

ORAL HISTORY OF BRIGITTE PETERHANS

Interviewed by Betty J. Blum

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## PREFACE

Born and raised in Germany, Brigitte Peterhans following the advice of an American friend she met in a laundry room in a youth hostel in Zurich, came to Chicago in 1957 to IIT to study architecture. This pivotal and defining meeting led to a lifetime of shared interests and friendship between Myron Goldsmith and Brigitte Peterhans and was the subject of the eulogy that she delivered at Myron Goldsmith's memorial in 1996. Of that consequential meeting Brigitte recalls, "Myron had a box of slides; first construction photos of the Farnsworth House and of 860/880... I was flabbergasted, not to say dumbfounded by all this; it was like a glimpse into a new world." Myron told me to come to Chicago to study with Mies and how to get there with a Fulbright scholarship." That advice shaped the direction of Brigitte's life because in 1957 she came to study at IIT with Mies. While still a student, Brigitte was lucky to get a part-time job at SOM in the interiors department where she quickly and solidly connected with Bruce Graham and his wife Jane and where, during her years at Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, she almost always worked with Graham on his award-winning projects. Intermittently, from 1964-1968, Brigitte traveled to Germany for family and professional reasons but in 1968 returned to SOM where she remained until she retired in 1990.

Brigitte's interesting story begins with her war-time experience in war-torn Germany, meeting Myron Goldsmith and the influence he had on the direction of her career, studying architecture in Germany, as well as in Chicago at IIT with Mies, her work and colleagues at SOM, her strong ties to her family and Germany. These are some of the highlights that Brigitte explores in her unique narrative presented in her usual lively way.

Brigitte and I met at her home in Chicago on December 19, 20, 24, 26, 2007 where we tape-recorded six hours of her recollections on 4 ninety-minute cassettes. The transcription has been carefully reviewed for clarity and accuracy, and has been edited to maintain the spirit, tone and flow of Brigitte's original narrative. Some passages Brigitte has expanded and enriched with more detail and color. Books and articles that I found helpful in preparation for this oral history are appended to the document, as is the eulogy prepared and delivered

by Brigitte at Myron Goldsmith's memorial in 1996. This oral history is available for study in the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries at The Art Institute of Chicago, as well as in a downloadable version from the Chicago Architects Oral History Project web page: [https://198.40.30.177:8443/cdm4/index\\_findingaids.php?CISOROOT=/findingaids](https://198.40.30.177:8443/cdm4/index_findingaids.php?CISOROOT=/findingaids).

Thanks go to many people in the preparation and completion of this oral history. My sincere appreciation goes to Brigitte Peterhans for her willingness to share her memories of colleagues and friends, events and issues with candor and thoughtful recall. To those at SOM who generously supported Peterhans' oral history, we are grateful, especially Craig Hartman, who has been our liaison throughout this undertaking.

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Betty J. Blum  
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BRIGITTE PETERHANS

BLUM: In Brigitte's own words, she says, "It is through Myron Goldsmith that I came to America, to Chicago, and to IIT." These were thoughts that she expressed in an essay she wrote for Myron Goldsmith's memorial service in 1996 at IIT.

PETERHANS: Yes, an essay, which I think I would actually like to have at the beginning of my oral history.

BLUM: We can add it as an appendix [pp. 217-18].

PETERHANS: I think it would be nice, because it's—it sort of gives my relation to my family, and to everything.

BLUM: Okay. Today is December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007. And I am with Brigitte Peterhans, in her home in Chicago, fittingly, in a Mies van der Rohe building.

PETERHANS: And here is a Mies van der Rohe chair and table. An original, from Berlin. And the low square wood table too is also by Mies. The chair is an original Tugendhat... It's not stainless steel, it's chrome-plated. And the day bed. But you don't need to record all of this.

BLUM: Well, this is more than appropriate to have all this Mies-inspired, and Mies-designed furniture.



PETERHANS: Yes, and it was Peterhans who brought them here from Berlin in 1937.

BLUM: Brigitte studied architecture at the University of Stuttgart and at IIT [Illinois Institute of Technology] in Chicago, where she earned her master's under Mies van der Rohe. After striking out on her own, Brigitte worked for five years on various projects in Germany. And in 1968, was hired by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill in Chicago, to do interior design.

PETERHANS: No, that's not true. I was first hired by SOM when I was a student in the summer of 1959.

BLUM: Let's backtrack to that.

PETERHANS: It was 1958, actually. And I was hired again later by Bruce Graham for architecture, not for interiors. I was in interiors only for—actually, I stopped even interiors before I went back to Germany. I was in interiors only from 1958 to 1959 and again from late 1959 to 1960, with interruptions.

BLUM: Was this while you were still a student?

PETERHANS: While I was a student I was working part-time at SOM. And then after this, after I did my master's, I worked in architecture at SOM.

BLUM: Then you were with SOM off and on for about twenty-two years. And most of the projects you worked on were Bruce Graham designed projects in both the United States and international.

PETERHANS: Right. I only worked with Bruce Graham and for a short time with Myron Goldsmith.

BLUM: You say you worked only with Bruce?

PETERHANS: I worked for a short time in the beginning with David Haid and with Myron Goldsmith, but then I basically only worked with Bruce Graham. Contrary to most people, I got along with him very well in spite of many fights, as you can read in his oral history.

BLUM: Brigitte, this is your story, told in your own words, and that is what we're here today to record. It would be helpful to understand how your career took shape, if we go back as far as possible. Brigitte, you were born in 1928, in...

PETERHANS: Sulz am Neckar. S-U-L-Z, am, A-M, Neckar. It's a medium-size river, which is the same river on which also Heidelberg is located, down the river before it enters the Rhine. Sulz is located in the Black Forest, far up-river.

BLUM: What did your father do?

PETERHANS: He was a parson, a preacher. A Lutheran. It was his first position and I was his first child.

BLUM: I see. And your mother?

PETERHANS: Housewife. She wanted to be a doctor, but in the poor years after World War I she became a nurse in a Stuttgart hospital. In my family up to Martin Luther, in my father's family, every oldest boy became a parson. And one of my brothers still is.

BLUM: How did you, as the next generation from this family of many parsons, wind up in architecture?

PETERHANS: My father always loved architecture. And he became the director of a big mental institution in Germany. And he built a lot of new buildings there.

BLUM: Did he hire architects?

PETERHANS: Yes, he hired architects and some of the architects became friends of his. He was always very involved in the buildings. And I was kind of always watching this, being his oldest.

BLUM: How old were you when this was all taking place?

PETERHANS: Well this was before the World War II and again after the war. I had four younger brothers, one of which became an engineer.

BLUM: He is very well-known.

PETERHANS: He became an engineer, because I told him he shouldn't become an architect. He wanted to become an architect, but I told him he should not. He's a very good mathematician and thanks me to his day that I pushed him towards engineering.

BLUM: And his name?

PETERHANS: Joerg Schlaich.

BLUM: And he became an engineer, a well-known engineer.

PETERHANS: Right. He's very well-known. Some people in Chicago, like Bill Baker, said to me that he thinks Joerg is the best engineer in the world. I'm not sure he meant it 100%.

BLUM: Well some of his projects have been...

PETERHANS: Well, he's no Calatrava. He's a very rational person. And so his big idea is he wants to change the world.

BLUM: He does?

PETERHANS: Well yes. This is the title of a little brochure, which I thought was one of his best lectures, so I translated it into English. So anyhow, I have four brothers. And we went through some problems in the war. We were bombed out completely.

