, they weren’t happy until Ned was happy, that’s the best way I can say that.

He got great delight in working with them. I suggest you find out what their names are. This is a couple, I don’t know what their business is. They are obviously fairly wealthy, they’re both extremely bright. They do a lot of international travel. They live in a metal building, it’s the nicest metal building I have ever seen. It could be a mechanic’s shop in another setting, they made a home out of it. They are very free thinking, very open and delightful people, you would benefit. They understand from an intellectual standpoint they were right in there with Ned, rather than another designer. In other words, these were just your common highly intellectual clients. They could provide some insight of how it is from the client’s side when you are fully clued in to what Ned Blake is all about. Marilyn can give you all the contact information.

Interviewer:
I really appreciate all of your time. I think between what was talked about and all the feedback you provided in writing, you have been an excellent resource and have helped me understand the earlier years. It’s really invaluable to what I’m doing.

General discussion by Interviewee: ....

Interviewee:

Of course, that’s with all of us, what molds us. Ned and I both were in our developing stages at that point, so we were both learning and developing our own special areas at the same time. It just so happened that a lot of our interests, we shared. This thing with his interest in history, talk about grabbing the bull by the horns. He grabbed that with the same gusto as he did with ecological studies. He would research – Have you seen his library, physically seen it? It was like some college libraries.

Interviewer Response/Follow Up:

I know Marilyn has donated a lot of his books to MSU, to the library – a kind of special collection that’s being created.

Interviewee:
It was one whole wall of the back room and their offices – shelves 10 feet high and 40 feet long, solid shelves filled with books. That didn’t count to ones laying on tables out in the other rooms – over in the front office. Avid – I have never known anybody who was such an avid reader. He would spend – I’m sorry to have to say it, but I saw it first-hand – but his work habits were his final demise, there’s no doubt in my mind about it. As early as it was – he would sometimes get so wrapped up in reading or working – usually both, but he was lucky to get 2 or 3 hours of sleep a night. This went on for years, he worked himself to death. That’s sad but it’s true.

Interviewer:

Sounds like a pretty amazing guy.

Interviewee:

He was.

Interviewer:

I’ll tell you what, I don’t want to take up any more of your time. That being said, would you have any issue if I – as this goes along and I start to make additional discoveries – if I called you again.
Interviewee:

No, don’t hesitate. I’m more than happy to help wherever I can. I knew that I was probably to only person who had information about the transitional part of his career because of the time and place, where we were together when all that was going on. We were both kind of the same mind. We were both searching – what am I going to stand for – those kinds of issues. Those remained fresh in my mind.

Interviewer Response/Follow Up:

Again, thank you so much. I’ll keep you updated on how things are progressing on the study.

Interviewee:

What is the culmination of all this?

Interviewer:

The beginning of this is really for my thesis in landscape architecture. As you know, I’m a faculty member in the School of Architecture and I am interested in taking this and pushing it forward possibly to a full-blown book of sorts. I have already spoken with Robert Ivy, who wrote the Fay Jones book, who you’re probably familiar with it.
Interviewee:

I haven’t read it but I’m familiar with it.

Interviewer:

Robert is the president of the AIA.

Interviewee:

I didn’t know that.

Interviewer:

He’s a good person to know. Anyhow, he’s very interested in you and Ed.

Interviewee:

They were good personal friends. Robert started out, if I recall, in Columbus, MS.

Interviewer:

That’s right. And I’ll be meeting with him to do an interview at his place in Columbus sometime in the fall. But he’s aware of the project and he’s very excited. He’s the one who suggested maybe a book. He led me to the Fay Jones book.
Interviewee:

And with him as a side resource, you’ve got a gold mine of information.

Interviewer:

We’ll see where it goes. I’m excited to get this first phase complete and get that out of the way and then carry on from there and putting together a much more complete biography. Giving Ed the kind of recognition he probably deserves.

Interviewee:

I may be biased, but he’s one of the most unique thinkers at least in the U.S. in a very long time in terms of landscape types.

(End of Interview)
Hi this is Robert

Interviewee:
Yes, it is

Interviewer:
Hi Robert this is Hans Hermann how are you

Interviewee:
I'm can't thank you let me pick up the phone so I can hear you better yeah how is your year going

Interviewer:
It's been great, no complaints lots of good things happening so how are you.

Interviewee:
It's so busy words fail we gotten so much done it's been a really great year for the association so we're just running as fast as we can but doing great things seem really good results we launched a public relations campaign for the AAA and millions of millions of people have seen it change in our digital and change her website I don't know a lot of activity a lot of good stuff.
Interviewer:
Yeah, I know it's great I am actually just rolling off the board here Mississippi taking a little break

Interviewee:
Yeah

Interviewer:
The project that we do here in town project one hour to stay so I think that was a bit of a high note to end on.

Interviewee:
Absolutely that's wonderful congratulations for all the good work that's great.

Interviewer:
Oh thanks, appreciate it. So I'm so excited that I caught up with you

Interviewee:
Ha, ha, yeah about that it's hard to do sorry.
Interviewer:

No, no, no, that's great you're actually the last person on my list it finally works out I was hoping to finish all of the interviews so I can finish my writing in the spring which is great.

Interviewee:

Good and I'm glad I'm here and I'll do what I can for you.

Interviewer:

Okay wonderful well I don't know if you had a chance to review any of the questions that I had sent an advance.

Interviewee:

I really was not able to, to be honest with you Hans, I mean you got me now and let's see what we can do but it's limited to what I can pull out of my right brain and out of my memory function so let's see what we can get out of there.

Interviewer:

No problem, I will read all the questions to you as we go in that case and just make sure just so you know I am recording this so I can create a transcript so with that it will become part of the MSU Library they have a special collection them on Ed Blake.
Interviewee:

Yeah, I'm fine with that.

Interviewer:

Okay and this is not part of the questionnaire but I have been asking everyone if you could just describe a little bit of your relationship with Ed Blake and tell you came to know him if it was professional and how exactly you are associated with him.

Interviewee:

Yeah well, I first met Ed I think through Fay Jones and the Pinecote Pavilion. I was writing the book on Fay Jones and was doing my own research for that work and went to well I think I first called him to discuss the project with him and that would've been my guess at the late 1980s maybe early 1990s are about and then went from there down to meet him there and spent some time with him down on the Crosby Arboretum, actually I think I spent a night out there. Ed stayed late and I think they put me up maybe I went back to Hattiesburg, I don't know. I'm not sure I can't recall but at any rate that was my first encounter with Ed I think? But you know, I can't even say that definitively because our state design community is so small that over the course of the months or
years preceding that that I don't know that I didn't meet Ed before, let's just say he came fully into my consciousness at that time.

Interviewer:

Sure, okay, that makes sense great and just to clarify things what I've been trying to do with these questions and asking everyone trying to paint a picture or create a sort of diachronic and synchronic mapping of Ed's work. So, these questions are really designed to really... I've been talking with people who have been working with him early in his life or mid career and late career and then a few people like yourself who really didn't do a project with him but sort of knew of him and maybe are able to position him relative to what was happening in landscape architecture at that time.

Interviewee:

Sure

Interviewer:

So, some of these questions in that case are maybe difficult for you to answer because they're really design more for professional collaborators rather than... So, just let me know if you feel uncomfortable answering it.
Interviewee:

Yeah

13. Please RANK (1 is the highest priority) the following based upon your opinion of their importance to Edward Blake’s Design Thinking and Process.

___ Compositional Logic
1__ Ecological Systems
___ Picturesque Beauty
___ Practical Accommodations
___ Experiential Delight
___ Programmatic Density
___ Other

Interviewer:

So, the first set of questions are really general questions and I'll start with number one please rank in terms of highest priority the following based upon your opinion of their importance to Ed Blake’s design thinking and process. So, I have a number of sorts of titles I guess that I'm trying to link with him so let me read them out to you I have compositional logic ecological systems picturesque beauty practical accommodation experiential delight programmatic density and other so I would just say based on what you know if him and what
he talked about in your meetings do any of those strike you as sort of the top priority of any of his thinking.

Interviewee:

Well, I think the best that you're going to get out of me is just let me riff some thoughts and it may not answer the question but it may take me is actually means to another question. I'm not sure because out of that list obviously I know but what I can say is that I think Ed is unusual as a designer in his ability to shift scales. Ed really began, I don't know if began, but concurrent with his thinking was a scale of infinite to particular. So, my belief is that Ed was thinking about the whole of reality when he was thinking about what a place should be, or could be, thinking about the cosmic scale. Because I had literally called him “cosmic Ed” because he could talk about you know, expanding a grid out into the cosmos and what would that mean and how that could then be reflected back to earth he was thinking down to the particular of where a pitcher plant was located and where that pitcher plant related to micro site to macro site in this case the whole arboretum and then out into the world and beyond that to what I call a cosmic view he really looked and thought concurrently with this sort of broad view that is most unusual in any designer. It was discussed, and I would say part of the dialogue back in 1960s and
that maybe the genesis of his own ability to shift perspectives with people like with people like Christopher Alexander who really had a methodology that could move between the infinite in the particular and others like Ian McHarg and others who looked at landscape in relationship to larger ecological systems, and to larger system thinking. But I say that's very unusual, I think because most designers today do not have that facility nor that part of the dialogue. Typically, it's a whole other set of concerns but in Ed's case it's like where do these pieces that we are manipulating fit into this grander scheme. It's really a very, I would say, inspiring methodology in perspective.

Interviewer:

Right okay great well I think that helps a lot of people have struggled with that question and say that he really did all of those things he was just very holistic and is thinking he couldn't really leave any of them off the table maybe some of them rose towards the top but they were all really his world

Interviewee:

Yeah, that's probably true
14. Please RANK the following based upon your opinion of their importance to Edward Blake’s Complete Body of Work. (1 is the highest priority)
___River Camps
___100 Acer Wood
___Crosby Arboretum
___Hattiesburg, MS Convention Center
___Vicksburg, MS Children’s Art Park
___Other(s)

Interviewer:
Yeah, yeah, okay well the next question deals kind of with his body of work and I don't know how familiar you are with all of the things that he was involved with? I have tried to select a sample of projects that I think are good representative samples of his beliefs and principles and well, let's just see if you know any of these. The question is, please rank the following based upon your opinion of the importance of it Blake’s complete body of work one being the highest the projects. I have one it’s called RiverCamps, and that was with Lake Flato down outside of Panama City Florida. Another project is called Hundred Acres of course is in Indianapolis Art Museum which is with Marlon Blackwell. And then I have the Arboretum of course. And then I have the Hattiesburg Lake Terrace Convention Center which I don't know if you ever brought you to that? And then the Vicksburg Children's Art Park the little small...
Interviewee:

Yeah, I have seen images of that but you know, I'm hesitant to do that Hans. Because I really, I know the particular things that I know about him and their limited. Obviously, I know the Arboretum and another project in Indiana, and I saw images of the Vicksburg Park, but I don't even know the other two and I hesitate to comment on that. But what I could say is, I think that the Arboretum project, which of course he did with another firm, Andropogon in Philadelphia, is of international importance. I don't know if the Indiana project will rise to that level of visibility and discussion among other people but, I can see how, although it had some wonderful ideas in it, I can see how the Arboretum project will, and if it is maintained in the manner and spirit in which it was conceived, it can serve as a starting point for discussions and critical understanding on the human relationship to the environment. I can see that for generations, I think that has a sort of timeless quality that provokes thought. It is a deeply conceived landscape.

15. What project(s) did you undertake with Ed Blake Jr and during what years was it designed?
Interviewer: So number three what projects did you undertake with Ed Blake Junior and during what years was it designed?

Interviewer:

Okay, okay, very fair, so the third question, and this really doesn't apply but the question is, what projects did you undertake with it Blake and during what years was it designed? So, I'm just going to put the Crosby Arboretum as the thing that you toured with him.

Interviewee:

It was a publishing project but actually he came to New York and presented the Indianapolis, Indiana project with Marlon and I think we published it, I don't remember? I know we were going to but can't recall if we actually did it or not because it took forever getting off the ground.

Interviewer: Right, Right

16. What **SINGLE** issue was MOST critical to Ed Blake Jr. in the project you undertook while working with him?

Interviewer:

Within those presentations I'll just link question four to what you just described, that question is: What single issue was most critical
to Ed in the projects and I guess is there any is it possible for you to recall? Any kind of particular principles that he, sort of, projected when he spoke about either of those two projects? Something like ecological systems or any of those certain terms like experiential delight?

**Interviewee:**

I can't say, you know I hate to be very vague about this because I actually spent a lot of time talking to him over the course of time and we became very bonded soulmates after my initial knowledge of him as other people would come in to his orb would. So, I kept up with him for years and we had numerous conversations and things but they were at the level of conversation because he was a great thinker and a great conversationalist and ultimately you know, one other project that I got involved with was the Columbus Mississippi soccer fields. Basically, that's when he passed away, so that was the last discussion that I, the last conversation that I, was involved with. But you know, what perspective I think probably most thing that I have to share is that story that appreciation that I gave to you at first. And that's the sort of broader perspective than most designers because, I think I was thinking about your comment. About how to respond to question one, I think he was thinking about the continuum from
the infinitely small to the infinitely great. And the place of any 
individual element or any individual decision within that broader 
landscape which I think is a rare quality of the contemporary 
designer. And basically, what it implies is intelligence of a kind 
that let's just say of another order. Because he did carry the whole 
ecological agenda forward but not at the polemical level. This was 
not what he was trying to convince other people what he was doing 
was displaying it and showing it so that it's an appreciation of the 
reality of the landscape and any landscape architecture as a 
human construct. Perspective on things that already exist and 
often changes it, and in his case, he changed it to heighten its 
appreciation, which is really a cool thing. So, it's to place you in 
this place so that you understand, or know better how the world 
works. Not how to alter the world to meet some preconceived 
notion. I think that would be another appreciation that I could 
offer. it's part of his gift, or his own desire, his practice was to 
place human beings in an environment that spoke to a larger truth 
about reality. So, it's less an artificial construct then it is a 
deliberate act of will. To place people in a relationship to the 
larger world, that's a lot of B.S., but I think there's something in 
there.

Interviewer:

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Well, I follow you. It's interesting because I was doing a literature review and one of the publications that was more, I guess, important as part of the exhibit in the 90s called eco-revelatory design.

**Interviewee:**

Oh hell! It's a very good title, that's great, that's really good. I think that's says what I just said, two words, three words.

**Interviewer:**

Yeah, but there were some really important people like Michael Van Valkenburgh, were all part of that era. An early group that was trying to decide what to call landscape design that was not about picturesque arrangements and compositions felt more like you said, the didactics and revealing of systems, the beauty. But anyway, so I guess the follow-up to that is: knowing what you know about it, why do you believe that was so important to him? Was that, I guess, a part of his early education? You know, I've always that, something that had to do with his childhood or his views? Do you have any insight into that?

**Interviewee:**

I don't know, I really don't. I can't comment on that, I don't know enough about his early life, I don't know can't say. I
know about his commitment to teaching them, which was real. And I don't know the other people that are in academia that you talk to and I'm not really qualified in that but there's also something in teaching that is related to design and the kind of design that I'm referring to here, is that that's that revelatory aspect. It's not beating people over the head with something, it's not being overly directive, and I think, more revelatory is a great word.

Interviewer:

I like that term. I guess the last part of that question is really, I you have any particulars that you could point to, at either the Arboretum or the hundred-acre project, that you could see clearly manifested that belief or that kind of underlying motive for all of his work.

Interviewee:

No, I can't answer that either because, like at the Arboretum you know, I'm not knowledgeable enough to tell how the design was created or evolved. And where was Andropogon? And where was he and where did these things intersect? And where did he go from there to carry this forward? And I know that much of the work that they did was early but that he carried
this and he did this in concert with them and carried it forward in some other ways. I don't know what those were, not qualified, and I'm not deep enough in his work to know that. That would require someone that is either worked with him or studied with him I think.

17. Did Ed Blake expand your conception of the Project Scope and if so how?

Interviewer:

Right, right, next question, and this one is really a question for a client or collaborator the question is, did he expand your conception of what a project could be and how far.

Interviewee:

And the answer’s Yes, I can answer that! I think that gets at what I was getting at earlier. His understanding is broader and deeper than most designers so to engage Ed, even if it were just to understand the project or his own thinking, led you into a different process which was beyond the simple programmatic requirements of a given project, and took you into another realm that was a picture more broader and deeper. So, when you were involved with it you were looking at a more ambitious set of opportunities than most would encounter, than most clients or
users would encounter. So, the range of possibilities was much
greater, and then became focused on what the needs or
requirements of the place and the people, the users, and the
owners, and so forth. So, I think to engage him was both an
expansion and then a focus that brought the project into what it
would really turn out to be, and most designers do not offer that.

18. To what extent do you believe was Ed Blake Jr. was known for attempting
supplement the projects ecological capacity and in what ways?

Interviewer:
Right, right, the sixth question, I guess, relates back to that in some
way to what extent do you believe that it was known for attempting to
supplement a project’s ecological capacity, and in what ways? But it
sounds like I kind of have the answer already, but that was always part
of the thinking not really a supplement.

Interviewee:
No, no. I think that it's fundamental to the design thinking. Yeah,
I mean, the whole notion of the burn over at Crosby is a radical
idea. In a way that it is also, I mean, it's a radical idea in
contemporary design philosophy to use control burning fire in
your thinking. But it's a completely natural occurrence that
actually helped ecosystems survive. And it's a function on that site
and where else on earth at that time were people thinking that we should do control burns to replicate what had been done originally. And frankly, this is another case that I don't know who’s ideas that was? I know Ed could articulated that very well but where was the germ of the idea? That I cannot answer. Did that come from Andropogon? Did that come from a client? Did that come from Ed? I think it came from Ed but I don't know that for a fact because I wasn't present at the gestation.

Interviewer:

Right, right, okay that's great.

Interviewee:

Let's just say that if he hadn't of originated the idea he fully embraced it and was a wonderful spokesperson for that ecological appreciation and understanding.

19. To what extent do you believe Ed was able to affect the client’s intentions for the project?

Interviewer:
Right, right, I guess along those lines the seventh question to what extent do you believe that it was able to affect the client’s intentions for the project?

**Interviewee:**

Yeah, and I can’t talk to a client’s view. I'm sure you have, with Lynn Gamill in Hattiesburg? Yeah, talk to her and see what she says I don't know but I would talk to her.

**Interviewer:**

Right, right.

**Interviewee:**

Have you talked to her?

**Interviewer:**

I have met her, I have not interviewed her yet.

**Interviewee:**

Oh, you need to interview her man. She's critical to the whole thing. She could fill in a lot of this from the client perspective and I think probably do it better than anybody.
Interviewer:

Yeah, yeah. Okay well that list of interviews has grown every time I've given an interview.

Interviewee:

Oh, I bet. But they really were in a close partnership and she was probably one of the strongest supporters. And his client base, I mean, she still is. You can't do this and not have her included, she's absolutely got to be part of your thing. I hate to say it but I'm going to have to go it's 11:30 and I've got another meeting is there. One other something that you need that I can help you with?

Interviewer:

No, that’s really the end of the questions for the most part. The others, I don’t think you'd be able to say too much about them anyway.

Interviewee:

The only thing that I would add more on tape is: Ed also had another quality, and that I would say is a charismatic quality. This is a human quality, and not all designers have this at all, but Ed was able to convince people. He was able to draw them in magnetically. He had this striking physical presence, this big guy, who had a really powerful energy, and enthusiasm, and verbal
ability, and intellect. And all those things combined, it's not enough to do good design. You have to convince people that this is a worthwhile enterprise and bring them along with it and convince them to spend money to do it, and have them feel something as a result. It's not a business transaction solely, it's an engagement, and also a partnership, and Ed had this. He had the ability to attract other people by the power of his words, by the power of his actions, to hold them into his world and engage them in an adventure. Not everyone is cut out to do that and Ed occasionally had run-ins with, you know as designer sometimes do, but for those who followed his sort of charismatic and compelling path there were real rewards along the way. And people who really got to know him loved him and this is not a casual or unimportant characteristic because a person with that level of torque, with skill, and that magnetism, and that sort of charisma, can actually do great things. The world is filled with designers that wanted to do things and could not accomplish them because they lack these interpersonal skills and Ed had them. And he employed them and people liked to be around him so that's my final thought.

Interviewer:

That's great, I appreciate that, the last question was on point, I appreciate that!
Interviewee:

I've got to run I hate to say I have a meeting but it's great to talk to you

Interviewer:

You too have a great holiday season and all the best.

Interviewee:

Wonderful, keep me up with your project I love to know how it goes.

Interviewer:

Okay will do, thank you.

Interviewee:

Okay, bye Hans

Interviewer: Hans C. Herrmann

Interviewee: Maurice Jennings, AIA, Crosby Arboretum collaborator

Interview Setting: Via telephone. The interview was conducted at 11:00 AM, November 16th 2015.

Affiliation with interviewee: N/A
APPENDIX A

Please RANK (1 is the highest priority) the following based upon your opinion of their importance to Edward Blake’s Design Thinking and Process.

- Compositional Logic
- Ecological Systems
- Picturesque Beauty
- Practical Accommodations
- Experiential Delight
- Programmatic Density
- Other

Interviewer:

Okay the first question that I had is really a kind of overview on your experience working with Ed in terms of what kind of process and thinking you felt was most important to him so I'll just read it out and on all of these I encourage you to if there are personal stories you feel relate to it feel free to tell me about that kind of stuff that's really been the most revealing thing with these interviews the questions are kind of intended to prompt that type of thing so anyway so the first one.

Please rank the following based on your opinion of the importance of Ed Blake’s thinking and process and you just tell me which one you think is the highest priority and which is the lowest and
I will just read them out so I have: Compositional Logic, Ecological Systems picturesque beauty practical accommodations experiential delight programmatic density or something other.

**Interviewee:**

I think at least, with my interpretation of Ed, it would be Ecological Systems was very important to him on the Crosby Arboretum. Fay and I we would in good humor laugh about how much we enjoyed, and we did enjoy, going with Ed over that 63-acre site there at Crosby Arboretum. I think it's a little over 24 inches elevation change over 60 acres and Ed would talk about the plants that will grow in the hills but not in the valleys. And he would spend hours teaching us about the flora and fauna and how some items would grow here but up to 2 inches it would not grow. It was just amazing his knowledge of the plant material and it, was real interesting, it's the real history and knowledge of the plan and how it grows at each location was just fascinating.

**Interviewer:**

Ok. ok. So, ecological systems would be ranked number one of the others how would you rank them in descending importance to get his kind of way of thinking and seeing the world.
Interviewee:

I think just as far as our work went the Picturesque Beauty, Experimental Delight and Compositional Logic..... Practical Accommodations though, I don't think in those terms of Crosby. I guess if you think about just materials and ecological systems then it would be very easy, to sort of, relate two but that one's a little more difficult, Programmatic Density, I don't, at least in my interpretation of terms, I don't really see that as a critical element with Ed.

Interviewer:

Right. Ok. Ok. That makes sense so I'm just going to write in experiential delight picturesque beauty and compositional logic as number two for sharing that space if that makes sense.

Interviewee:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Great.

20. Please RANK the following based upon your opinion of their importance to Edward Blake’s Complete Body of Work. (1 is the highest priority)
   ___River Camps
Interviewer:

So, the next one please rank the following based upon your opinion of their importance to Edward Blake's complete body of work. One being the highest priority and again if you're not familiar with those other projects....

Interviewee:

I really am not so I'm not able to really comment on that one.

Interviewer:

Okay, no problem we'll skip that one.

21. What project(s) did you undertake with Ed Blake Jr and during what years was it designed?

Interviewer:
So number three, what projects did you undertake with Ed Blake Junior and during what years was it designed?

**Interviewee:**

Of course the Crosby Arboretum. When was that done? I think ‘86 excuse me I mean ’88 ’89.

**Interviewer:**

Yeah, the planning began I want to say ‘83 off the top of my head, but and that all depends on what part of playing in the formation of the board and inception of the project and all of that and....

**Interviewee:**

Our role came-in in maybe ’87.

**Interviewer:**

‘87 okay do you remember the duration? Was it just a couple of years or less?

**Interviewee:**

It was a full two years.
Ok. Ok. Great.

Interviewee:

Construction was about 12 months.

Interviewer:

Okay and I suppose within this if you want, or if you have anything you could elaborate on in terms of the type of interaction you had with Ed within that project and just a little bit I guess about also your relationship that would also be helpful.

Interviewee:

Well like, you know, I say the most memorable story was the one that I spoke of earlier. I work with, and he was always a delight to, his complete knowledge of the plant material. Not all landscape architects have that knowledge of plant materials, he did do a lot of thinking about the Savannah the Pine Forest all those different elements were indicated. They are at Pinecote so those were all important things to him it was important for him to see those items develop and have that flow from one area to the other, you know, the natural flowers and the natural things that occur within the Savannah. The burning of the Savannah at times all of those were very important to have it reach its potential.
Interviewer:

Okay in terms of your working with him, you know, so I teach architecture here at Mississippi State and I have this kind of interest on landscape architecture in particular the relationship that architects and landscape architects have, and how they collaborate on some of these works. I'm curious did you and he, or Fay, sit down and talk about the pavilion and what it would be like based on the landscaping? What the landscape was going to be like for the pavilion or where those things done sort of discreetly in light of information that you shared is there anything like that?

Interviewee:

Well it was more when we did the pavilion of course that was the first element. There are department it was really pretty much given to us with free reign and wall that was completing and was finishing a list for the plans for the garden areas for the Arboretum. And he had laid out the trails and had done those things on his own. He asked us to design the walkways, we did that sort of independent, but at his request. And, you know, it was just a very good working relationship and it's been a lot of time. I believe reviewing and looking at the site and a lot of time on the site.
Interviewer:

Right, right, yeah. No I’ve heard that a lot that he was practically living in sleeping out there for a while.

Interviewee:

Yes.

Interviewer:

He was really intense about that. Yeah, that was interesting because I had never really been able to learn if the pavilion came before the landscape had been designed or vice versa so that was interesting to know.

Interviewee:

Yeah, we were given sort of you know free blank canvas. And Ed had the concept of doing the pond. The pond was already under construction and then we designed the pavilion to go there on the pond then everything else was developed from that from my reflection.

Interviewer:
Okay excellent, and I've seen the drawings for some of the other buildings that you and Fay had designed for out there, and, just curious where those developed simultaneously with the pavilion or were those sort of first or after?

Interviewee:

They came a little bit afterwards. We thought that the other elements, you know, the Visitor Center and those things would be built but they never were.

Interviewer:

Yeah well, I've done some work down there was students end and then I started to come across those drawings that I didn't even know they existed and I've been pushing from my and I don't know if anything will come of it but for the Arboretum to reconsider the development of those projects to see it through the way it had been designed by you and Fay so I don't know what kind of effect I will have but I'm pushing very hard for that.

Interviewee:

Oh, thank you.

Interviewer:
It would be a treasure for certainly the state if not the country to get some of these plan projects realized. I think some of the motivation for straying from those plans are kind of shortsighted in terms of meeting just practical issues maybe but in the grand scheme of things you know the cultural importance of seeing this project the way it was planned is pretty critical, so maybe something will happen. Who knows, maybe one day you'll get a call.

**Interviewee:**

**Hopefully so.**

**Interviewer:**

Yeah, I think that would be wonderful anyway so I digressed let me....

22. What **SINGLE** issue was MOST critical to Ed Blake Jr. in the project you undertook while working with him?

**Interviewer:**

Question four, what single issue was most critical to a Blake Junior in the project you undertook while working with him? Was there ever a time where he, sort of, shared something he just had to see happen or it could be a problem or some possibility or opportunity or anything like that?
Interviewee:

All these things, I'm sure, he thought out just fine before our involvement. As for, as wanting to have the walkway. The thought of having the raised walk areas above the low lands and to not impede and leave as small a footprint as possible, it was really important for Ed to show his many different types of plants and topography for zones of different planting. He was very concerned about the education of the visitor to the project, it was what he was working toward.

Interviewer:

Ok. ok. that's great and just to follow up with that. Why did you believe that that was the most important to him? Did he ever speak of a sort of philological or theoretical position that he held in terms of why the Arboretum should be that type of showcase instead of a more traditional arboretum which was often times inclusive of non-native plants and kind of a much more formal way and in some cases different sets of motives. Did he ever talk to you about anything like that?

Interviewee:
Well he did talk about the use of natural materials, indigenous materials, that were there on the site and I'm sure he did have other motives and needs. But I'm not sure that I was aware of what they were.

Interviewer:

The next question was kind of a follow up to your answer regarding his interest and showcase. So many of the natives making it available for the visitor to comprehend. In particular, with that in mind, do you know anything about how that idea or how that attention was manifest or realized in the Crosby project in terms of sometime kind of experience in plans or I kind of detailing that he, or sectional condition, or it could be experience, in terms of how he designed?