BLUM: Your town?

PETERHANS: In 1942 we were thrown out of the mental hospital where my father worked because it was closed down by the Nazis after they had put away a certain amount of patients as *Lebensunwertes* (worthless life). My father was in the war from the first day, actually, before the war started, he was drafted. He was first in France, then in Russia and at the end of the war in Italy. So we were kicked out of where we lived in 1942 and moved to a town, Heilbronn, where my grandparents lived and found us an apartment. Then in December of 1944 Heilbronn was completely destroyed by an air raid during which I am supposed to have saved my family.

BLUM: How so?

PETERHANS: Well, that's a long story. But, you know, it's too complicated to tell. But I sort of think I did because I was older I was in charge. I was fifteen years old, so I knew what was happening and knew how to escape the fire.

BLUM: As you were growing up, when you were a child, did you like to draw? Did you play with erector sets? What were your preferences in toys or pastimes?

PETERHANS: Well I liked... We didn't have any good drawing classes, or anything. But yes, I did make little drawings. But mainly I made little fantasy worlds. I built little landscapes in which my little dolls were located, with little houses. I built more things than I drew. I still am not a very good draftsman today.

BLUM: So do you believe what the title of your brother's book proposes, *We Can Change the World*?

PETERHANS: Yes. But it's not a book, it was a lecture that I liked and translated into English and his office made this little brochure of it. It's about his most important idea: a solar energy tower that has the capacity and efficiency of a nuclear energy plant, yet without any environmental disadvantages.

BLUM: So, as a child, were you practicing what he was talking about?

PETERHANS: Well, not really. Joerg is six years younger than I and I was just making fantasy things. I would, you know, just invent things for a story, for which I would dress up my four little brothers as princes and princesses. All my brothers would have to stand still and they were at my mercy. I

was spoiled by my mother and even more by my grandmothers, being their very first grandchild. I adored them both and visited with them very often. But when the war began we were completely bombed out one night and had nothing except for what we had on our bodies. My father was in Russia, my mother was not a very healthy woman and my brothers were children. And so I had to be the one in charge. We moved to a very remote countryside where relatives took us in and we lived in very poor circumstances until after the war. I had missed a lot of schooling in the last years of the war. But a few months after the war, my father was still a POW in Italy, I heard about a boarding school opening not too far away from where we were. I borrowed a bike to investigate, it's an eight-hour ride each way. I told my mother I want to go and for some lucky reason, I managed to go there. And it was fabulous. I found out that the school that had been a Nazi school had now again had been taken over by the Protestant church and that a friend of my father's would be the director. It was a school, a very liberal school, it was a boy and girl boarding school.

BLUM: And where was that school located?

PETERHANS: It was near Ulm. It was also in the countryside in Germany. Very remote in a monastery named Urspring (pure well) and beautifully located in a remote valley with nothing but meadows, forests and mountains around. So it was run as a very progressive school with small classes and all the

freedom one could think of. For instance, when we had tests, the teacher left the room. You were left to your honesty.

BLUM: Was this an honor code system?

PETERHANS: Yes. And boys and girls were left completely alone. We lived in separate buildings very frugally, often four or five to a room. But other than lessons we could do whatever we wanted to do.

BLUM: Was that unusual?

PETERHANS: Well, it couldn't happen here. When I came to Chicago, and I was almost eight years older, I was caught by the dean at IIT with men in my room.

BLUM: Was that against the rules of the house?

PETERHANS: Right. I was a twenty-five, twenty-six year old student here, a graduate student with a Fulbright, and I was caught by the dean of women with my roommate, who was a Japanese girl. She told us that she has been informed that we were receiving boys in our apartment after dark. That was in 1957.

BLUM: And you must have thought that was rather regressive after attending a progressive school where you...



PETERHANS: I thought it was ridiculous. The men visitors were student friends. We were working together.

BLUM: When you spotted this progressive school in Germany, was it a school that you thought would be good not only for yourself, but for your brothers, as well?

PETERHANS: I took one of my brothers with me.

BLUM: And his name is?

PETERHANS: Joerg [Schlaich], my favorite brother. But he was too young, only nine years old. He could not stand being away from home. So he only stayed for three or four months.

BLUM: But you stayed on?

PETERHANS: Almost two years. My father made me jump a class, because, this is interesting, I think. One day I was called to the [office of the] director of the school, and he said, "I have a letter from your father," whom he knew, "who says that he wants you to jump a class. He wants you to study, to go to a university, to become a professional because he thinks that you are of an age that you may not find a husband."

BLUM: How old were you then?

PETERHANS: I was, at that time, seventeen. And my father explained that to me later—he had three sisters who lost their fiancés in World War I, and never married again. And they didn't have a proper education. They had some, you know, they were smart girls, but... And so he said in the letter, "I have four more sons. And I want her to be out of the way, education-wise, when they come up. Financially, I won't be able to handle it all at the same time. So I want her to jump a class, so she's finished sooner, and she can go and choose what she wants to do because she may not find a husband. Because the men—the eligible men for her have mostly died in the war." You know, they were all young officers, and a huge percentage died.

BLUM: There was probably some merit to what he said.

PETERHANS: It was true. So I had to jump a class. And I jumped the class, and then he got very involved in what I should become. I had no idea myself. Except I had a friend in the same school whose father was a famous interior architect and professor, Gustav Stoltz. Much later I learned that he was a friend of Mies's. And with him, I looked at magazines and books he had from his father, and we'd talk about design. So I said I wanted to be an interior designer.

BLUM: How did you come to that decision?

PETERHANS: Well, because of my friend in Urspring. He too was going to be an interior designer, like his father. But when I was back to where my parents lived, back to the mental institution near Stuttgart, my father wasn't so sure this was a good job, a good profession for me.

BLUM: How was that difference resolved?

PETERHANS: So, he took me around. My father was a very modern man. He took me around and showed me possibilities. Like he took me to the main library in Stuttgart, where another of his friends was the director. And they showed me around this huge library. Would I want to be a librarian because I liked to read? Well, I didn't. Then it was some other things he tried on me. And finally, he said, Well, I have now investigated interior design. I went to Professor Schneck, Adolf Schneck, who was also a famous architect and interior designer, who did some famous furniture, and who also was a friend of his. And he said he has two daughters. One is an interior designer; and one is an architect who also does interior design. But he thinks you have to study architecture to be a really good interior designer. So he said to me, "So, if you want to stick with interior design, you have to first study architecture."

BLUM: Did you agree?

PETERHANS: Well, I didn't. I was scared. I had no idea. So he made me go find out all about it by myself. I went to the university, to the architecture

department, and I still had my braids hanging down, about two feet long—and the guy looked at me, and said, “Did you do the exam?” In Germany we have this *abitur*, you know. When you are eighteen you have to make a big exam completing high school, somewhat like the French *baccalaureat*.

BLUM: And if you pass the exam?

PETERHANS: You have to pass that to be eligible for the university. At this time, after the war when all the universities were bombed entry numbers to universities were very restricted. You had to have excellent grades. So he asked me, “Do you have an *abitur*?” And I said, “Yes.” He looked at my braids. “Are you sure? How old are you? How did you pass it?” So I went straight home, and had my braids cut off.

BLUM: Oh. Just to prove you were old enough?

PETERHANS: Right. So, and then I was accepted, but then there were more fantastic restrictions. You had to first work for half a year on the reconstruction of the university and this before your entry exam, just to show your dedication. So I worked on the building site making...