Interviewee:

I'm not sure but I think this is something that Ed would really thought about for years and considered and felt really strongly. As far as that, using the indigenous materials from there to take people off the others. So, I think that this is something that became an out of the wall process wasn't three months studying and he decide to do this I think it was sort of integral to Ed to do the system as he saw the Arboretum developed which he put a lot of thought into.
23. Did Ed Blake expand your conception of the Project Scope and if so how?

Interviewer:

So, question number five, Did Ed Blake expand your conception of the project scope and if so how?

Interviewee:

I do think so, as I was telling you... Saying I never had really thought about the different plant materials on the same level as, and as far as plants that will grow in this valley but won't grow on the hill which is 8 inches taller because of the amount of rainfall. So, we were very impressed with the different species and the limitations of these different species as far as what could survive so this was a surprise to me and the most educational part of the Arboretum and I hope that still today sticks and doesn't come out from the people touring the Arboretum.

Interviewer:
Right, okay. I'm wondering if there's anything within the work that you did, in terms of the planning of the other buildings or and even the way that the pavilion met the pond and things like that, that were in some way and acknowledged his intentions?

Interviewee:

I think that, ah, he didn't mention it, but I think after Fay explained to the board and to Ed, what we were doing with the pavilion. As far as doing it out of a very lightweight structure, and the vignetting of out of that structure out into nothing. In the same way that the limbs of the trees reach out and the spacing in the air flow between them. I think that, that was something that coincide very closely with the way Ed felt about the floor in front of that you counted there. You know it was amazing, a very light weight structure that was designed for the pavilion. It's one of those things that probably, that if you had an engineering group study it, they would probably say it wouldn't stand. But here it's been through several hurricanes when other thing were blowing up. I remember Ed calling one time and saying that a couch was blown up by the wind sitting in the pavilion. And so, the wind was strong enough to pick up the couch and other things and blow it into the site, but the building stood, and that was good of course.
Interviewer:

Yeah, it was pretty amazing. I moved here to Mississippi about seven and half years ago and I've done a number of things at the Arboretum and I try to take students down there and we actually do the tour all through Arkansas last year with our students and went to a number of your projects and it is an astonishing thing that the lightness of that building and the intensity of the weather that it's faced it's really amazing thing.

Interviewee:

I'm pretty sure I think there's eight still columns at the little ridge that anchor everything to the ground I don't know if you see that in the drawings but there are the lower eight columns are still encased in wood in order to get us that sheer strength.

Interviewer:

Yeah, yeah, okay. Well it's an amazing thing, I teach second year students on the idea of tectonic and how the development of the structure could actually be architecture rather than it all being hidden sort of buried within walls end that and your project in particular are big inspiration for that to showcase and talk about how everything is working.
Interviewee:

Most of the things that fail, and I did and the things we do now, it would be impossible to design and then turn over to a structural engineer.

Interviewer:

It's sad to see that happening with so few engineers willing to look at things in that cowboy I hope that doesn't remain the norm but it probably will we'll see

24. To what extent do you believe was Ed Blake Jr. was known for attempting supplement the projects ecological capacity and in what ways?

Interviewer:

So, let's see, with regard to what we were talking about. To what extent was Ed willing to supplement the project ecological capacity and in what ways? And this would be maybe if you were privy to the conversation that it was having with the board or kind of a clientele talking about what the Arboretum could be? And in particular if he was ever kind of pushing for the Arboretum to be a kind of ecological showcase over it being a, kind of, picturesque garden, or formal garden, or something like that.
Interviewee:

I do know, like you're mentioning, that was a very important thing to Ed. That the site become a showplace for that ecological capacity. And that the plants, that we're talking about, that grow in one elevation and not in the other and in the savanna where we have the reduction in trees what happens under the trees and such, ah it was very, very, important. and I think that’s someday where if we leave nature alone it will just show us all those things. It's almost as if we, if you, take your hands off of everything it'll seem to show you the direction to go. I think that's what Ed did with the Arboretum, he let the ecological system lead him, rather than him forcing his way on it.

25. To what extent do you believe Ed was able to affect the client’s intentions for the project?

Interviewer:

In relation to that, to what extent do you believe it was able to affect the client's intention for that project? And this might be something that I don't know if he knew the border maybe their goals for the project? Very early on before they were able to establish but if you did?

Interviewee:
I don't remember, it's just been so many years. I don't remember that is an issue I'm sure that it was, but I don't recall any stories about that.

Interviewer:
Okay, okay.

26. Other Points?
Interviewer: N/A

27. Do you recall a period/point in Edward Blake Jr.’s career in which his professional intentions underwent a shift? Please if possible include the approx. date(s) of this shift.

Interviewer:
And again, number nine is probably a question that you won't be able to help me with it has to do with more careers but I'll read it to just encasing something pops into your mind do you remember or recall. Or point and it word Blake Junior's career in which his professional intentions underwent a shift? Again, I'm trying to learn more about his very early experience. What he was doing in practice, and if the Crosby in particular, and his time with you and Fay became a kind of perfect storm? That was the time in his life where his priorities in terms of design.
Interviewee:

I would not know, I look for to reading your report to find out what other people say.

Interviewer:

Yeah, okay no problem.

28. Would you characterize Ed Blake Jr. as a Formalist, Experientialist, or Other?

Interviewer:

And the last question on the general questions would you characterize it Blake Junior as a foremost fix. Your list or other…

Interviewee:

I think more of Experientialist. He was very, I think the reason in the Arboretum in particular, were we had the pathways through the space, that he was wanting to get that experience to the visitors. And I think that's pretty apparent in the way that, he laid out the systems there at the Arboretum.

Interviewer:
Right, that makes sense. yeah okay great. Now I'll move onto the
Crosby's specific questions which we kind of have really been focused
on the Crosby anyway given the nature of your relationship with Ed.

29. The first one is how different do you think the conception or ideation of the
Crosby Arboretum was from Ed's a typical approach? and again you may not
be able to answer that.

Interviewee:
I really don't know.

Interviewer:
Yeah okay and the second one is…. not knowing anything about its
path you really won't be able to respond to the third one in some ways
we've already covered.

30. what aspects of the Arboretum's planning and design do you believe that the
most…. and it sounds like that it was primarily the way that the things been
designed to frame the way that the ecology could be revealed to the patron or
to the visitor?

Interviewee:
That exactly right, yes.

Interviewer:
Number four this is kind of an important one.
31. Do you recall speaking of the notion of the *landscape journey* when he was describing the Arboretum? Or any kind of detailing...

**Interviewee:**

I do remember that term and I do remember him speaking of that. And I don't know when he started using that term or thinking in that notion, but this was something that he did speak of quite a bit.

**Interviewer:**

Okay can you recall any areas in the Arboretum, or specific conditions that he was trying to highlight within that or if it was all sort of one journey or multiple journeys that he had envisioned or any of those stand on the relationship on the work that you and they had done out there?

**Interviewee:**

It could be just my memory, you know this has been many years ago, but my main memory is of him speaking for some time about the plant material of the Savannah and comparing that to the Pine Forest. And those relationships to each other is what stuck in my mind. I'm not saying that that was most important to him or what he thought but that's what I recall him speaking of the most.

**Interviewer:**
Okay. Okay, well that's an interesting kind of the notion of comparison in a person's experience would be potentially enhanced through that contrast between the those types of and really the eco-tone from moving from one type of landscape to another is something that I've always wondered about because he never sets up a critical threshold, or any kind of special detail with in the paths that would almost serve as a kind of gate that would really drive home that idea that now you can move into something different. But what I have wondered about is maybe this is something you can verify for me the information kiosk that you and Fay designed where you involved on making decisions about where those were located in how their design was directed in terms of a person's approach or their prospects or something like that?

Interviewee:

Well of course it was thought of that they were going to be something very special in the entryway, when the visitors first come, that would let them read about the paths and walkways and give information on that. So that was a thing that, with Ed’s help that was sited there. And the other ones, I believe Ed was instrumental in telling us where they should go, it was more of his decision rather than ours. He decided the best place for the kiosks.

Interviewer:
Right okay in terms of the design of the kiosk they're very kind of passive I guess in terms of a person could come up and read them if they wanted to but they're not kind of aggressively assaulted with information or forced to participate in that way. Was that intentional or from the point of view of how they are designed, was there anything behind that notion?

Interviewee:

I think we were trying to design something there that would convey the information that was necessary, but yet something that would still blend in with the site. It would not be a dominating element to the landscape but rather blend into the landscape itself.

Interviewer:

Okay great.

32. Last question do you believe that its primary design intent was to bring exposure to ecological processes within Crosby Arboretum?

Interviewer:

And it sounds like with what we've talked about that the answer would be yes.

Interviewee:

It really is yes. I do believe that is very important to him.
33. Closing questions and comments.

Interviewer:

Wonderful let me ask you a couple of questions that will shed some light for me so some of things. I've done, with students since I've been involved they constructed another part of the landscape the small forest stream in the Gum pond. That was planned for the north end of the site so the gum pond is a seasonal pond and that's all been built and then of course there's a small stream that leads all the way down to the small beaver pond cutting through the forest. And I have been involved with students to build a whole series of little bridges, there's 11 bridges in total, across this meandering stream and we have a large bridge planned up at the Gum pond that will really serve as not just a bridge, but a place to take in the exhibit. It’s kind of viewing platform in some ways and I've been wondering about I've really struggled with what you and Ed and Fay would have wanted in terms it fitting with the Arboretum and some ways maybe it should be the most substantial structure. And in terms of architectural structure built on that side of the Arboretum it should possibly serve as a kind of bookend to work in dialogue with the pavilion. I like that idea, but I also get nervous in the shadow of the work that you did there.

Interviewee:
I do know what they would say. They would like to see something that was designed like the bridges that are already on the Arboretum. We would like to see something that would continue that design to take that element and repeated that repetition would be something that he would feel would be good towards for the total site.

Interviewer:
Right right yeah, harmony well that's very helpful I was serious about that I've studied those bridges pretty closely and looked at doing them again I really love the way use the bench disorder serve as a handrail end to a real nice subtle quality

Interviewee:
I remember when we first did those bridges and walkways they had only been built for a matter of a few weeks and Ed was out there in a large moccasin was sunning itself on one of the little bridges. And I said, Ed did you kill it” and he was appalled that I would even suggest that kind of thing. Because it was part of nature and I said but it was going to get in trouble with visitors coming in that snake is there. And he said “oh no we're not going to do that” that's something that's important for the people to see
you also it would be terrible to kill the snake” He really felt strongly that people should be able to see all parts of nature.

Interviewer:
Yeah ok alright. That makes sense with that pond being something that is seasonal I spent a lot of time studying along with Bob Brzusek here on campus who worked with Ed for quite a while the idea that that pond really all the action happens on the water's edge and like you said earlier the action is something that takes place in about 10 inches of elevation change is so subtle I've been struggling with the idea how can I make a bridge that spans this pond that makes people see that that brings that delight for them without it being I don't know just too much of a gimmick or something that is....

Interviewee:
I think that the raised walkway bridge that we use there would allow that easily.

Interviewer:
Yeah I really like that idea I really like that that area secluded and the person has to sit and take it in to get those very small details that was definitely inspired and trying to find a way to keep that and maybe even intensify that in some way but I love that idea in relation to that
what was the inspiration behind the fountain because that's the only piece of cast copper....

Interviewee:
That was Fay's design he wanted to drinking fountain and he felt that it should be more like an artesian well there. He felt that that was something that would tie in as far as the shape of it and the cantilevers and things, part of it was trying to do something that would be functional and yet he wanted to do something that would be recognizable and this is where it gets more difficult. Not sure that everyone realizes that it is a drinking fountain and it's not just a water feature, what do you think?

Interviewer:
The metal disks that are on I believe those gave me the sense that it was scaled for a person to be able to drink but it was a very fine line knowing the students that are taking their half of them stand back and look at and some of that I think is the way that the ground is treated around that is not necessarily designed to suggest that you can stand in there the way that splashes down and works its way over to the pond. But it's always been a curious element to me because part of the design work that's done the other end of the Arboretum there's kind of a weird structure. And my students studied the one that you and Fay had built
and we made all kinds of different models and design with cast concrete and the kind of stepping down and the students kept referring to the one you did and the idea of pouring concrete somewhere on that site comes up it opens up the debate on whether or not that's appropriate. If it should be maintained and continued and what that meant terms of the larger picture and if that was just a practical issue in terms of if you're going to have as to why it was not built out of wood, um, or if there's a different meaning behind it the way that it was built.

**Interviewee:**

I think that it was just taken in Fay's mind as an architectural element. I think that he felt that it would be easier to maintain if made out of concrete rather than if it was built out of wood or brick. Concrete would blend in more and with the aging process it would blend in more with other things that have been built.

**Interviewer:**

Sure, sure, no that makes sense and then that's our dilemma with the bridges they don't like the idea of presoak logs the way that the original bridges were built their nervous about that so the alternative has been to cast everything which in the long run we might find out is not any better for the environment just a fascinating issue that I've
always been curious about you know what drove some of those
decisions if it would be inappropriate to use concrete and also just for
me to have peace of mind that is not going to break down to be some
sort of maintenance bubble from them.

Interviewee:

Have they replaced some of the wood that's on the pavilion?

Interviewer:

Yes, they just went through an extensive reconstruction primarily on
the verticals, of all columns, the first 3 feet or so, 3 or 4 feet up from
the ground have been slowly deteriorating, especially on the perimeter
just because the moisture. In the two columns on the end overlooking
the pond I think primarily because of you, the and water started to bow
a little bit that all part over the last year and a half or so replaced all of
that material that's something the architecture department here was
originally involved in. They talked about just cutting off the columns
and replacing the lower 4 feet or something like that and we all, know
you, said you can't do that. That would create a sort of false datum in
there that's not really into the design also redid the roofing and
everything at the same time it was substantial I think $400,000+ to
rebuild. I'm glad that it's there and repaired it serves as a pretty big
inspiration for all of our students at least I try to take students down there every year so it's pretty great thing to have.

Misc. discussion of other teaching and MSU activities, not related to Ed Blake.

**Interviewee:**

**Will you publish this information that you doing?**

**Interviewer:**

I will it will definitely become part of the MSU Library and my intent is this is really for my master’s thesis in landscape architecture I want to use this information I've spoken with Robert Ivy a good bit and he's in love with this project and he said that he would work with me to create a companion book to go with the state book so I'm hoping that long-term it leads to the book till we do something more substantial and then in that case I will be back in touch to talk to you about other things you know if you're interested in writing a piece of it or an introduction or some part of it maybe some photography and things like that so, it’s all on the horizon.

**Interviewee:**
I look forward to meeting you when you get up to this area please give me a call. I enjoyed the interview.

Interviewer:
Well great I can't say how excited I am to have a chance to speak with you I'm a huge admirer of your work, actually: looking in my office I have one of the original shingles from the pavilion I talked them into giving me a shingle when they were rebuilding it one day. I'll have to remember to bring it up to you and get you're I sign it or something. Thank you so much again for your time, and I'll send you a copy of the transcript when it's complete just for your records. I'll keep you up-to-date on how it's going.

Interviewer: Hans C. Herrmann

Interviewee: Dr. Neil Odenwald, Friend and former Professor

Interview Setting: Via telephone. The interview was conducted at 8:00 PM, November 2nd 2015.

Affiliation with interviewee: N/A

(Due to a technical issue the recording was incomplete. Please see hand written interview notes for complete interview.)

Interviewee:

Hello
Interviewer:

Hi doctor Odenwald. This is Hans Hermann at Mississippi State, how are you?

Interviewee:

I am doing fine thank you.

Interviewer:

Great can’t complain. Is this still a good time for you?

Interviewee:

Yes. Yes, it is. It’ll be fine.

Interviewer:

Wonderful. I just wanted to make sure I was going to record the call and do a transcription if that’s ok with you just for my own record.

Interviewee:

That’s fine.
Ok wonderful. Um so I sent that email out this morning did you get that ok?

Interviewee:

I did uh huh. uh some of the questions. I think are pertinent to me others are not but you know as we move through the discussion. I’ll tell you what I think is appropriate for me and we can go from there.

Interviewer:

Sure. No, and I understand the majority of the people that were interviewed worked with Ed and collaborated with him professionally. And if I understand correctly from Bob, you were his teacher, is that right? Or did you also work with him professionally?

Interviewee:

Yes, but I did work at the Arboretum, I was on his board at Crosby when he came there, you know, when he was working with Fay Jones and the master plan, I was on the board at that time. While I didn’t do professional projects, I went to board meetings and naturally saw him struggle with the master plan and all of that at Crosby. So, my work with him was actually as a student and then much later after he had, you know, gone into practice. I
don’t even know where then he came to the Arboretum and encountered him again.

Interviewer:  
Ok, well I think that will be helpful. So, I don’t know how much you could gather from my email but um what I’m really trying to do is put together a bit of a picture of Ed, sort of, in his early career or your time with him and then that is really probably the most unclear picture that I have right now. It sort-of, his, you know, training of the period. And then I’m trying to look at how much of that may be um is maintained throughout his career vs. if there was a point somewhere along the line where he really, you know, developed his own thing which doesn’t necessarily deny his education but, you know, moves into a totally different way of thinking. A more mature, I guess, in depth way of thinking that, you know, might come with years of practice.

Interviewee:  
Um, hm.

Interviewer:  
So, I’m excited to be able to hear, to speak with you, a little bit about what he was like as a student. And then, it sounds like you had a
good, I don’t know how much you know about his time right after he graduated and what his general kind of response was to that, and if he came to the arboretum sort-of because of some dissatisfaction he had in that early work or if, you know, I have no idea so I’m just trying to find out more.

Interviewee:

That is very, that’s unclear with me. I mean, I really didn’t follow Ed’s work after, you know, I saw him as a student until I saw him, you know, and worked with him at the Arboretum. So, I know he went into a practice with a firm but I don’t know any of the particulars there.

Interviewer:

Ok, I see.

Interviewee:

I mean we can start with the student if that’s appropriate?

Interviewer:

Sure, yeah, absolutely. And I think you can try and respond to these questions, well if you can clarify when you respond, if you think there’s a difference sort of his…the way you might answer these
questions, sort of, as when you knew him as a student vs. working with him later at the Arboretum. That would be great if you can just point out that distinction.

**Interviewee:**

I do have some feelings about that and, you know just kind of let me start first with the student life. You understand it will be fifty years, so that’s quite a long time ago.

**Interviewer:**

Sure, yeah, absolutely, yeah.

**Interviewee:**

But I do remember Ed very well it was in an introductory course he was a freshmen, and it was actually before Mississippi State, I think, confirmed and had a landscape architecture program. In other words, it was more of a landscape design in horticulture, in other words, Ed stood out as a very inquisitive student. In other words, even as a young person you know he was a very inquisitive and wanted to know more and he had good, you know, good work ethic as a student. And I remember that, in other words you know, freshmen often times, you know, cut corners and things like that. But Ed was a very serious student in those early
years and I often thought, well this is a guy who’s going to make something out of his life, and he did. It was good to have him in those early years and then see him at the Arboretum. And while there was great maturity in those years, there was a lot of similarity there. Ed struggled to make decisions because he wanted to be so sure of making the right decision. And he didn’t come at solutions quickly, I remember so vividly in meeting that his board wanted to see the master plan, you know, when are you going to finish the master plan. And Ed indicated a tremendous inward and personal struggle to be sure that it was right because he was....

Recording Device failure, remaining interview recorded via hand-written notes.

Interviewer: Hans C. Herrmann

Interviewee: Ted Flato, Professional Collaborator

Interview Setting: Via telephone. The interview was conducted at 10:00 AM, November 22nd 2015.

Affiliation with interviewee: N/A

1. Please RANK (1 is the highest priority) the following based upon your opinion of their importance to Edward Blake’s Design Thinking and Process.
   
   4. Compositional Logic
Interviewer:

So, the first question is Please RANK (1 is the highest priority) the following based upon your opinion of their importance to Edward Blake’s Design Thinking and Process. And I don’t know if you have these in front of you or not?

Interviewee:

I do. So first I’m going to preface this with, it’s been a while. I’m mean, I’m lucky enough to have worked on a lot of wonderful landscape projects and, you know, the times that I have, where we started working with Ed, we found ourselves kind of in the southeast. In the forest of the southeast and so, that’s when I knew you know the person to start working with was someone who I admired their work for a number of years. Finally, we had an opportunity to be working in that particular landscape so I had always admired the Crosby Arboretum. And just the
before and after, and I was also very familiar with Andropogon who had obviously done some of the initial things. But just finally over our correspondence with Ed we realized that that “on the ground involvement” could really take that landscape and turn it into something even more remarkable. But I have to say, I have never been to the Crosby Arboretum. so *laughing*… But I just imagine it, and imagine the success of it and picture again over the years of going and talking with others and having Ed as part of my team using the Arboretum, using the burning, and discussing the ecological systems and things. It just became as if I had been there many times *Laughing*…and also the other thing was, you know, as I recall the Crosby was also a planted pine forest. Right?

Interviewer:
Correct, yeah.

Interviewee:
Yeah, and so, all of the projects that we worked together on were already kind of “man manipulated” projects that were in the country and wanted to be kind of brought back to nature. So, for me those were the sweet spots for what I knew of that. Now Ed may have had many, many, many, other talents but as Ed would always describe it, the projects we worked on together were
always “landscape-scale places”. That was his term for it and I always loved it. The landscape-scale meant a couple thousand acres usually, and that was the scale we were always working at so we were really I didn’t know him as a garden designer. I really knew him as kind of a big scale landscape planner, someone who was working at that big scale but knew what it would be like to then work at that smaller scale. So that was a little thing to kind of give you a sense of the Ed Blake I knew which may be a different Ed Blake that others probably knew. Ed and I, those were the landscapes we were planning and we had a lot of fun. We probably working in, um, 2000 when we first began, or 2002, that would be my guess and on in close to his death although I saw him a little less and less those last few years.

Interviewer:

Right. No, that’s perfect that’s really why you’re on the list because I’m trying to get a range of collaborators for the most part they were kind of more planning efforts than like you said specific small-scale designs that’s perfect.

Interviewee:

Yeah, so consequently, when you ask a question like this he could read ecological systems, and it seemed to me he based a lot
of things on logic. And the logic came from ecology and appreciation for the natural, um, appreciation for beauty and appreciation for picturesque. So a lot of the things you mentioned, and his enthusiasm was just delightful, and so, that idea of experiential delight, I would say always seemed to just in his use of words, which were lovely. I would always get a sense of excitement for where we were headed and so as I’m speaking I can remember us talking… But anyways, that’s it, I’m going to end up taking too long on these things and get off track.

Interviewer:

No, no, you’re fine let me just make sure I have it sort of in order, 1. ecological systems…

Interviewee:

Yeah so, Ecological Systems is number 1, Picturesque Beauty was number 2, Experiential Delight was number 3, and those were kind of the things that seemed to resonate with me. He had, you could say, Compositional Logic because he forever had the culmination that once we made large open spaces that he would introduce what he loved to call, “a mosaic of plants”. He would use his fingers and they would cross over and I always pictured these open prairies that we had planned a bunch of these
different places that I can only remember only one project that it went all the way through completion. And, um, and those were these making open prairies big forest area and as I recall he would plant those prairies on a grid with different planting and he described doing that in Crosby but I only got to appreciate what looked like, a really natural experience, and so I always imagined that he kind of knew that you can introduce a real heavy geometry of your planting but basically nature will still torture it. I mean, first you’d burn it so, and then well, it would come back as different things, and ultimately, I think, it blends. I think he always knew that it would ultimately blend into some kind of richer version of the natural system anyway. So.

Interviewer:

Right. Right. Ok. Ok. No that’s great.

Interviewee:

Well luckily, you’re recording this because there was no place in that question for any of that stuff. Ok so number two.

Interviewer:

No um, that’s the kind of stuff that has actually been the most helpful in this process. I’ve done a lot of these interviews and I’m
kind of getting a better sense for his um you know just his personal approach is almost most clearly conveyed though the kind of antidotal things rather than these questions which I struggle endlessly with what they should be about and no, no, it’s great. Um, and I don’t know number two.

2. Please RANK the following based upon your opinion of their importance to Edward Blake’s Complete Body of Work. (1 is the highest priority)

___ River Camps
___ 100 Acer Wood
1. Crosby Arboretum
___ Hattiesburg, MS Convention Center
___ Vicksburg, MS Children’s Art Park
___ Other(s)

Interviewee:

Number two for me is Please RANK the following based upon your opinion of their importance to Edward Blake’s Complete Body of Work. I would say cause for me it was Crosby, it begins at Crosby. And I don’t know the other projects other than River Camps which we worked very, very, closely on from the beginning to the end. And then there were some other iterations of River Camps, working in some other parts of the Florida panhandle for the St. Joe Company. But River Camps was the only
one that actually got done. There were a bunch of projects that we worked on that were never really completed, but RiverCamps was. So, the others I’m sure were very important but I don’t know them.

Interviewer:

Ok, ok, No problem

3. What project(s) did you undertake with Ed Blake Jr and during what years was it designed?

Interviewee:

And then as far as number three, what projects did you undertake with Ed? Obviously RiverCamps and a bunch of other projects for St. Joe in the era of 2002 until the economy imploded and maybe that was 2006 or 2007? I don’t remember. Then latter we worked outside of Oxford, MS together on another project. That was for the Leak family that had some property that had some lakes that were being built about the time we were hired and we were both in a scramble mode to restore and fix some of the damage that was already done by some of these lakes that were created and then trying to…. It was a lot of also planted pine, I remember, I think. Or actually, it had been clear-cut. I think parts
of it had been clear-cut, parts were still left ragged, anyway it was another project that we worked on together.

Interviewer:

Ok. Ok.

4. What SINGLE issue was MOST critical to Ed Blake Jr. in the project you undertook while working with him?

Interviewer:

So, in number 4 What SINGLE issue was MOST critical to Ed Blake Jr. in the project you undertook while working with him? River Camps in particular was there anything in particular that kind of stuck that surfaced at every meeting or something like that? And that can be a design idea or a kind of aspiration or a technical…

Interviewee:

Well the single most thing was an appreciation for natural systems and ecology. So, when we had RiverCamps, it had a gorgeous natural edge which was Panama Bay and a beautiful little creek that went through it Crooked Creek, so it had some already natural systems along the existing water ways and a couple of low areas still had natural systems where they weren’t able to go in and timber but the rest was a prime plantation. But it
was dense and pretty, but I remember he was a great collaborator
so I had a lot of fun with him. So, I’m afraid I cannot remember
whose idea was which would never ever happen without his being
there. On RiverCamps the most exciting thing that we came up
with on that one was the notion which was, a way of taking that
pine forest and doing big openings that felt like natural conditions.
They had the sense of being like lakes and you could look across
them but they would be “grass lakes” and then that’s where he… I
remember having this whole discussion, that that’s where he was
going to do this mosaic of planting. That was out in those spaces
and we would burn them there was a great deal of discussion
about, um, doing burns in these larger areas. Um so, you could
really fire up the quality of the grasses and keep them in a
healthier state without having to do kind of silly things like
mowing or something like that. He brought those kinds of things
to bear, and a lot of it just came from just huge enthusiasm and
appreciation for what a natural area would look like. Knowing
how would you take this and turn it into something that felt
vaguely natural but you’re taking a man-made condition and turn
it into something different.
So, the next one, What do you believe was so important to him? He just had, you know, a second sense to him for the beauty of nature, he was a very passionate guy.

Interviewer:

Right. Right and it sounds like the idea of the dry lakes was a lot of his work is sometimes associated with eco revelatory design I don’t know if your familiar with that term but you know a kind of approach were the intent of the design is really to show case a natural condition or bring that forward as a thing of beauty rather than you know some kind of composed composition or you know whatever kind of picturesque arrangement and I don’t know if that’s exactly what your yeah…..

Interviewee:

so how it was manifested actually I answered earlier were “Dry Lakes”.

Interviewer:

Ok. Ok great. And that sounds like it was almost a direct import from sort of the thinking of Crosby.

Interviewee:
Yes. Well those Crosby you know he truly introduced real lakes where these were big grass land lakes but the same fact but with a lot less effort. We already had water ways and things like that, we didn’t need to actually carve out. All we needed to do was clear them so it was fun and now you drive through that place and as soon as you have big open spaces you then appreciate the denser forest canopy and stuff.

Interviewer:


Interviewee:

You got a sense it was several thousand acres but you couldn’t get a sense of how large the place was so it was a way of giving you that appreciation for the scale of the landscape.

Interviewer:

Um hmm. Um hmm. It’s almost like a poche condition with that. Ok.