BLUM: You mean reconstructing the bombed university buildings?

PETERHANS: Yes. We worked outdoors, in the coldest winter, doing heavy labor, making pre-cast concrete pieces, all of this by hand. We had to tear down the damaged walls, pull out the reusable bricks, clean them, etc. And then we had to spend a half year in a building related shop, either a carpenter or furniture, or whatever. I had to do that too, where I learned a lot. And then you had to pass two entry exams. They tried to keep as many as possible young students back because besides most universities being bombed there were all these men who had been in the war and had missed up to five years. Even in Urspring, in my high school, we had two ex-soldiers in our class. They had been officers and both highly decorated for bravery, and now had to sit in class with us young kids. They couldn't take it. They would smoke non-stop and were unable to sit still. They'd keep getting up and running out for their smokes. It was very upsetting.

BLUM: Now this was in high school. Was that the equivalent to American high schools?

PETERHANS: Yes, more or less.

BLUM: Which would be like the ninth through the twelfth grade?

PETERHANS: Yes, but it includes college courses like several languages and high math and physics. It goes until you are eighteen or nineteen years old.

BLUM: I see. What grade level did all these exams and the work you did, prepare you for?

PETERHANS: Well that was afterwards. After I decided to become an architect, I had to make an entry exam. After I had been working six months on the construction site.

BLUM: And how old were you then?

PETERHANS: I was, by that time, nineteen. After that I had to still work in a carpentry shop. I worked in a woodworking shop for, I think, half a year. I forget. So by the time I entered the university finally—I had to do another exam.

BLUM: To get into the University of Stuttgart?

PETERHANS: Yes. This time to become an architect. You know, first it was general intelligence exam; second, it was architectural intelligence. After you passed that, then you were accepted. So I was almost twenty or I was twenty.

BLUM: Twenty. Did you have a lot of competition to get a place to study at the university?

PETERHANS: Yes. And it was mostly men. There were only a very small amount of girls in architecture, at that time. Not like now. But this was the same, I

think, anywhere in the world. And in post-war Germany there were lots of boys who were former soldiers, officers mostly.

BLUM: So you were in a really mixed group.

PETERHANS: Yes. Ages twenty to twenty-eight. So finally I entered the University of Stuttgart.

BLUM: Why the University of Stuttgart?

PETERHANS: Well, my father also said, "If you want to study, you have to live at home. I can't afford to..."

BLUM: For financial reasons?

PETERHANS: Right. I had to commute every day by bicycle, sixteen miles in hilly terrain or depending on the weather, by train. "And you have to still help your mother, because we cannot afford any more a maid." So I had to always live at home. "And you will not be able to go to a second university, which your brothers, of course, will, because it's important for their careers." He always made this point. Because he had studied in Berlin and in England. "But you have to stay at home. Study and do the whole thing at the same university, living at home, helping your mother. Later without having to support a family, you'll always manage."

BLUM: Were you satisfied with that?

PETERHANS: Well I saw the point, you know. I mean, we were not spoiled. But it was a little difficult. For instance, you couldn't have boyfriends.

BLUM: But you had contact with boys in Stuttgart.

PETERHANS: I had friends at the university in Stuttgart, but I had to go home every evening on the train. The last train was 10:30pm or 11:30pm. And then I had to be back at school in the morning at 8:30, or 8:00. It was fun.

BLUM: What was the curriculum like? Was it a Beaux-Arts orientation, or was it modern?

PETERHANS: No, it was post-Hitler.

BLUM: What do you mean?

PETERHANS: Well, they had had very good people at that university, but they were Hitlerian. They made Hitlerian architecture, which was fascist on one side, and true Germanic, which meant natural wood and sloping tiled roofs, and wood furniture, home country style, on the other. Anyhow, all these pre-war professors were out, because they were Germanic, and the opposite came in, you know, the ones who had been depressed by the others. So they were super-modern.



BLUM: And was that the basis of the instruction that you received?

PETERHANS: Yes. Super-modern. Our teachers were the types who tore down all war damaged buildings, whether they were good or bad. Now today, some of these buildings, famous historic buildings in prominent sites, are again being reconstructed. In Stuttgart there is a rather nice baroque palace, which forms the main plaza. And there were huge arguments whether it should be saved or replaced with a modern building.

BLUM: How ironic. Was the palace a government building?

PETERHANS: Originally it was the local king's palace, later a government building. It was badly damaged, but not totally. The modernists wanted to take it down. And we students were influenced to agree to take it down. Well, fortunately, they saved it. You may have recently heard a story from Berlin. The East Germans replaced the damaged Prussian king's palace with their Communist headquarter. Which was now again taken down for a huge amount of money, though in my modest opinion it was by far not one of the worst post-war buildings. They will soon rebuild from scratch an exact copy of the old baroque palace, even though they don't know what to do with it. They are scared to do a contemporary building in this historic location, in 2007.

BLUM: I suppose you have to get far enough away to have a perspective on what you're destroying, and then maybe you won't destroy it.

PETERHANS: Right. So, but when I went to school, they wanted to take everything down. Well, fortunately, there were people who fought. So now they are tearing down some of these post-war so-called modern creations and again rebuilding with historic copies also in Stuttgart.

BLUM: Considering your orientation and your age at that time, where did you stand on this issue?

PETERHANS: Well, of course, I was—you know, I was always a modernist, but I wasn't sure about that palace, because it formed the whole—it formed the whole central plaza. It formed everything. What would you do instead? There was a park relating to it, and a lake, and a pond. Everything was relating to it. So, I was not sure about that. But of course, we were too naïve. You have to realize, in post-war Germany we were very poor. There were very few books. We didn't have history at school. In my last years of high school, history and geography and everything taught to us was taken back to the...

BLUM: Pre-war?

PETERHANS: No, much further. Because all the books and everything of the Hitlerian time was colored, you know, in a way. And there were no new books yet.

So, in history, we only had the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Greek and the Romans. And anything further was dangerous, because that's when the Germans started to come in, and that German history was Nazified. All history school books were Nazi. Right after the war there were no updated history, geography, or even philosophy books. Even at the university, a few years later, we had mainly medieval art and architecture. Nothing about nineteenth century industrial architecture. In Stuttgart we were lucky to have some of the remaining houses of the famous 1928/29 Weissenhofsiedlung, some of them war damaged and in very poor condition. But they were the only modern architecture we saw. We couldn't travel. We couldn't leave the country at this time.

BLUM: Who imposed that restriction?

PETERHANS: Well, we were under occupation. Germany was divided in four sections: the French, in the south of southwest Germany, in which we lived at the end of the war, and where the French dictated what to teach. So I made a French *abiteur*, called a *baccalaureat*. By this time my parents had moved to the American sector, back to where this mental hospital was, near Stuttgart. And then there was a British sector and the Russian sector. Thank God we were not in the Russian one.

BLUM: So you were in the French sector and later in the American.

PETERHANS: But there were borders in between. You had to have papers.

BLUM: Was there a distinct difference between the two?

PETERHANS: Not really. But you have to realize that for one or two years after the war we were completely stupid. We had no radios, no good newspapers, magazines or books. So we had a very limited view of the world. There was only one magazine in the American sector; it was made for Germans by Americans.

BLUM: Yes. I see the problem.

PETERHANS: We couldn't leave the country. We didn't have passports. And I was studying but also having to stay at home. So after my second year, luckily, I managed to go to Switzerland, by working in my summer vacation as a farmhand. We were allowed to go to Switzerland if we worked for Swiss farmers.