5. Did Ed Blake expand your conception of the Project Scope and if so how?

Interviewer:
Um so number 5 did Ed expand your conception of the project scope and if so how? I understand that it was a very collaborative effort but did you ever find times where you thought hmm this are really I would have not gone that way…

Interviewee:
The big thing that was new to me was this notion that you would, once you made these big spaces which I could really picture I’m lucky enough to have grown up in a big open landscape and appreciate these big open landscapes and kind of don’t know what to do when I get into a forest. So, the idea of making these big open spaces, you know, made tons of sense to me. That’s why I say, it just kind of came out of all of our thinking and working, but then the replanting and the discussion of how you would plant these open spaces, again the notion of as he would always say this mosaic pattern, and I could always imagine this sort of interesting plaid that would happen. And he would describe it after burn, or in the spring, in my head I imagine this incredibly lush vibrant prairie that would have an interesting pattern to it. I pictured sort of a modernist quality to the planting. I never saw it like that but I’m afraid that a lot of the time when your down low at the ground you probably can’t appreciate that complexity. And I also can imagine that nature may not have allowed it to be so server, but I
had this fantasy that it had a kind of other worldly quality to it. That’s how you can get sucked into Blake’s world. *Laughing* but I was good with it. I was excited by it, I liked the notion that these open spaces might have more complexity to them than just open space and grass lands.

Interviewer:

Right. Right. Ok.

Interviewee:

So… and that’s what he would describe, the complexity of a lot of different plants and, you know, a lot of times when you go into these big fields that do get burned you see a lot of times it’s not just this monoculture of grasses. A lot of different things are allowed to come up that come up after fire. So anyway, it was something that I appreciated that he brought to the table that was very special that I hadn’t thought about.

Interviewer:

Ok. Ok.

6. To what extent do you believe was Ed Blake Jr. was known for attempting supplement the projects ecological capacity and in what ways?
Interviewer:

In this I guess question 6 kind of has to do with a little bit how with what you knew of him in terms of how he worked with other people or if he had kind of a reputation I suppose, As far as wanting to supplement projects with this kind of ecological capacity. That’s what your practice is about…

Interviewee:

Yeah, the extra piece is this notion of this kind of enhanced prairie. We were going to seed it and off we go so we added this additional complexity to sound interesting. But yeah….

7. To what extent do you believe Ed was able to affect the client’s intentions for the project?

Interviewee:

Well that one is a really neat one because he had, you know, so much. Often design is a result of great ideas and persuasiveness. He had a marvelous quality that you would follow him. He had a very soft but convincing, a very convincing manner. You just trusted him and it began with an obvious appreciation for nature. Anybody could go with that. And then this vision was to discuss transforming in our case big landscapes or “man manipulated landscapes” but with some really amazing natural incisions and edges. And he would get people pretty fired up about the potential
of these places early on so he would build a level of enthusiasm and trust in the earliest part of the project that then allowed a very easy to…. Every time we would have a presentation to the client about something it always seemed to be moving forward really easily, never a “tough-sell”, but was a very principled designer, you know, not soft in that sense but he had a soft manner.

Interviewer:
Ok, umm.

8. Other Points?

Interviewer:
To what extent did Ed attempt to supplement the projects ecological value and productive potential?

Interviewee:
My memory of those is, you know, using fire clearing, thinning, he knew what all that shade would do to the forest bottom floor so he had an appreciation for the dense forest but he understood the potential of thinning out and taking things out so he could start to bring back the floor before. I don’t know yeah…
Interviewer:

Kind of interesting, I’ve been looking at it his work so much of the intent was in what the thing was going to be over time more so what it was just on the day you cut the ribbon and he got most of that to happen through the way that he always included the Management Plan and an evolutionary system for the landscape. Would that be a fair characterization?

Interviewee:

That’s totally a fair characterization. A lot of the times your working with, like botanical gardens, so our landscape architect might be doing a garden that’s only two or three acres size and they’re dense, and they’re amazing, the billions that we put into those kind of places already have fairly finished landscapes and amazing plans and you’re working with these botanists, you know, all the guys that work in botanical gardens toil up all the big huge plants and trees and get it finished. Or residential scale projects are similar. They’re done, they’re amazing, but these big landscapes that we worked on, umm yeah, you weren’t sure really where they were going to go. You just knew they were going to be great and that’s why I have to say unless you’re lucky enough to keep going back to these places, I don’t know, I just have full trust and I can imagine what they would be like in five years ten years
and there was always a management plan that was always a big strategy and it was easy for me to appreciate that. I knew they were going to change over years. They weren’t irrigated, none of this stuff we worked on had any irrigation. It was always about the natural systems you have to work with. And so, um, it reminded me of a lot of familiar things. Which is that, we have my family has this ranch that I’ve grown up going to and it’s a big part of who I am. And that’s a scale that is before I ever met Ed I had been thinking and working on. I would always go and get things cleared and make big fields and do these things and then I’d watch these places sometimes just dry up and, and, we would burn, we did all those things. We did a lot of these things already, I did these on my own place. But we struggled in Texas because it’s hard to get things to burn and boy you couldn’t wait until you could get a burn. We had equipment that we could burn with, we had burning people, and so a lot of the stuff that Ed was always talking about I was already quite familiar with. But the difference is I could imagine what they’d look like. I could imagine, them on good years and bad years and again that was just kind of some of my experiences. But it was that expertise that I had, this huge trust on, I knew that they would actually be far more interesting than if we had just made these clearings. To have this kind of very thoughtful mythical way of introducing new things back into
them. So, but unfortunately, I wasn’t really… I haven’t been back to some of these great places… *Laughing* but I’m confident that they are gorgeous… *Laughing*

Interviewer:

well that’s a… it’s definitely and interesting thing. To actually be a part of... when I start dreaming of what the book might be. It would really be almost a set of photos from these different projects four seasons out of the year, as a way to start to make people understand what really he was… in general it wasn’t about that one photo it was about the duration of the thing.

Interviewee:

Yeah. Yeah, you would see all these pictures and its constantly changing place, he set up, and did us all a favor, and set up his system. Then, uh, if you followed some of the management that, you would yeah you would, see a lot of a…. and even though... go out in the spring and take a picture of that field at a certain time that’s when it’s going to be crazy and great. Now there would be a neat way of taking a picture from the same space from the same shot at four different times. Yeah that would be neat. And if you were able to take a picture of what it looked like before you ever
did it you know… But yeah those were Ed. I always had a fantasy getting Ed out to the country to our place and we never did

Interviewer:

Hmm

9. Do you recall a period/point in Edward Blake Jr.’s career in which his professional intentions underwent a shift? Please if possible include the approx. date(s) of this shift.

Interviewee:

I didn’t know him that well really. I adored him but I didn’t…..

So, I can only say no to that.

Interviewer:

Sure. Sure.

10. Would you characterize Ed Blake Jr. as a Formalist, Experientialist, or Other?

Interviewee:

I would say he was an experientialist. Though that’s a really abstract term, what is that? But my comment on this is just, we only, like I said, we only worked in big open landscapes in a scale that he always referred to as “landscape-scale”. And so that formalist, he had a formalist quality to him which would be that,
that’s what he would do to the floors of these new cleared floored spaces. He would grid them out and do this mosaic. But we have worked with a lot of different architects and I would not call him a formalist. We’ve worked with a lot of formalist. He was just fun. You trusted him and his way of sizing up a landscape and he seemed like a soul brother on that stuff. We were talking the same language from the very beginning when we’d look at something. A superb collaborator I thought. And then somebody that would ramp it up to another level way beyond anything you could ever imagine.

Interviewee:

Ok let’s see. So, starting on the RiverCamps stuff. Do you think the conception and ideation of the RiverCamps on Crooked Creek project was different from Ed’s typical approach?

Interviewer:

Yeah, and this may not be something you can answer I don’t know.

Interviewee:

I don’t know, you know, all I knew was what I gathered. And again, some of the things that happened at Crosby were some early
ideas of Andropogon. To introduce those lakes I think? And so, then the maintenance and taking that whole area to another level was Ed. I would have thought that the things that were going on at RiverCamps weren’t unusual for Ed. It seemed like something he would naturally do, the idea of doing these big open clearings.

Interviewer:
Yeah, and to clarify this question is… the people I’ve been interviewing have a kind of cross section between very early experience or professional experience and collaborators. And then with Crosby kind of at the middle of all that and then you guys kind of on the later end of things….

Interviewee:
Oh yeah, so I would say yeah, that he was fully informed and was already hitting the ground running.

Interviewee:
Do you think that the difference was Exciting and Challenging for Ed and Why?
Anyways again, he seemed like he was really consistent with what would have grown out of his experiences at Crosby and this
seemed like a neat opportunity to leverage what he had already learned there.

Interviewer:
Right.

Interviewee:
What do you think that Ed struggled with the most in his projects?

I can’t even think of anything he struggled with other than, you know, as a developer in these days, you know, developers are different types. They have different budgets and perspectives. But embraced, everyone got what Ed was trying to do, and the beauty of RiverCamps was the landscape and it already had a really pretty edge. It ended up having a really beautiful middle, which is what I think was Ed’s big contribution to that project.

Interviewer:
Um, hmm. Now how did he…. Was there ever any issues like time management or Just getting one of the things that has come up in some of the interviews was that because he was so concerned in considering everything. A lot of times duration was an issue. He was
kind of careful to the point where sometimes things weren’t done quickly enough.

Interviewee:

Well in that case he was more into planning scale. You know, that time issue... you know, we weren’t doing a tight little garden so I think it worked well. The level of work that was needed from him and the scale of work that we needed they married really well so the time management on that project was not an issue at all. The way we’d work on that project is; we would do these charrettes in Florida, or here in our office in San Antonio, and then he’d go away and do these marvelous sketches and nothing came out of those but they came back pretty rapidly it seemed like to me. So then ultimately what we then finished with, they were big move drawings and things. They didn’t have some, again, big irrigation plan or exact planting plan. The kind of things that would have been very time consuming and probably difficult for an office at this scale. So but... this level of skill worked well, it required all of his thinking and didn’t require a lot of huge additional drawings. We had another landscape architect, at least in the early stage, but I don’t know when they departed. But it seemed to me that he wasn’t involved in the roads and things. Seemed like he was maybe part of the planning effort in the roads...? We had
whatever Ed Stones firm is called in Florida. But anyway, it’s an online landscape firm and they were part of the project form the beginning. But it was Ed that I knew would get the big landscape and figure that out and make those decisions and good shapes and where things go. And I think he was probably very keen on knowing where the roads ultimately might shape a little differently. Perhaps where they were laid out? But my memory was that he wasn’t in charge of roads. That was another technical group that was doing that so that probably worked well for his strengths. So it meant that we could produce a lot of drawings but I don’t think that they were produced by him….. But that’s my memory... it was a while ago. And it’s also not… we get involved in the early planning stage and then, when actually real production drawings on the landscape are going on, one is even asking how they are going and looking, it’s now out of my hands and not part of my involvement any more. We’re now working on Architecture. So yeah.

Interviewer:

Ok. Um let’s see.

Interviewee:
What elements and issues did you know of that Ed was never comfortable with?

I don’t know, you know? Again we didn’t work on small-scale stuff and I don't know really what it would've been like to work on small-scale stuff. And I don't really know what it would have been like to work at a small scale we've been lucky enough to work with so many amazing talented landscape architects over the years. We had a certain relationship with a certain scale landscape architect and that's what I would've stuck with. And I wouldn't have called Ed up on a different one. There are just other people that would work at a different scale probably, and Ed may have been really great at that but I just don't have any idea.

Interviewer:

Right, right. okay #3. What aspect did you think intrigued him the most it sounds like it was maybe the dry lakes or…?

Interviewee:

Yeah, and how you would integrate this big landscape, several thousand acres, and make a place out of it instead of just a thick forest and a good-looking edge. And how you would enjoy some of these untouched pieces these pieces that were in the wetlands, the pieces that were near Crooked Creek which were just gorgeous.
And we would walk over to it and point these amazing things out, and how you might showcase that and how you might be able to experience it or see it. I remember one day we were looking at a whole other landscape at the time. And we were in a helicopter together and man it was one of those one great days you just want to pinch yourself and it was another one of these back creeks, way back in another part of this area. St. Joe had so much land and we had rented a helicopter because it was so thick that you couldn't even drive through it. There was so much wet area so we were trying to imagine how we would introduce this housing area, another RiverCamps but in a much wilder, it felt like Vietnam to me with the helicopter. Wiggling we would stay low and be in the creek. The creek was black, it had just this amazing color that came from whatever the stuff in the bottom of the creek was that was creating this beautiful color. But it was jet black and very reflective, I just remember this one day with Ed in that in the excitement as we were looking over this landscape, practically we felt like for the first time, it was just really fun. A lot of it was he was just a delight to be with and he was just a joy to be with and always came away with this huge smile and huge appreciation for what we were getting ready to do and a great deal of trust.

Interviewer:
What aspects of Rivercamps do you believe intrigued Ed the most?

**Interviewee:**

This notion of taking a man-made landscape and then expressing the natural areas there.

**Interviewer:**

Do you recall Ed speaking of the notion of the landscape journey and developing design proposals for river camps?

**Interviewee:**

Well, landscape journey, Yes. He would always have this but now it's been too long but… His way of introducing ideas, it did seem like he had a story that he began with but I don't know. You know more about this probably from your research so unfortunately, it's been a little too long.

**Interviewer:**

That's alright I guess part of what I'm wondering about on the RiverCamps project and this has to do with my ignorance on the particulars on that project was that a conservation subdivision I mean I know there was a lot of land that was sort of set aside right and he tried
to make that available even if people were living directly on it was sort
of the value I guess of buying into that neighborhood is that fair.

Interviewee:

Well, so, what we did on the 2000 acres was St. Joe put in a
permanent easement forever whole lot more acreage we developed
2000 acres but there's a great deal more acreage all along the
whole edge of Panama Bay. My memory is that it's an easement
and nature conservative. I think that looks over in perpetuity, we
were designing this area that the density was very, very, small.
2000 acres and the idea was you would have a kind of circle that
you would own ware your house would go and the rest was shared
landscape with all the other houses in the area. And when we cut
these big lakes, those were big shared areas as well, and we
worked building close to the creek so that was another huge
shared landscape. And then with paths and walkways and those
things and then you had this one main complex that was on the
prettiest part of the property. That was the only development that
kind of stuck itself out into the bay, and that was this thing called
the RiverHouse and everybody got to use that in the development.
And the 2000 acres was pretty much restricted to the people who
built their houses in that development. But then there was this
much larger preserve beyond the RiverCamps property, and that
I'm sure he was very involved in that as well. We weren't, there was maybe an autobahn building that was going to be built into that landscape, my memory is and I may be wrong, but my memory is, that we brought Ed to St. Joe who soon fell in love with him and adopted him and doing a few things that we weren't with him on. And I think he was probably involved in that and thinking a little bit about how people might appreciate the larger preserve, it had a lot of wetland in it so anyway...

Interviewer:

That’s helpful. I was just trying to understand I've gone over there my parents live in Florida and Central Florida last time I went to visit them I drove through to try and stop at the river camps but it was a Sunday and it was closed I couldn't get in so I don't know much about the place other than what I can find on the website

Interviewee:

Yeah well, developments are funny things to do the main thing was planning in creating these neat opportunities. And a long-term maintenance program after that, I don't know, the baton was passed to another generation of people at St. Joe. It was incredibly popular at one moment and the properties were opening up. They would sell them and so I would buy them and flip it and they
would have to auction them off they were so popular. And then the bottom of the floor, real estate market, just fell out and that place just kind of got mothballed. And now the new St. Joe has sold off an enormous amount of acreage and they’re much more of a paired down leaner group and different view. The people are there from the time when me and Ed worked with them but very few, mainly it's a completely new guard. When all that happened all that institutional memory goes away and I have no idea what it looks like now. It's different than the Crosby or the project that Marlon and Ed worked on which was the botanical gardens?

Interviewer:

Yeah, the Hundred Acre Art Park.

Interviewee:

Is that what it's called? The Hundred Acres?

Interviewer:

Yeah, the Virginia B. Fairbanks Art and Nature Park. It's part of the Indianapolis Art Museum and that was a pretty good size landscape, I understand from Marlon they really did not build much of what they planned because the funding just had kind of gone away, but that was probably the next step down in terms of scale from what you did a
little more of a park with small green design but also working at a landscape scale in many ways so, yeah.

Interviewer:
I really appreciate your time and insight on his approach those things are great if you like I'd be happy to send you a copy of the transcript once I get it done if you'd like that's entirely up to you

Interviewee:
Oh no, I can't wait. Yeah after you edit it *Laughing* I don't think I read what I just told you, but I would read what you're smart editing capabilities wood pile in there. I think I repeated the same thing? I had one set story that probably could've been wrapped up in a few minutes but anyway it's been fun for me to talk about him and share and speak with you about it. It was a really important person in my life in this moment in time. We got to work together and I'm just delighted that you're looking into it see what you can make out of it and make a book into it if you can, sounds great.

Interviewer:
Yeah, it's a fun project on that note if things continue to progress I don't know what kind of photography if you have any RiverCamps?
Interviewee:

They aren’t very good because it was very abrupt when we started working on the project because that’s what happens when a market, the bottom falls out it and then you get busy, move onto other things, and it was in Florida so we don't have amazing pictures. But we'd love to share with you what we have for the beautiful things like the pictures on the road and the pictures looking out at open spaces that are created. We don't have any of that so the pictures we have are of the RiverHouse and from the water. We have a couple pretty pictures and St. Joe took a lot of the creek at the mouth of Crooked Creek, a lot of the natural things were beautiful because they were always beautiful. The big move was taking out a graded-out forest of all very similar sized Slash Pines and turned it into something pretty and they were pretty I too. Like you went back to Florida a few months ago and try to get in as well but there’s no one at the guard station which is kind of, you know, but oh well.

Interviewer:

I thought that was odd but okay, Well, I will keep you up-to-date on how this is going.
Interviewee: Marilyn Blake, The Landscape Studio Business Manager and Partner

Interview Setting: Via telephone. The interview was conducted at 10:30 AM, December 7th 2015.

Affiliation with interviewee: N/A

Interviewer: Hans C. Herrmann

Interviewee: Yeah, super.

Interviewer: Tell those guys, Clay and John Taylor, I said hi, and you have a good weekend.

Interviewer: Hey good morning Mrs. Marilyn this is Hans speaking, how are you?

Interviewee: Ok, I hope it’s you that’s supposed to call me at 10:30

Interviewer: I’m sorry did I do something wrong 10:30

Interviewee: No, no. I thought it was funny

Interviewer: Well great

Interviewer: I just wasn’t expecting you yet that’s what I was saying hold on a second let me get my glasses… ok can you hear me?
Yes, I can hear you very well

**Interviewee:**
Ok

Interviewer:
And I am recording this just so I can create a transcript just a reminder of that to make sure you're ok with that.

**Interviewee:**
Yea

Interviewer:
The University the MSU University was actually intersected in having a database. The collection that you started that actually included all of my phone interviews and transcripts so that will be an interesting contribution to that collection hopefully it will be of value to other people

**Interviewee:**
Yeah Do I need to fill out that interview sheet and send it in?

Interviewer:
I don't believe so as long as you say on the phone that you're okay with it becoming part of the collection that covers us but if I need it I'll get back in touch with you and I don't know if you're interested or not but I would be happy to share with you the other people I interviewed to this point it was obvious that Bob obviously help put together

**Interviewee:**
Okay that would be good

Interviewer:
Yeah so I spoke with Marlon Blackwell that was the first person I spoke with and then Ted Flato out of Lake Flato doctor Neil oldenwald Maurice Jennings Sam hold Robert pour and I spoke with Carol Franklin but she's very hard she's had some issues in her life and that sounds like that's not going to work out timewise and then Friday I'm supposed to speak with Robert Ivy

**Interviewee:**
Wow, okay

Interviewer:
Yeah so I'll have everyone on my list except Ernie Ihod who I can't seem to track down a good phone number for
Interviewee:
Yeah, I guess he's not at Mississippi State anymore yeah no I mean you're there so

Interviewer:
Yeah, I've spoken to his former neighbors and friends here in Starkville end they gave me some numbers and he had moved up to New Hampshire or Vermont I can't remember

Interviewee:
Yeah, he started an apartment up there yeah, yeah, okay, yeah

Interviewer:
Yeah but I spoke with them and he retired from there and they don't want to share his personal phone numbers so I've kind a hit a dead end on tracking him down but maybe I can see if I can talk to Larry Albert or somebody like that that would be good

Interviewee:
Well yeah of course also I would suggest I don't know if Bob told you that they videoed and made a DVD of his memorial at the Crosby Arboretum after he passed away because a lot of his colleagues couldn't make it to the funeral and we had 10 speakers Carol Franklin being one of those that went on and on and on and especially like the director of hundred acres art and nature park Mark thalamus Marlon is on that and after each one gave their speeches including Bob and Od and Walt and Neil was the MC have you seen this

Interviewer:
I have not I've heard about it but I've never seen it

Interviewee:
Well I sent Bob, you need to sit down and watch that and also the Anderson that he worked with Allison and what's his name they are architects down in Bay St. Louis

Interviewer:
Oh okay unabridged architects?

Interviewee:
Yes yes and they spoke afterword’s and they did some informal interviews after the audience sitting there speaking to his mother they spoke to clients and Anderson and my staff, even that part would be very beneficial for you to watch that also, yeah she was head of the chairman of the LA Department,
there was a double Alabama Mississippi ASLA meeting down on the coast and they asked me to be a keynote speaker at that time he been diagnosed and it was just before the surgery that I believe was in June and that's the last public speech that he gave before he passed away in August. It was very interesting because what he gave everybody was a visual chronological timeline of okay over here this is what was going on at this time in history in landscape architecture and this is the new world and what is going on here and what's going on there and how it developed here a whole chronological story up to the present and it's a good you know maybe hour and a half presentation and you can listen to that

Interviewer:
Do you know that that was recorded by anyone?

Interviewee:
Yes, let me find it I have a copy of it it was a DVD where you get to sit there watching give the talk it was at the casino in the deiverville on the Gulf Coast and Saudi gave it to me I know that he knows or bob knows how to get a copy of that because they have a copy of it.

Interviewer:
Okay that would be great let me follow up on that that would be wonderful

Interviewee:
Okay if this is your thesis have you designed it can you give me an overall and I have to have a statement and conclusions he had to present it what is your approach to this

Interviewer:
That's a question that I'm not sure I'm able to answer yet

Interviewee:
Okay you're still designing it are you

Interviewer:
Well, to an extent yeah, well I'm the first person to a thesis like this, everyone else's are very objective almost science like projects. I'm the first person to propose anything that is a work of historical interpretation, everyone is sort of scratching their heads saying this is really important, we need this done but we’re or not sure what to tell you in terms of meeting and a template.

Interviewee:
Yeah, people get so locked into structures and when you start going outside the lines... So, you defied the committee huh
Interviewer:
Well sort of, we've kind of come to the point where I made a whole series of proposals, some of them very specific sort of studies suggesting that I would look really closely at how the work kind of sits within components of eco-revelatory design, and I prepared a whole proposal for that and everybody said no, that's probably too specific and we cannot really be sure that that is fair to look at the work that way. I tend to agree with that critique but that was my best attempt at making the question small and precise; and so, since then everyone is kind of just said let's just interview people and see what they have to say and see if some patterns or trends emerges in terms of their responses and use that to create a sort of characterization of how his works sits within other things that were happening at that time, and in particular why his work with special in the Southeast United States.

Interviewee:
Okay

Interviewer:
So that's still very broad, so I'm going to get to that so what I've been trying to do with these interviews is create a sort of cross-section of Ed's professional career. The hardest part is been finding people that worked with him, with a lot of information about him early in his life. The proposal has always been what Bob suggested, that something happened when he started working at the Crosby which changed the way he works from then on. Yeah so, I'm trying to lay that foundation so I wasn't really sure, without showing what he believed and worked on before the Crosby, it's very hard to make the case that any sort of change happened. If there was some abrupt shift in his thinking.

Interviewee:
He started working in Kentucky, with a very well renowned firm, and when you first start out you sort of do what you're assigned and they have a sort of philosophy for their work and how they do it, and you're just starting the ball game, you're just beginning to form your art form, you're still learning from others and you're observing trying to find your own philosophy. It Doesn't come to you after you've been in school where everyone told you this is this, he went to Wichita and also works for Olinger Smith and won his first national merit award for heritage Park and did lots of extraordinary work there. But when you go to the Crosby Arboretum and as you know most Arboretum and botanical gardens that he went to, they sent him around to visit when they asked him to be the director, part of it was going and listening and looking into observing and getting ideas for structuring the Crosby. Those things had been already there, they were already developed there was already a structure, and a functioning arboretum, and he was starting from scratch from nothing and not many people get that opportunity.
Interviewee:
So, what he said about that when he talks about his Genesis at the studio work this is where the sense of place became important qualities guiding his perception of landscape architecture. He said, pursuing these ideas lead to 13 years of work that changed my life at the Crosby Arboretum in Picayune Mississippi. I listened for, and found my voice. That's exactly the way he described it and when you asked on your general questionnaire to rank his philosophy, thinking and process instead of doing that, I think I'll tell you what to put down. In 1998 he was really into the equinox and observing how light changes with the different equinox, and he designed a philosophy to work at our studio and there are rules of what we went by and what we believed in and the first thing was that you do no harm to the land, you converse and enrich species diversity conserve and enrich water and soil relationships. Allocate the use of appropriate biotechnologies, conserve and enhance the cultural signature of the place, produce the quality of design sought by the top 10% of the client base, enhanced ecology structure and landscape through their design management. So I don't know that a lot of firms and landscape studios even have that kind of concept? That this is what they believe they must do they just do. I can send you a copy of this, but this is how he thought was necessary to perform. Most important for him is what you learn, or begin to, is always a sense of place and that was the history, sustainability, or maintaining or adding to the ecosystem that was already there. Working with native plants, he believed in timeless places. You start, you had the past, and then you went toward the future. It's so encompassing, it's hard for your little ranking thing based upon their importance. Of course, the Crosby was important, but everything that he did, I don't think you can rank it. They are all individually done with all of his heart and soul.

Interviewer:
Right, right

Interviewee:
That makes sense?

Interviewer:
It does, part of the issue, or struggle especially with you, you know his full body of work. These questions were written for professional collaborators on specific projects so to a certain extent they're probably not written very well for this interview. Let me ask you this, do you think that these products that I pulled out for you, do they represent, if we were to trying to make a list of projects that
illustrate his beliefs or his interests most clearly? Do you think these would be the correct projects?

**Interviewee:**
Yeah

**Interviewer:**
Okay because that's what Bob and I were trying to get at when we started choosing projects was a list of seminal works.

**Interviewee:**
And I told Bob when he came in May for the exhibit that the cultural center did of Ed’s work, his painting his photography all of the above. He spoke and I spoke and then we did a bus trip in the Arboretum the next day blah blah blah. But anyway, I told him because I had four years of organizing all these archives and getting ready for the exhibit that I have so much stuff now that needs to go to the collections at the library. I think it might be a good idea if you and Bob could come down soon and you would have an awful lot of information. Because of the folders and the files and the information that you could use, that might give you clarity, that may give you references, help that you're not going to get from some of these people.

**Interviewer:**
Right, right

**Interviewee:**
The collaboration history might not give you enough to information what you want to do. But if you could just come down and get the stuff and take it with you and you go through it and it can go then to library. Stuff on River Camps and the Children’s Art Park in Vicksburg and again it's a whole history. He tried to take the history of the time with the steamboats and that's how the concept of the stacks the steamboat stacks became the art in the fountains, so the kids could run into the water and minerals with the whole history of Vicksburg on it. It's a really beautiful concept, import of course I think another really great thing to study and it's not another one like it is Mississippi Museum of Art in Jackson have you been there?

**Interviewer:**
I have, I was actually just there less than a month ago at the AIA convention we want an award and I was down there picking it up in the little pavilion right there next to the garden.

**Interviewee:**
Oh, okay alright and it changes you know, with the seasons. And everything, the idea of the terracing in his “steel pans” as he liked to call them, that
became important to him. To always, with garden stuff, bringing stuff in high maintenance and it doesn't fit so you know it became important to him for plant restoration for using native plants. That was a major role with Lake Terrace and I see more and more of that going on, in Indianapolis and their downtown for accents and things. It's just smart you know, right there, what you have, the whole genealogy of that plant is right there, and not to bring in stuff that you know it's not sustainable. It's all in involvement you know, one thing starts, and that leads to another, and that means you see it this way. You know it’s just an artistic thing, thats all I can say. That it’s a spiritual as well as physical evolution, that went on with Ed I think.

Interviewer:
Right, right. And there's a certain component of this that I'm trying to develop simultaneously, which is sort of a timeline of all of his projects. And that's something I was hoping you would be able to help me with. Um to chronologically organize all of his work so I can develop a pictorial timeline that would be a component of the thesis, but also my larger aspirations, that this would become a book, that’s a big part of what talking with Robert Ivy about. That this would also become a book, almost a companion book to the Fay Jones book that he did. That is the struggle, to compartmentalizing these things to finish the thesis but also use this to foreground the larger project. So, I'm not sure where that's going to go if there's anything you have it's like that? That outlines just a very basic list, for the thesis what I need is fairly basic information and then I would elaborate on that of course. If you have anything in writing, a sort of logical list of things you did, that would be very helpful to me. Because I would really like to be able to be able to make comparisons between what Ed was doing versus what the status quo landscape architecture was. Because I think it's in that comparison that I can start to illustrate to people why he was so important and why he was a revolutionary thinker, certainly for the region, if not nationally.