BLUM: Do you mean in the fields?

PETERHANS: Yes. So, I left Germany for the first time. Before the war I had only been to Austria. When the war started I was ten years old and with my little brothers we didn't travel much. Now in 1949 or 1950, I managed to get to Switzerland. And I'll never forget, first we had to attend a—what do you call this? A weekend brainwash? We called it brainwash.

BLUM: An orientation?

PETERHANS: Orientation thing, but we called it brainwash, where we were told how to behave with the Swiss, because we were still bad Germans. In that orientation weekend they were telling us that Germans were thought of as being bad by the world, as still being Nazis even though the really terrible Nazis had been put away during the Nuremberg trials. And we were told to be very respectful of anything the Swiss people we met would say to us about the war and about Germany in general. But I mean, it makes you realize that we were really kept caged-in. But at last, I managed to get out and go to Switzerland to this farm, on my own.

BLUM: For how long did you do this part-time farm work?

PETERHANS: It was during our summer vacation. At German universities we have very long summer vacation. You don't have a winter vacation, only two brief recesses for Christmas and Easter. But then you have off from June to October, over three months.

BLUM: A nice long vacation.

PETERHANS: University is closed. And we are supposed to use this period in the old times, and now again, for special studies and to travel. But at that time, you were off. So I went to Switzerland to this farm. It was unbelievable. I got off a train somewhere. Nobody picked me up. And there I was. I had

a little suitcase. I walked for two hours. They were very poor farmers. Before, the train from Germany had crossed the border, it was like the sun went on because all the buildings were clean. And in Germany, all the buildings were dirty and falling apart. And in Switzerland, everything was perfect. It was like Ah. But when I went up to this farm... Coming from poor Germany, you know, where we had no money, it was after the monetary reform. Every ten marks had been reduced to one mark. So we had no money. Well, I thought, coming to Switzerland... But these farmers were so poor and worked so hard. They had six children. The milk, which every morning I had to take to a central place where they made cheese and all of this... I had to take it down with a horse and buggy. The milk for the children, who were under the age of seven—six of them—was half made with water. They had meat only once a week, but the father ate the meat. The breakfast was fried potatoes, fried with old coffee grounds instead of fat. Unbelievable. I really learned a fabulous lesson. And I worked like a horse. I went from a size six to a size ten or twelve. If you work like a horse from four in the morning to eight at night... The only water was outside the house in a wood though in which you had to hand pump it and where the horses and the cows were drinking. And you washed yourself and the children, and you washed the laundry, and the dishes—everything—in ice cold water. It was phenomenal. But I was very impressed by these people. The woman was always pregnant, a tiny delicate person, so me, the strong German, I could never say, I can't do this, because she did everything in the house

as well as in the fields. They had ten cows, pigs, chicken, an old horse and a lot of fields but no help, except an ancient retarded aunt.

BLUM: Interesting description. How long did you stay with them?

PETERHANS: Two months. And we made fifty marks a month. I had relatives in the nearby city in Bern. I visited them once on a Sunday. They looked at me because my nails were so dirty and my hair was a mess. They looked down at me and treated me like a poor relation. It was a very good, a very good experience.

BLUM: Makes us realize how narrow our own vision is.

PETERHANS: Yes, coming from poor Germany to rich Switzerland, I had to work like never ever in my life again, physically. Unbelievable.

BLUM: Did you keep up with the family afterwards?

PETERHANS: Yes, I kept going again, two more times.

BLUM: Under the program or just because you wanted to?

PETERHANS: No, on my own. That's when I met Myron, on one of those trips by bicycle on a stop-over on one of those youth hostels in Zurich.

BLUM: Can you tell us more about your stay with the family in Switzerland?

PETERHANS: It was again in a university vacation. One of my brothers also went to this farm later. They had, in the meantime, more children. And the mother, she was amazing. The story is unbelievable. I would say, "Why do you have so many children?" And she said, "What shall I do?" So I said, "Well..." The next time I came—they had been such a sweet couple, so nice to each other, but suddenly they were fighting all the time. I asked, "What's the matter? Why are you fighting?" "Well, I don't let him come in my bed anymore. And he can't handle it."

BLUM: They hadn't heard of contraception?

PETERHANS: There was nothing. They were of a religious persuasion. So they had one child after the other. It was amazing. I became the godmother to one of them.

BLUM: That certainly is contrary to the image we hold of a Swiss family.

PETERHANS: Right. They were in the mountains, Bernese Oberland. It was beautiful, but all their fields were on steep stony slopes, very poor soil, most difficult and tough for farming.

BLUM: And after the summer did you return to the university?



PETERHANS: Right. But then I became a member of the student self-government. We had a lot of foreign students at this time, mostly from the Middle East and China. They were welcome in Germany and it was cheap for them. See, our universities are free. In Germany we have—or at least we had—no privileged or private special universities. They all have the same value. It just depends sometimes on a single man, a single professor with whom you want to study, to go to a specific university.

BLUM: But you had to qualify.

PETERHANS: Yes, you had to qualify. You had to qualify but the schools were all the same. They still are basically all the same. After my first years I was very interested in architectural history. So I took a bicycle ride all by myself all the way up and down the Rhine, and visited all those famous cathedrals and castles. At least what was left.

BLUM: Left after the bombing?

PETERHANS: Yes. Cathedrals and castles, and towns. And on this trip I met my first foreigners, first Americans. It was before I had been to Switzerland and met Myron. He was on a grant in Switzerland. He traveled with a black girl by bicycle through Germany, staying as I did in small youth hostels. Later they came to Stuttgart and visited with my family. And I stayed in touch with him for a long time. I had some other foreign student friends, so I founded a department for foreign students in this student self-

government. I said, "We need a special department for the foreigners, because they seem to often have problems finding places to stay and meet Germans." So after this, I organized student exchanges for the three-month vacation. I said, "Well, can't we get some work in their country, and they could work in our country, if we found them jobs?" So, eventually, I went to Turkey. And I worked in Turkey all summer. At the time there were no Turkish people in Germany yet. Now we have millions of Turkish people.

BLUM: Why did you select Turkey?

PETERHANS: Because I was always fascinated by the Muslim architecture. I even went earlier on a trip to Yugoslavia, which was the only country where the Iron Curtain was open. Yugoslavia was a Communist country unified at that time by Tito, General Tito. And he opened it to tourists 1951 or 1950.

BLUM: Now you were doing this while you were still attending the university?

PETERHANS: I wasn't studying too hard, as you can tell.

BLUM: How did you do as a student?

PETERHANS: I did okay. But in the upper semesters you had to make these designs—four major designs before you can apply for the diploma. And those I had to do at home on my own.

BLUM: What were the subjects of your design projects?

PETERHANS: Well, you could pick different ones under different professors. One was a house, one was a student dormitory, and one was a—I've forgotten. Anyhow, but you had to do those at home, because see, we had very few classrooms. We went to the university only for lectures. Then we went home and had to do all the drawings, model building, etc. because there were no places for you—no rooms with tables to sit, and draw at the university. So we had the introductions at school and then you had to work alone at home.

BLUM: Were these drawing projects?

PETERHANS: They were design projects in the fifth to the eighth semester. You had to do everything: the program, the design, and the renderings, and the models. And you had to do this all at home. So it depended very much on your own speed and energy. And out there in Stetten, in our village, I was very slow on that. There was no one near to meet and talk with about our problems.

BLUM: Were you expected to work on your project on your vacation?

PETERHANS: Of course, you were supposed to work in your vacation on it. Well, I went on my trips. And I also had to always make some money on the side. I always had jobs on the side.

BLUM: Was school too easy for you?

PETERHANS: No, not really. I don't know. I didn't quite know what I was doing, in my opinion. Well, after I had met Myron, I had suddenly a very strong opinion about architecture.

BLUM: How did you meet Myron?

PETERHANS: In Zurich, in the youth hostel, as I said before. I was the first to see the slides from the Farnsworth House in Europe!

BLUM: Did he carry slides of the Farnsworth House with him?

PETERHANS: Right, on which he had worked during design and especially during construction. At this time, he already told me to get a Fulbright and come to IIT and study with Mies, especially after I showed him what I was doing for people in our village. People came to me and said, "Can you do me a house?" Of course, I had to do it, you know, I made two hundred marks doing a house.

BLUM: Where were the houses built?

PETERHANS: Where we lived, in the country, near Stuttgart. But I didn't know what I was doing, but I did it.

BLUM: Were you designing?

PETERHANS: Yes, and everything.

BLUM: Did you have anything to do with the construction?

PETERHANS: Everything. I did everything.

BLUM: And this was before you had your diploma?

PETERHANS: Yes, you could do that, at that time. I even did the engineering. Once I had a problem because I had engineered something wrong. There was a crack in the wall after a while.

BLUM: What was the connection between what we call architecture, which is more aesthetic, and engineering, which we think of as structural?

PETERHANS: Well, for a simple house in Germany you didn't need an engineer at this time.

BLUM: I understand that at some universities, like the University of Illinois for instance, design and esthetics were very separate fields.

[Tape 1: Side B]

PETERHANS: It's not exactly the same. We learned a lot about construction, I mean, even construction and the mathematics of statistics. We learned how to build foundation walls, and windows and roofs, everything.

BLUM: So you had some practical experience.

PETERHANS: Well, yes. We were drawing carpenter work, and we were drawing windows, and we were drawing... We learned a lot of practical things. We learned construction materials, even estimating. In the first two years, you hardly did any design, only in the upper two or three years. But for aesthetics in the lower semesters you had life drawing, sculpture classes, and sketching and watercolor. These mostly out-of-doors in spring and fall.

BLUM: And what was design like in the lower classes?

PETERHANS: You were just doing small designs, like you would maybe design a bathroom or a kitchen, or a porch or a fountain.

BLUM: Did you meet Myron before you received your diploma?

PETERHANS: Oh yes, a long time before. I met him after the second year. I was already building and when he saw these buildings, he said, "You'd better come to Chicago."

BLUM: What was he doing in Germany? Was this when he was in Italy studying with Nervi?

PETERHANS: Well, after he had supervised the Farnsworth House construction, the steelwork, he had a Fulbright. He went to Nervi in Italy via Switzerland and by bike he traveled to Germany. Myron wanted to see the first big construction business exhibition the "Constructa" in Hanover. He was a foreigner and he knew everything but I, the German, knew nothing. And he had the first slides with him from the Farnsworth House.

BLUM: Why did he carry those with him?

PETERHANS: After I met him in Switzerland, he came to Stuttgart, to our house. This is a long story and I wrote it for his memorial. Anyhow, he told me to get a Fulbright. I did want to see the world too. So without any money, I had traveled through Yugoslavia, and saw the Communist world, and also my first mosque. My father was born in Palestine, the son of a parson. There was a German colony in Palestine—Jaffa. They had developed the Jaffa oranges, which we still eat now. And they needed a parson, so my grandfather, as a young man, went there. My father was born there and

his first playmates were on the street in the village of Palestine. My father always knew some Arabic, and he was fascinated by Muslim culture.

BLUM: Why was he interested in Muslim architecture?

PETERHANS: He was fascinated by the religion and lifestyle too. So it came unto us. My brothers, the same and even my nephews. So this is a very bad time too for us now, with the Muslims. Well, it's an interesting time. Anyhow, in 1951 I went to Turkey. When I arranged this exchange, they said, "Don't send any girls." But I said, "We must send girls."

BLUM: You were doing administration for this group?

PETERHANS: I was handling this whole thing. And I said, "I will go and try it out for girls."

BLUM: You were the trial balloon?

PETERHANS: Of course. This way I got there.

BLUM: I understand.

PETERHANS: There were about twelve students, all boys, and me. They were all traveling together but I didn't travel with them. I traveled on my own. On the way I made several stops, and had a great time in Ankara in Turkey. I



worked in a government office that was in charge of the NATO roads. Turkey had not entered the Second World War, and afterward it joined NATO. There had been this very modern and progressive Turkish man, Kemal Pasha, who modernized the country during the twenties and thirties. He changed the Arabic writing to the alphabet and he took the veils off women. He did all sorts of things. He died only recently so it was not difficult for me to go there. I had one boss who had studied in America, another one who had studied in Germany. They were building the NATO roads towards Russia in case there would be a war with Russia, which at this time, after 1945, everybody was nervous about. So the NATO roads were supposed to go up to the Black Sea to fight the Russians.

BLUM: Did you work on that project?

PETERHANS: In the architectural office that was doing gas stations, rest houses, etc. along these NATO roads.

BLUM: Was this still before you had your diploma?

PETERHANS: Yes, yes. They made me do unbelievable things.

BLUM: Well, what's unbelievable is that you could do them.

PETERHANS: I really couldn't but I did. My brother later on, of course, my brothers always followed what I did. So they followed me to Switzerland, they followed me to Yugoslavia. My little brother, Joerg, followed me to Turkey. And he saw the buildings there I had designed, meanwhile built. He said, "Well, one of the sliding doors she has detailed for a garage was really goofy." I said, "How was I supposed to know how to do details for a twenty-foot steel sliding door from scratch?"

BLUM: Were all four of your brothers interested in architecture?

PETERHANS: To some extent. Yes, but Joerg was the one who went into engineering.

BLUM: Joerg, today the well-known one.

PETERHANS: Joerg, yes. Most Americans call him George. So I studied slowly, because I also had all these other interests. But I also had problems. After I had met Myron and seen the Farnsworth House slides...

BLUM: What did you think of the Farnsworth House?

PETERHANS: Oh, I was crazy about it. Myron kept sending me all the magazine pages he thought were of good architecture. In Stuttgart we were taught so-called modern architecture, but with very local flavor. And I had problems with my professors, some of them.

BLUM: Did you have knowledge of the Bauhaus, that had closed in 1933?

PETERHANS: We knew some but very little.

BLUM: And the work of the Bauhaus?

PETERHANS: Yes, right. But, you know, there were no books yet.

BLUM: Oh. Did you have any class text like Giedion's *Space Time and Architecture*?

PETERHANS: No books. We only saw these buildings in slides. But I had been spoiled by Myron because he sent me all these new and interesting magazines. So I saw the Lever House. I saw Mies's first apartment buildings here in Chicago. I even saw and was fascinated by that hotel in which SOM did the Miro mural.

BLUM: Oh, in Cincinnati?

PETERHANS: Right, for the Terrace Plaza Hotel. And then Myron also sent me a book about Frank Lloyd Wright. I studied mainly the plans. I didn't read much about it, because my English was not so good. But I was very impressed by Frank Lloyd Wright's plans. It was not what they taught at my university. So I would have arguments, Yes, with my professors and their assistants.

BLUM: How did the other students feel about Frank Lloyd Wright's work?