Interviewee:
Well you don't have... Bob doesn't have...

Interviewer:
Do you have a list of projects?

Interviewee:
Yeah, you don't have a projects list?

Interviewer:
I do, I just don't know if they're in the proper order, you know chronologically. That's what I think but I'm not a hundred percent certain about and I'm trying to, you know, be able to go into the archives and look up other award-winning projects that were happening nationally. To be able to make the comparisons
between those projects that Ed was doing at the same time that I think would help to make my case

Interviewee:
Yeah, okay well, I have a lot of lists and shoot especially his vita, with all their published writings, publication marks, and ... I'll see if Sally Hughes… Did you interview Sally?

Interviewer:
I did not. No.

Interviewee:
You need to because she was the last one to work with him on stuff. That was more recent and Ashley Norton, you need to talk to her because she worked on the Hundred Acres, and as far as getting something on the projects that you've chosen, the people that you interviewed are not going to really help with that other than Marlon. So, Sally Hughes, she's working with Tom Eve's now, have you talked to Tom Eves?

Interviewer:
No, I don't know that name

Interviewee:
Tom Eves graduated from state, he's a landscape architect here in Hattiesburg. He and Ed worked together and they were really good friends because they were new graduates. Tom graduated a year two, I think after Ed did from Mississippi State. Because you know, it was a brand-new program then. I think he graduated with the second class or something out of that, and Tom soon after and he worked in the Madison Jackson area for a long time but then moved here. Ed gave him a lot of referral work because we did such large projects, smaller projects and stuff we were able to give him a lot of referral work. But sometimes they worked together on things so Tom Eves would be another good person to talk to. Sally has gone to work, she’s sort of independent but she works for Tom because she's good and she got so much from Ed. Her stuff is wonderful, she has all of the stuff from his work, a lot of computer stuff. The project list, I have is from 2005 and then I have things with current projects and stuff but I'll see if there's a project list and she can go in because she has all of his stuff on the computer she has it. She has a lot of its work and stuff, she has just a lot of data.

Interviewer:
Sure, sure.

Interviewee:
Because that computer, I bought and paid for when we switched over. So, a lot of times we pay for her to do things like we have a lot of photos of his work at the Arboretum Memorial and the funeral and took pictures of his projects and put it into a slideshow and just played those things so people can see the visual images of his projects. So, she's a good person to talk to you and if you need her phone number. You know Ashley Morning? She came from Auburn when Ed taught at Auburn as an adjunct professor. When she graduated with her masters in landscape architecture she came to Hattiesburg to work with us and she worked with us for quite a while until she met an attorney and wanted to start having babies. But I could still use her after Ed died, because she could do a lot when I finish the Gordon's Creek for Hattiesburg, which is connecting all the parks and trails together so that we have a parkway bikeway system with Gordon's creek, and I can use her to do consulting work she could do at home and I could use other people to do the paint palette for the plants. And then Sally coordinated all that, so I had to continue on for a couple of years afterwards he died to complete contracts. Like the Columbus project in Columbus Mississippi it’s that soccer Park, have you seen it?

Interviewer:
Yes, I remember when that was being proposed.

Interviewee:
Yeah, that's how he saved that big old Cedar tree, he just would not let that go. And that grove of trees, rather than stripping everything, if you’ve got these big old soccer fields at least you still have these groves of trees were people could go and still find shade. And he didn't try and, you know, rip up everything and just put in soccer fields. He still kept it a park-like thing. So, we saw the journey of course we finish doing the Mississippi Museum Plaza after he died, because he had finished completing that. So anyway, I think you asked the question that you needed someone with the river camps info.

Interviewer:
A little bit of information with River Camps, I did speak with Ted Flato of Lake Flato gave me some things but he didn't know a whole lot he didn't recall much and certainly didn't recall.

Interviewee:
Scott Sanders, just let me read you something here. Ed just loves working with Saint Joe company in Northwest Florida because they pioneered new approaches to wetlands preservation, wildlife protection, and land restoration. And so, they were committed to setting a new standard for land management and environmentally sensitive development. So Yeah! They had all kinds of projects, River camps is just one thing he did for them. They had all kinds and he was a consultant for all of them. They each had their own
staff but he was a consultant for them. Of course, River Camps just really became a reality. [unlike the other projects he consulted on for St. Joe] And after he died, Scott Sanders called us. We were in Washington D.C. he was doing some jury work for ASLA. With Saint Joe and then the recession hit and everything fell apart. And all these wonderful people, that Ed was working with had to go find other jobs. But Scott Sanders became vice president for design and construction of MGM Hospitality in Las Vegas and that's how Ed went to China. He sent me a note, he introduced Ed to the River Camps project and he said, Ed struck me as one of the most mesmerizing and thoughtful people I have ever met. He had this million-year view of every piece of property that we looked at and a profound respect for all of nature. [reading from the note] “You are so right, I never heard of him saying an unkind word about any human being even though he would've been justified at times with our company. Over the years with tramped over thousands of acres together and he could show me something right below my feet that I would never have noticed. He said recently I asked Ed to come to China for the Kung Du project and as usual the clients and consultants from all around the world where amazed at his perspective and insight. He just didn't get it, he couldn't understand he couldn’t understand why? He was very, you know, sometimes he was surprised at the attention he got.

Interviewer:
Uh, huh

Interviewee:
He wasn't egotistical okay. He was such an honest and loving person and he gave everybody the benefit of the doubt. But it says “he did soon realize his honest respect to the land the place and the culture was evident to everyone around him he was a class act and a true gentleman”
So you know, I think the people that he worked with always, and the people around here that he designed the gardens, for Doug and Becky Monticue, he did they're wonderful garden. And Hope McMullin, people here, which was our upper 10% so he could do a magnificent job. With a large fabulous garden for these people’s homes, just big projects were he did wonderful specialist projects. But yeah, you do need to project list I'll ask Sally if she has a more up-to-date project list. And then again, I would have to say, if you and Bob could come down and load up some stuff that that would at least give you some data and files and things that you could go through and you might find some answers to your questions or does that sound...

Interviewer:
Yeah I think so. I spoke with Bob briefly after you made the first donation and we talked about how somebody going through this and starting to catalog it and everything that the university needs and apparently it's typically something that I graduates student what do they would hire a graduate student it would just be
part-time work while they're doing their graduate studies. Which surprised me, I thought it would have more to do with that anyway so now they will find external funding to pay someone to do that. He and I, when we spoke I said that didn't matter to me this would be more about learning.

Interviewee:
I mean, if I have to give you permission to look at the materials and select things that you need I don't think that's going to interfere. Who knows, how long it's going to take them to get that shit organized, they may have great intentions but it's sits there it's sits there it sits there.

Interviewer:
Yeah, they told me it's in 3 to 5 years in terms of the cycle.

Interviewee:
Yeah, right now don't do that stuff. Don't worry, you can take what you need, copy it, researching whatever you need of the information, put it back, and let somebody spend 20 hours a week on it.

Interviewer:
Okay that would make life a lot easier because it's been very challenging just getting access to the contributions that were already made so Bob is just been sort of sifting through it and giving me things that he thought would be useful.

Interviewee:
But I have more things that are useful like River camp stuff I was at the point one time that some things just could go and other things I was using to put in folders to catalog to organize. Just like someone, he would, and this is all the extra those that are still in file and you could just sit down and look and say this is exactly what I'm looking for no I don't need this.

Interviewer:
Well how many boxes what are we talking about here because I have to figure out where to keep it I can store some things in my office but if it's 50 boxes that becomes tricky.

Interviewee:
No, we're not talking thirty - forty boxes or anything like that. Like five boxes and then rolled up design drawings just studio drawings and stuff and products that he did. And they need to go so it's not a lot but every bit of it's very important.

Interviewer:
Right right well let me get with Bob and see about getting an SUV or a pick up so we can get it all you will let me get with Bob and see what he thinks see if there's
a way we can officially give it to the university that would make sense see if he's okay with that or has any problem with that so just to give you a full picture my hope is to finish the degree this spring while they're working on the interviews it's an unbelievable hard to get people on the phone I'll reschedule with Robert Ivy four times I started the interviews I'm going to say in either May or March and it's taken this long to speak to the mall it's just been a very slow process and I need to wrap up I'm trying to get this sorted out with Bob and sexy with a need to see you now be comfortable with and I can move on because my plan is to I'm applying for sabbatical which will kick in and fall 2017 so I have a huge chunk of dedicated time to really plow through at least a rough draft of the book and then of course I'll be working on everything up to that point even with a two wheel you have there that reconcile the play might on a personal schedule and everything it's still a big project to get it all together but that timeline seems reasonable to you in terms of when the material gets donated to the university

**Interviewee:**
That's fine there's no rush I mean because you are using it you're putting it...

Yes

**Interviewer:**
I figured it would get more used with me that it's going to

**Interviewee:**
It's in here you're doing something with it and that's what's important do you want to contact Sally Hughes and Ashley

**Interviewer:**
I may I have Sally let me ask you if this number sounds right she gave me a flash drive when I met her at the dedication and that had a lot of photographs on it which might help that slideshow we were talking and in that I'm looking at right now there was a project list it's dated August 10, 2007 but it only appears to have 10 projects on it so I'm assuming this is only the 2007 project and not everything that the landscapes studio did maybe I'm wrong

**Interviewee:**
Let me see what I have also would you give me your mailing address if I can't email something to at least I can put in an envelope and mail it is that okay

**Interviewer:**
Absolutely yeah. Do you have a pen?

**Interviewee:**
I do
The University address is school of architecture 899 college view Street PO B AQ Mississippi State Mississippi 39762.
I meant for Sally… I have a couple numbers for.. Her home number I have 601-408-5627

Interviewee:
Okay Sally's number is you had a 601 number 408 567

Interviewer:
I do yeah. Is that the number?

Interviewee:
Yeah that's her cell phone because you can be sure even at work are you interested in talking to Tom eves at all?

Interviewer:
It's possible, so

Interviewee:
Let me get the number for you

Interviewer:
And I can clarify a little bit better why what these questionnaires are about for you to the idea that Bob and I had was basically that the project is going to be I would speak to everybody and try to develop a set of principles that we believe that it followed the course since then we found the stuff that you've donated there's an notebook entry that basically says these are my principles and he wrote them out very clearly in between that and the things you told me right at the beginning that he had written down I think we have that with the interviews and his collaborators to validate certain elements of the principles through the different projects that they undertook think that for this coming together pretty clearly at least for the thesis project and what I may need to do is interview a few more people to kind of cooperate maybe one or two of those principles that it is maybe laid out

Interviewee:
And talking to Larry Albert would be...

Interviewer:
Would be one of those people

Interviewee:
Because Ed he's never had a partner like that that has challenged him and if it wasn't for Larry starting this Lake Terrace convention Center and they had hired a firm of Texas and they have the convention center looking
straight and the ugly highway 49 and the congestion and it kept sort of looking at what they are he was doing any thought about it and he sort of went over it and then all of a sudden Ed and him are doing it end the firm in Texas is gone he loves Ed Blake that's why I would like you to listen to that DVD that Bob passed because Larry is on there and he said I've never had anybody just challenge me he said he would drop things from New York Times after Sunday morning because I am always the first person to work but no it Blake would beat me to work this bond was so strong and they collaborated on the convention center and Tom Eves, longtime friend and collaborator, so if you need one more I can give you his cell phone number he was a landscape architect he's the one that we have now and people go oh God I wish Ed was here but anyway his is 601-606-0089 two you want his email?

Interviewer:
Sure

Interviewee:
Okay that's good. Tom@landarchgroup.net

Interviewer:
What I Think is most critical for me is if you can identify for me the key collaborators on these projects that I've outlined which is what I was trying to do is hundred acre speaking with Marlon and then....

Interviewee:
Okay but what about you haven't talked to Mark's Thelonious though

Interviewer:
No

Interviewee:
Who is one of the directors there you know they would have all of these sure rents and meetings and stuff and Mark is a good person to talk to also

Interviewer:
That’s M-A-R-K...

Interviewee:
And also he's on the DVD he came from Indianapolis his first trip to Mississippi he landed in Jackson and the first thing he did was talk to Betsy the museum director at Mississippi Museum of Art and she pulled out the plans and showed him it's Art Park any get to see the plans for that and then he went to Laurel Mississippi to see some work that Ed had done with Mike Michael Jeffcoat and is wonderful card and that he is in the book you know
they did a book where they took the most outstanding architects in the United States one from each state and do this book with them and then they did landscape architects and Ed was chosen in Mississippi to be in the book and those were three private gardens that he did so he went there and studied that and then he came here and he also spoke at this um... And he's a wonderful person to talk to

Interviewer:
I was going to say I know about that book but I have not been able to track down a copy of it out here on campus

Interviewee:
Really? We'll have a copy of the book if you come here and pick up the stuff. Bob doesn't have a copy?

Interviewer:
Hmm... I feel like I asked him about it. I know I looked online and did a bunch of research about what was going on the 80s and I know I came across that book because I did a literature review and it was popping out that he was named in journals and books and anything like that I feel like that's where I came across it but I knew he didn't have a copy in our university library and I don't think I was able to buy a copy on Amazon or anything like that

Interviewee:
Its leading residential landscape professionals is the name of it

Interviewer:
Let's see I'll check it leading...

Interviewee:
It was done like 2000...

Interviewer:
The perfect home August 1, 2006 does that sound right?

Interviewee:
Yeah that sounds right

Interviewer:
There's a used copy on sale on Amazon that's what I'm Finding and first it's not volume two its volume 1?

Interviewee:
I think so I don't know about volume 2 doesn't say
Interviewer:
What does the cover look like it's their pool?

Interviewee:
There are some lawn chairs and a pergola in the back

Interviewer:
Yeah that's it they have a used copy and about right now

Interviewee:
Computers froze up so I will just email you marks contact alright is there anything else also excited about the DVD for that Alabama... Let's see that would've been 2009 note 2010 down on the coast and he did a chronological timeline on the history of landscape architecture

Interviewer:
Right I've got that and I'm going to ask sodic and Bob to see that and I know the folks from unabridged architecture they're actually on the board with me John is anyway Anderson did they do a number of projects together or...

Interviewee:
Yeah, they did all... Whole Street... That Ed...

Interviewer:
Sorry you are breaking up are you still there

Interviewee:
Can you hear me?

Interviewer:
Yeah I can hear you now

Interviewee:
He also designed rheim...