PETERHANS: I don't know. I didn't have much connection to other students, because I always had to go home in the evening and be there in weekends, you know. So I did apply for the Fulbright. The first time I failed completely. They asked me something about American literature. I said, "No, I hadn't read it." The Fulbright for Germans was more political than professional. They wanted to know did I read Faulkner. Did I know a novel by so-and-so they asked and I said, "No."

BLUM: Was that the literature question?

PETERHANS: Yes. I said, "No." And they asked me something else—I forgot what it was, but I had never heard of it either. I had no idea. So I didn't do well. The second time I already did better.

BLUM: Did you know what they were going to ask in advance?

PETERHANS: Right. Modern American literature. So I had read some meanwhile. And a year later I was supposed to come back to the second examination. But by that time I was in Turkey. So I couldn't come. So I went again another year later, and by this time, I really knew how to do it. If I had no answers, I just made one up. All you had to do is be aggressive and smart. And before I went to the examination, I went to the beauty shop,

and I had myself fixed up. I even had told them to put a little make-up on me. And I came out first almost, one of the first for all of Germany.

BLUM: You had learned the way to succeed.

PETERHANS: I guess. It was very funny. And Myron had told me, "Now, once you get it, let me know, then I'll make sure you can come to Chicago," we were not allowed to choose where we wanted to go, because again, it was not a professional, it was a political scholarship. We were supposed to learn what America is all about.

BLUM: Well, in as much as you knew about Lever House and some of the...

PETERHANS: Right. But they never asked things like that.

BLUM: Did you really want to come to Chicago?

PETERHANS: Oh yes. Oh, I was dying to come to Chicago.

BLUM: What about New York?

PETERHANS: No, I wanted to come to Chicago. And all I knew of Chicago was Mies van der Rohe. And I thought Myron would probably be here. But when I came, he wasn't.

BLUM: Was he in California?

PETERHANS: Right. So when I came here at last, and Mies finally showed up at the school, he walked up to me and said, "Oh, I'm so glad you are here. "Goldie"—they called Myron Goldie—"has told us a lot about you." I almost dropped through the floor. But I had no idea what I was doing. So I had a hard time at first. We had to do a house. First Mies said to all the new graduate students, "Do a house the way you would like it." So I tried to do a real Miesian house. I did a square, a perfect square with a square stair in the center. I thought it was a great stair. Mies looked at it, and he looked at me, and he said, "Never make an open stair unless you can do a good stair." He liked some Irish boy's design real well.

BLUM: Mies said that to you?

PETERHANS: Yes. "If you can't do a good stair, put it in a box. Hide it." I was devastated.

BLUM: Did you understand his criticism?

PETERHAN: Not quite, because I didn't think my stair was that bad. I even still think today my stair wasn't that bad. But it was in the center and stupid to Mies. By the way, when I had elected to finally come to Chicago, I was just starting my diploma in Germany. I had just completed the required four projects.

BLUM: For the Stuttgart University in Germany?

PETERHANS: Yes. And my father said, "Well, you will just tell them you're coming a year later." I said, "No, I'm going now."

BLUM: To Chicago without having finished your diploma?

PETERHANS: Yes. "I'm going. I can do my diploma later." My father made me write down and sign a promise that I would come back and complete the German diploma.

BLUM: Did you need the German diploma before you could get any advanced degree, such as a master's, as you did?

PETERHANS: No, no. You could get into an American graduate school after the *Vordiplom*. The final German diploma, the *Dipl. Ing.*, the diploma is more than a bachelor's.

BLUM: You could get it without a bachelor's?

PETERHANS: The diploma is more advanced. It's a Diploma Engineer so it's more than a bachelor's.

BLUM: I see. But not yet a master's.

PETERHANS: We don't have master's. After the German diploma we have to take a doctorate, a Ph.D. And architects hardly did that at that time. Anyhow, so I had to sign a paper promising my father that I would come back and do this diploma even if I had gotten married and had children. I had to come back to Stuttgart and do the diploma.

BLUM: How long was the Fulbright?

PETERHANS: One year. It was great. I was given a huge amount of money. First thing I bought was a Leica. I never had much money before, but now I had money. The Fulbright gave you money and free tuition.

BLUM: What was IIT like, compared to your classes at the University of Stuttgart?

PETERHANS: Completely different. You know, we never had our own drafting table at school, like at IIT, in Crown Hall, where every student has a big table. I picked the last table at the end of a row. I never had worked at school before, we only had lectures at school. The only thing we did at school in Stuttgart was in the sculpture class. There was a shop where you could do sculpture and life drawings. And then we had drawing classes outdoors.

BLUM: What was the situation in Germany?



PETERHANS: In Germany. You would go with your teacher outdoors. You sat on a little stool and had to draw a building, street scene or a landscape. But that's the only class you had. Otherwise, there were only lectures. You did all your architectural sketches and hardline drawings at home and then you had to come in for critique. You had to get an appointment for critique and wait in line. And for half an hour, they looked at what you were doing, and critiquing it. And then you went back home. And that was, for me, quite difficult. I had no idea. I'd never even learned how to draw with ink, with the compass, etc. I made a mess first, alone with this all by myself.

BLUM: Did you learn that at IIT?

PETERHANS: No, I never learned it. At IIT they had this terrific course. I don't know whether you know the story. When Mies came here, he took along Hilberseimer for urban planning, and after he ran into Peterhans in New York. Peterhans had been in the Dessau Bauhaus teaching photography. After it closed in 1933 he and Mies had remained in touch in Berlin. Peterhans had a photographic studio and Mies had an office. Then Mies ran into Peterhans by accident, in New York. Peterhans, like Mies, also wanted to get out of Nazi Germany. And Mies said, "I think I'm going to have a chance to open a new school in Chicago, and why don't you come because I need someone for visual training?" They didn't first call it that,

I don't know what they called it. "I need somebody to train the students visually."

BLUM: To teach how to see?

PETERHANS: Yes, how to see proportions, materials, textures, etc. And so they came here all together with Hilberseimer. And they started in that old building on Dearborn and Erie—what is it called? It's now a restaurant, or club.

BLUM: It was the old Chicago Historical Society building. A big gray rusticated stone building.

PETERHANS: It's still standing and is a restaurant or club now. And later they were in the Art Institute, I think.

BLUM: Everyone talks about IIT holding classes just under the roof at the Art Institute.

PETERHANS: Right. And they didn't at first have a curriculum. They had been out of the Bauhaus for years, and they didn't want to do what the Bauhaus was doing. They didn't think the Bauhaus was that important, at that time.

BLUM: Moholy-Nagy came here wanting to open the New Bauhaus.

PETERHANS: Right. And he had opened the Institute of Design at about the same time. They didn't like him very much. Mies, Hilbs and Peterhans didn't like Moholy-Nagy but they loved his first wife.

BLUM: They all came out of the same German Bauhaus.

PETERHANS: Yes, but Moholy had left earlier. The Bauhaus had several phases under different direction: first, Gropius; then Hannes Meyer; and finally Mies until 1933 when the Nazis closed the school. And it was, each time, a very different school. I don't know really. Don't ask me these things, because I know very little. See, what happened is Peterhans didn't like to talk about the Bauhaus. He said, "All that talk about the Bauhaus is coming out of my ears, it was just a school, you know." And the people who taught there, some of them were very good and we were close to each other and some weren't. So when I came here Moholy-Nagy had already died, in 1948 I think. They never had much contact with him here. They had little in common, not the same philosophy, I guess.

BLUM: So, Mies began his school with Peterhans and Hilberseimer.

PETERHANS: Yes. Mies was very rational. All three were rational from what I know about them. First they didn't really know how to organize an architectural school in America, in a country they didn't know yet. Mies thought since Peterhans was a photographer, "Why don't you teach them visually with photography? And Peterhans began to teach a photographic

course. But after one or two years, they found out that it didn't work. It was too expensive. The students had to buy cameras and it took too long for the students to know what they were doing with photography before they could really apply it and be good photographers. Peterhans felt it didn't work. At the same time also Mies said the students don't know how to draw. So, Peterhans developed a course in which the first-year students learned how to draw. They had to draw with a pencil first, and then with ink. He came up with some very interesting problems. I wish I had taken this course. Everything was on the same format, on 20x26 boards, very organized. For one problem they had to draw parallel lines with pencil, something like ten lines, in the same distance apart, and each time...

BLUM: Ten parallel lines?

PETERHANS: Yes. But each line had to be a little thicker, a perfect graduation. Then they had to draw circles, free-hand, first free-hand and then with the compass following the golden section. He combined the drafting course with the classic geometric problems. It was a fabulous course.

BLUM: And this is the course Peterhans developed?

PETERHANS: He developed that course.

BLUM: Was it called Visual Training?

PETERHANS: No. It was totally different from Visual Training that was taught in the upper semesters. This drawing course was given in the first year after Mies found out that the students first had to learn to draw. He developed it with one or two other guys.

BLUM: Who were the other people?

PETERHANS: I don't know. Younger people. There were all sorts of people. It would be worthwhile to dig out this course. They're still teaching it, I think. Now, with the computer they no longer really need to know how to draw by hand.

BLUM: Now what were the courses that you took in the year that you were there?

PETERHANS: When I came here, I was in this graduate class, and there were probably ten students from all parts of the world. There was one or two Americans, one or two South Americans, an Irish and a French boy, a Spanish boy, and another German boy. I was the only girl at that time. And we had to take Visual Training with Peterhans.

BLUM: So, you took the Visual Training course. What was interesting about the class for you?

PETERHANS: After my initial inhibitions and fears, I learned a lot. I could apply it to all the things I'd learned before, and it improved my—whatever you call it—my sense of quality enormously.

BLUM: Did you take a class that many people who studied at IIT talk about...

PETERHANS: With Caldwell?

BLUM: Yes, Caldwell's course, in which he had students endlessly drawing little bricks?

PETERHANS: He was teaching this in the lower semesters. In graduate school I had to take planning with Hilberseimer, architecture with Mies, and with Peterhans, visual training. And Caldwell was teaching this so-called construction course to the second year. But since I had very poor architectural history in Stuttgart I went to some of Caldwell's architecture history courses, just sat in. And I also approached him after half a year if I could take his construction course. The first half-year of this course was bricks—a brick house, and you had to draw all these bricks. I couldn't possibly do that. I never had the discipline.

BLUM: People resist and then rave about that class.

PETERHANS: They still do it. They still do it now. That class still exists.

BLUM: It must have proven its worth somewhere along the line.

PETERHANS: I guess people seem to like to suffer, to torment themselves. Like the— what do you call it? In the monasteries, when they pray forever? It's supposed to be very good discipline. But I couldn't. I would never do that, I just don't have it.

BLUM: Could you do it in Caldwell's class?

PETERHANS: No. So I didn't take the brick course but I did take his wood class. The second half of this course was a house out of wood, a balloon frame house, including doors and windows. I went to that. And Mr. Caldwell was very nice to me. I think by this time, I was already married to Peterhans. No, I don't think so. I mean, I was married to Peterhans relatively early, but nobody knew, because I was so embarrassed about it.

BLUM: Why were you embarrassed?

PETERHANS: Well, I'm marrying this old man. My family was having a fit, you know.

BLUM: Oh, your family.

PETERHANS: Yes, but here I felt very out of place. I mean, I didn't want to marry him, for God's sake.

BLUM: Why did you?

PETERHANS: Well, because he insisted. He said I had to.

BLUM: Well, you must have had some make-up on that day to make yourself look older.

PETERHANS: No, I never wore any make-up. The only time was for that Fulbright exam. Anyhow, it was a good course. I learned a lot well, and I learned this—I knew how to detail. Mr. Caldwell made you do all the details in full-scale. And that, I still do now. That was the best thing to learn, to detail everything full-scale.

BLUM: When you first came to Chicago, what was the city like?

PETERHANS: Well, I was amazed. I came in fall, and it was still hot like in summer. And it smelled from the stockyards. It was unbelievable! However, at IIT, a studio apartment was waiting for me together with Reiko Hayashi a Japanese girl who studied at the Institute of Design, also located in Crown Hall in the lower level. We shared this nicely furnished apartment in one of the Mies's buildings on campus. I did not have to go to the student dormitory.

BLUM: Oh, was your apartment in one of the residential towers?



PETERHANS: Yes, the residential building by Mies at 3301 South Wabash. It was a ten-story building concrete and brick Mies-designed apartment. Reiko was beautiful and lots of fun. I met her years later in Germany again. She had a good position and was visiting the Rosenthal factory. Unfortunately we lost touch. Meanwhile at school after the disaster with the house I had to do a courthouse. Everyone in the graduate class had to do a courthouse. And you had to do it with a model.

BLUM: So you had to make a model first, and then do the drawings?

PETERHANS: Yes, drawings and the model all  $\frac{1}{4}$  scale. So anyhow, the courthouse, there was a system you had to follow. But nobody told me how to do it. I was the only girl. The boys all looked down on me. I was not very smart looking. I had no make-up on. I wore little funny self-made clothes. So they all didn't take me seriously, I think.

BLUM: Why do you think they didn't take you seriously?

PETERHANS: I don't think they took me for a scholar. Perhaps because I did not behave and look like one. I was not one of these typical Fulbright scholars.

BLUM: Do you think that because you were German had anything to do with it?

PETERHANS: Probably so. And the one German that was there was the son of an architect and came on his own. I couldn't stand him or he couldn't stand me, so we hardly talked to each other.

BLUM: Did Mies give you preferential treatment?

PETERHANS: No. Not after the bad stair. So then I had to build this courthouse, and you had the model on a plywood board with a walnut or oak frame. Then there were these walls going into grooves, which had to be covered with a certain kind of cloth. Well, you know, I was new. I had no idea about the city, where things were. I was out there—the campus was a shock. There were those beautiful Mies buildings, but around them was nothing but slums—which I adored. I adored the slums actually, but it was strange. Late at night, of course, we always worked at night. But these students often had families already, the other graduate students, so they were not there at night. I was there at night with and fortunately, there were other young kids. And so I had some very good friends from the younger semesters.

BLUM: Were you much older than the usual college population?

PETERHANS: I guess I was but they didn't realize it. They became my best friends and are now still. John Vinci and what's-his-name?

BLUM: John was a walk-to student. He lived in the neighborhood of IIT.

PETERHANS: Yes, he lived just west of the campus with his parents. And I adored his family. His Sicilian mother cooked so well. And then, David Sharpe, who in the evening, tailored. He was tailoring suits in the school using those big tables to cut his fabrics from patterns and he did linings. He made his living making suits for some other students. It was fabulous. We had a great time there, so after I was married, I was over there all the time at night. Peterhans was always reading and studying. At midnight or eleven o'clock the school closed, and a policeman walked me home. They insisted that it was dangerous at night. But then I had to build the model and find all these shops. Nobody gave you a list where you could buy these things, and have these things made. So, it took me forever to just find all these places.