Interviewer:
Somebody's dialing

Interviewee:
Yeah, I don't know what's going on let me see

Interviewer:
It stopped

Interviewee:
He also designed a green parking garage they sent me pictures afterwards and they said the greenroom already had stuff growing on it and I think it was making it grow but it was a very interesting parking garage that they designed and it had already won an award and what was neat about this parking garage is that they could build the convention center on top of it and then people could drive up park take an elevator and go up into the convention center and they already I think the convention center but when we go first check is to see his doctors and stuff we would always go to Bay St. Louis and check out how the projects were going and the city and look at the trees that were being planted so they're also on that memorial DVD but afterwards when they were doing little interviews with the crowd Interviewer: Okay interesting well that would be great I look forward to seeing so I think I have in terms of other people to talk to is there someone else with regards to river camps that I should talk to other than Ted Flato

Interviewee:
Yeah, I don't even play into that I don't know why Scott Sanders and he was in MGM now you know MGM entertainment but they go all over and build hotels and things and this is a vacation city. Now at the middle class in China is evolving they have money to go on vacation so, then Chinese thought well you know.

Interviewer:
Still there? Hello? Hello? Hello?
Phone connection lost.
Interview ended as questionnaire had ceased being discussed.
Edward Blake Jr. 2009 Curriculum Vitae

Edward L. Blake, Jr. ASLA
Founding Principal and Landscape Architect

The Landscape Studio
Landscape Architects LLC

Registration:
- CLAIBB Certification No. 6148
- State of Mississippi No. 184
- State of Alabama No. 467
- State of Arkansas No. 225
- State of Kansas No. 183
- Commonwealth of Kentucky No. 191
- State of Indiana No. 20700598
- State of Louisiana No. 03-0387
- State of South Carolina No. 791
- State of Texas No. 1941

Education:
- Jackson, Mississippi public schools 1953-1965
- Walters, Bailey, and Muresh
- Mississippi State University 1966-1970
  - Bachelor of Landscape Architecture
  - Alpha Zeta Honorary Fraternity; Graduated in top 9% of student body

Experience:
- The Landscape Studio Landscape Architecture LLC 1999-present
  - Master Planning, Land Planning, Site Planning, Sustainable Design,
    Fine Garden Design, Historical Landscape Planning and Design,
    Waterland Planning and Design, Parr Community Mosaic Mapping
  - The Landscape Studio Edward L. Blake, Jr. 1994-1998
    - My regionally oriented landscape architectural practice, a sole proprietorship, Hattiesburg, MS.
  - Graduate School of Design, Harvard University 1994-Fall
    - Visiting Design Critic; I taught an Option Studio to graduate students of architecture, urban design, and landscape architecture.
  - The Crosby Arboretum 1994-1999
    - Executive Director; I directed the planning, design, and development of Picnicote, the Arboretum’s 64-acre interpretive center at Picayune, MS.
  - The SunHouse 1979-1984
    - Sole Proprietor; My landscape architectural consulting practice undertaken as an adjunct to teaching, Starkville, MS.
  - Mississippi State University 1977-1984
    - Instructor, Department of Landscape Architecture; I taught courses in design and theory, construction methods and design presentation methods.
  - Planning Development Services 1990-Summer
  - Registered Landscape Architectural Consultant 1979-Summer
  - Working in Jubba, Saudi Arabia, for six weeks, I was responsible for designing plantings, irrigation, and site amenities for worker village housing.
  - Working in Lincoln, Nebraska, for two weeks, I was responsible for assisting business owners prepare site plans and budgets for re-building their businesses in the aftermath of a tornado.
  - Oblinger-Smith Corporation 1973-1977
    - Registered Landscape Architect, A. Wichita, KS interdisciplinary consulting corporation specializing in urban planning, architecture, and landscape architecture. I was responsible for the planning, design and construction management of public works.
  - Jack P. Dolbeer Associates, Inc. 1973
    - Graduate Intern Landscape Architect, Wichita, KS based developer, designer, and assemblers of component built, multi-family housing produced for the southwestern and southeastern United States. I was responsible for site planning and design.
Edward L. Blake, Jr. ASLA
Founding Principal and Landscape Architect (continued)

Miller, Wphy, and Lee, Inc. 1970-1972
Registered Landscape Architect, Graduate Intern Landscape Architect
A Louisville, KY, interdisciplinary consulting corporation offering civil engineering and landscape architectural services for land planning and development. I was responsible for land planning and design, and project planning and design. While in college, I worked as a student intern during the summers of 1968 and 1969.

Foreign Travel: Canada 1975
Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Holland 1977
Italy, Greece, Saudi Arabia 1979
Hawaii 1986
Austria 1999
French Garden Study Tour 2000
Mexico 2001
Italian Garden Study Tour 2002
Paris and Pontlevay, France 2002
Portugal and Spain Garden Study Tour 2003
Denmark, Sweden, and Paris Garden Study Tour 2004
Brazil Garden Study Tour, particularly Butte Mans gardens 2005
Northern Italy Garden Study Tour 2006
San Francisco Gardens of Thomas Church 2007

Recognition: Most Outstanding Alumni Member of the Year Award 2008
Outstanding dedication, service, and leadership contributions to the profession of landscape architecture and the department. 2007-2008 Academic Year, Department of Landscape Architecture, Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS

Honor Award 2000, 2002
Awarded by the Mississippi Chapter, American Society of Landscape Architects for excellence in land planning. Collaboration with Rotera Poore and Michael Van Valkenborg, Tishomingo South, Hinds County, MS

Centennial Medallion Award 1999
To commemorate their 100th anniversary, the American Society of Landscape Architects recognized significant works of landscape architecture in places of the heart across America. The Crosby Arboretum, Picayune, MS

Lake Ternos Convention Center, Hattiesburg, MS

The design drawings for Butte Mans garden. The design of its garden and exhibits gravitating landscape architectural work that rework the perceptions ecologists share, and relationships University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Department of Landscape Architecture, Open in Champaign, IL October 1968, and exhibited in Boston, MA, September 1999,


Alfred B. LaGasse Medal 1994
The award recognizes individuals who, through professional practice or publication of landscape architecture, have made notable contributions to the management of natural resources, the management of public lands, or the management of other lands in the public interest. Presented by the Landscape Architecture Foundation, American Society of Landscape Architects Annual Meeting, San Antonio, TX

Design of Public Space Award 1992
Presented to The Crosby Arboretum for excellence in the planning and design of Picayune, The Crosby Arboretum's 65-acre Interpretative Center at Picayune, MS. Governor's Awards for Excellence in the Arts Mississippi Arts Commission, Old Capitol Museum, Jackson, MS
Edward L. Blake, Jr. ASLA
Founding Principal and Landscape Architect (continued)

Honor Award 1991
For excellence in the planning and design of Pinnebog, The Crosby Arboretum. Presented by the American Society of Landscape Architects National Awards Meeting, Kansas City, KS

Outstanding Alumnus 1990
I am one of three graduates having been recognized for personal achievement and contributions to landscape architecture, 25th Anniversary Celebration, Department of Landscape Architecture Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS

Merit Award 1980
For planning and design of the Arkansas River Corridor, Wichita, KS, as a multi-modal greenway. I was a member of the design team for Oblinger-Smith Corporation, National Design Awards, American Society of Landscape Architects

Merit Award 1979
For the design of Heritage Square, a one-quarter acre historical urban park in downtown Wichita, KS. I was the design team leader for Oblinger-Smith Corporation, National Design Awards, American Society of Landscape Architects

Affiliations: American Society of Landscape Architects 1970-present
National Design Student Awards Juror 2009
Visionary Design Awards Juror 1999
National Design Awards Juror 1997
President, Mississippi Chapter 1995-1997
Program Accreditation Team Member
University of Wisconsin, Madison 2007
State University of New York 2005
West Virginia University 2005
Colorado State University 2004
Ohio State University 2003
University of Illinois 2002
Texas Tech University 2001
University of Georgia 2000
University of Arkansas 1999
University of Maryland 1998
University of Washington 1997

Visiting Design Critic
Mississippi State University 2008
University of Arkansas 2005
Auburn University 2001
University of Arkansas at Mexico City 2001
University of Arkansas 2000
Harvard's Graduate School of Design 1999
Louisiana State University 1999
Iowa State University 1997
Auburn University 1997
Mississippi State University 1996
Harvard's Graduate School of Design 1994

Architectural Fellowship Juror
McKee Fellowship 2004
American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta 1991
Hosted Southeastern Regional Meeting 1991
The Crosby Arboretum

The Crosby Arboretum
Member, Board of Directors 1998-present
Chair, Capital Committee 1998-present

Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture
Keynote speaker and one of hosts 1994
National Meeting at Long Beach, MS
Edward L. Blake, Jr. ASLA
Founding Principal and Landscape Architect (continued)

- Eudora Welty Garden Advisory Committee 1995
- Hattiesburg Downtown Association 1995-present
  - Chair, Design Committee 2000-2001
  - President 1998-1999
  - Vice-President 1997-1998
  - Chair, Enhancements Committee 1996-1998

- Society of Ecological Restoration 1994-present
  - President 1997-1998
  - Vice-president 1995-1996

- Callaway Gardens Horticultural Advisory Board 1993-1995
  - Member, Board of Directors

- Library of American Landscape History 2005-present
  - Member, Advisory Board

- Cultural Landscape Foundation 2005-present
- Mayor's Green Initiative Committee, Hattiesburg, MS 2008

Speaking Engagements:

- The Quality of Life Summit 2009
- Place-Making: Transforming Ordinary into Extraordinary
- Celebrating the Power of a Beautiful Place
- Area Development Partners, Lake Terrace Convention Center
- Hattiesburg, MS

- Mississippi Urban Forest Council 2008
- Going Green: Green Infrastructure, Hattiesburg, MS

- Cullowhee Annual Native Plant Conference 2007
- Keynote Speaker, Western Carolina University, NC

- Annual Meeting, American Institute of Architects 2007
- San Antonio, TX

- Horticultural Society, Indianapolis Museum of Art 2007
- Indianapolis, Indiana

- Hattiesburg Arts Council 2006
- Luncheon and Lecture Series
- Landscape’s Architecture: Signatures of Time and Place

- Southern Gardens Symposium 2005
- Center for the Study of Southern Culture
  - The University of Mississippi

- Texas chapter ASLA 2005
- Annual Meeting, Austin, TX

- Colorado College 2004
- Landscape and the Built Environment Series

- Society of Ecological Restoration 2004
- Annual International Conference, Victoria, British Columbia

- Studio in the Woods 2004
- New Orleans, LA

- University of Oregon 2004
- HOPES Conference

- Tulane University School of Architecture 2003
  - A Studio in the Woods Workshop

- Abbey of Portimay 2002
- European Landscape Education Exchange, Portimay, France

- Mississippi State University 2002
- Department of Landscape Architecture

- Oklahoma State University 2001
- Landscape Architecture Program

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Edward L. Blake, Jr. ASLA
Founding Principal and Landscape Architect (continued)

Auburn University
School of Architecture 2001
American Society of Landscape Architects
National Convention, Montreal, Canada 2001
University of Arkansas School of Architecture
Spring Graduation Commencement Speaker 2001
American Institute of Architects
National Convention, Denver, Colorado 2001
Villanova University
Connecticut College Arboretum 2000
Harvard University
Graduate School of Design 1999
University of Arkansas
Department of Landscape Architecture 1999
Louisiana State University
College of Design 1999
Auburn University
School of Architecture 1998
Iowa State University
College of Design 1996
California State Polytechnic University
College of Environmental Design 1995
Mississippi State University
Department of Landscape Architecture 1994
University of Georgia
School of Environmental Design 1994
Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture
National Meeting at Pass Christian, MS 1994
University of Western North Carolina
Cullowhee Native Plant Conference 1994
Mississippi State University
School of Architecture 1990
Louisiana State University
National Council of Garden Clubs Annual Meeting 1989
American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta
Annual Meeting presentation of The Crosby Arboretum 1985

Community Service and Sponsorship:
Pinecote Interpretive Exhibits 2006
MSU Department of Landscape Architecture
The Crosby Arboretum, Picayune, MS
Mississippi State University Design Week 2006
Highway 49 Corridor Study from Hattiesburg to Gulfport
MSU Department of Landscape Architecture
Governor’s Forum on Recovery and Renewal 2005
Hurricane Katrina Planning Charette, Biloxi, MS

Exhibits of Work:
12Q24 2008
Exhibit of The Landscape Studio’s Work
School of Architecture Gallery, Department of Landscape Architecture, Mississippi State University
Musings: Sketchbooks 2002
Second Floor Contemporary, Memphis, TN
Eco-Revelatory Design: Lake Terrace Convention Center 1999
University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana
The Boston Architectural Center, Chicago Botanical Garden
The National Building Museum
Edward L. Blake, Jr., ASLA
Founding Principal and Landscape Architect (continued)

Publications Featuring Work:
Guides to Careers in Design: Becoming a Landscape Architect 2009
Kellein; Foster; John Wiley and Sons, Inc
Public Garden 2008
Placing Nature as Art Park
100 Acres: Virginia B. Folsom Art and Nature Park
Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indiana
Architectural Record 2007
100 Acres: Virginia B. Folsom Art and Nature Park
Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indiana
Leading Residential Landscape Professionals 2006
Sandow Media
Mans with a Plan 2006
Profile of Landscape Architect Ed Blake
Hattiesburg American: 11.12.36
Weathering and Durability in Landscape Architecture: 2004
Fundamentals, Practices, and Case Studies; Noll Kirkwood
My Mississippi 2000
Willie Morris
100 Years of Landscape Architecture 1999
American Society of Landscape Architects
Melanie Simo’s Essay on Pinescote
The Once and Future Forest 1998
Leslie Jones Saer, author
Pinecote photography by Ed Blake
Landscape Architecture: Third Addition 1997
John Ormsbee Simonds, author
Pinecote aerial photography by Ed Blake
Ecological Design and Planning 1997
George F. Thompson, Frederick R. Steiner, editors
Pinecote photography by Ed Blake
Fay Jones 1992
Robert A. Ivy, Jr., author; Pinecote photography by Ed Blake
Modern Landscape Architecture: Redefining the Garden 1991
Jory Johnson and Felicia Frankel

Published Writing:
Public Garden 2008
Placing Nature as Art Park: Genesis of a Landscape’s Architecture
The Spiritual Gardener 1997
Nature Conscious of Itself
National Council of State Garden Clubs 1996
Development of Landscape Architecture to 1840
The Crosby Arboretum Foundation 1994
Chisholm Foundation
Pinecote Master Plan
Director’s Notebook
500 Word Essays By Ed Blake
The Crosby Arboretum Foundation 1988
Mississippi Committee for the Humanities
A Story of Man and the Land