BLUM: But you must have learned the city in the process.

PETERHANS: Yes, I did. It was a fabulous way to learn.

BLUM: What about the work of Frank Lloyd Wright? Did you know about his work before you came to IIT?

PETERHANS: Yes, of course. I remembered the book from Myron. During the first months we were taken up to Taliesin to Frank Lloyd Wright's school.

BLUM: Did Mies go with you?

PETERHANS: No. He was too busy, with Seagram being built. He used to go. But some other teachers went along. And Frank Lloyd Wright came down the road in his Rolls Royce and big hat, and greeted us. Then he took off and had someone show us the buildings. We saw Johnson Wax, et cetera. But, to build this model was incredible. I had to do everything three or four times. And each time throw away the goofy pieces, because you couldn't re-use them. Ah. And finally I had it. I had the roof that had to be framed with painted steel for which I had to find spray paint and learn how to use it. I'd never built thing like this. You know, it was like a real building. It had to be sand-blasted glass for the roof; and then the columns inside. And then you had study space in this courthouse. We didn't even have a word in German for space. The word *raum* is not exactly the same.

BLUM: That was the purpose of models, wasn't it?

PETERHANS: Right. That was the whole thing. But the beginning was just to build this crazy model. And it had to be perfect. Ah. I did finally get it together; everything was perfect. And I put a few things in, in a little hurry, because I heard that Mies, who didn't come too often, would come. And he came. He sat down and looked at my model and he said, "Those columns look like drunken soldiers." Drunken sailors! Drunken sailors! He actually said it in German and it sounded worse.

BLUM: Why drunken sailors?

PETERHANS: Because they were not perfectly straight. Well, I was in a hurry.

BLUM: How did that make you feel?

PETERHANS: I was devastated. Then, after another three or four weeks he came again, and I had them straight. And I also had some things in there. And he asked me, "How far is it from there to there—the courtyard?" I was too nervous to remember, no one ever had asked such a question.

BLUM: Oh my.

PETERHANS: So I think he wanted to know—forty feet. I said, "It's something like forty feet." "Well, don't you know exactly?" And then I had to put in other things: a glass window wall. "How high is that glass?" Well, thank God, I knew that. And he looked at it again and said nothing. And that was the best critique you could ever have. Because if you stood there, and you had your drawing next to it, and you looked at your own work for ten minutes without anything happening, well, you saw how bad it was. Cause you never do that.

BLUM: Is that the purpose of just sitting and staring, and thinking about what you're looking at?

PETERHANS: I think so. At least, it had that effect on me. The first time in my life, you know, did I really spend time looking at what I had done. Normally, you never do it, and you're finished. Instead this guy is sitting there, sucking his cigar and saying nothing. And then he would say, "I think you have to study this a little longer." [very slowly and drawn out] And he said nothing else about it. But this was the best thing that could happen to you. It was phenomenal. He didn't say, make this longer or shorter; I don't think this is right. He just said, "Work a little harder and more on it."

BLUM: He let you sit and look at it until you became enlightened?

PETERHANS: Right. Well, until you finally got it. The next time he said, "It's getting better." [slowly and drawn out] And, still "Just work a little longer." And then you were told by Hilberseimer that you were okay. You could start your thesis.

BLUM: Was that an effective way of teaching?

PETERHANS: Yes. Phenomenal.

BLUM: What did you think of the looks of the city, when you finally got off-campus?

PETERHANS: Well, we had to go and look at all the famous buildings. And read the famous Condit book. There was still more of the famous old buildings standing around the campus. There were famous old houses and churches by famous architects like Sullivan. They were often empty and falling apart. Eventually they were wrecked. With my friends John Vinci and Phil Zielinski we went to investigate these buildings. There was also Richard Nickel taking pictures. He was a student of Aaron Siskind's on the lower level's Institute of Design. I took a class with Aaron. He was the sweetest and most original, the way he thought.

BLUM: Did you have classes with Hilberseimer?

PETERHANS: Regularly. We had to do all his studies every week.

BLUM: Were they city planning courses?

PETERHANS: Yes, right. You had to start from zero learning his principles, on which his system was based. Do you know that story?

BLUM: No, I don't think so.

PETERHANS: Well, his main principle was, people had to live in houses, where on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December every home in which people live had to have a minimum of four hours sunshine. This came to be known as Hilbs' Day. On the shortest day, on the 21<sup>st</sup>, it had the least sun. And he came from

Berlin, where in the late nineteenth century the city was built with big blocks, four- or five-story walkup apartment houses, very minimal. And then they continued to build into the center courtyard of these blocks, all rentals with many rooms in which people never got a drop of sun. Tuberculosis was all over. This is where he came from, where his theory started. So we first had to do a minimum but adequate house and an apartment. Then we had to put these buildings into sites that allowed for four hours of sun. Spacing for these buildings were dictated by the sun. Little by little you had to develop this logic dictated by the angle of the sun in Chicago on December 21st. It was like a math puzzle. His next principle was that every working person has to be able to walk to his or her job within thirty or forty minutes. Every child has to be able to walk to school without crossing a road. So this set his whole system. It was pure logic, almost arithmetic, very sound, but kind of dull. Tragically he never succeeded building anything like this. Not even Mies in Detroit, where they did an urban project together. Mies had to break his system. It is not crucial nowadays because houses are heated properly and tuberculosis is extinct in the western world. There were huge arguments that he said it wasn't important that you could drive your car to your doorstep. Hilbs didn't believe in the car. He was right. The car is the disaster for the entire world, as we learn today. It was a very tough class but we adored him.

BLUM: Was Hilbs well liked by other students?



PETERHANS: Oh yes. My Japanese roommate and I would have him over for Japanese or German food. He was one of the people for which we had to get a chaperone. When he came we had to call the manager of housing who was living in the building on the dean's request. So we would call him and say, "We are having somebody over tonight. Are you going to come down?" He came once, and he said then, "Forget it." So, the poor dean of women never found out. But I mean, this was America. It was incredible at this time still. Adult girls having to ask. While there were all these things that we knew about, like—what is it called in the car? Necking?

BLUM: Necking.

PETERHANS: Necking or petting. We knew about that, which of course we couldn't do, because we didn't have cars..

BLUM: How was Peterhans as an instructor?

PETERHANS: Well, he was very thorough.

BLUM: Was he loved by his students like you say Hilbs was?

PETERHANS: I think he was not; he was more distant. He was not as approachable. But I believe his course was taken seriously, because everybody knew that you learned a lot.

BLUM: What was the year you were at IIT on your Fulbright?

PETERHANS: 1957 to 1958, and then I got an extension for the school. I got a scholarship, so I didn't have to pay tuition.

BLUM: Then when did you go back to Germany?

PETERHANS: Not until 1959. In the spring of 1958 I started to work at SOM. I needed money because I didn't have much. The new scholarship only paid for tuition, so I worked part-time.

BLUM: Did you have your diploma from the University of Stuttgart by then?

PETERHANS: No. I was at IIT, where I spent one year on the Fulbright just learning the basics, like doing that courthouse, and the Visual Training course, and Hilbs, also improving my English at night. And then I got married. No, I didn't get married right away. First I got an extension for one more year to do a master's.

BLUM: That was your scholarship?

PETERHANS: Right. For my master's degree. But the scholarship paid for the school, for tuition. So, then I had to work on the side. That's when I started to work at SOM in the spring of 1958.

BLUM: Okay. You really had a lot of things going at one time.

PETERHANS: Well, and then during the time I was working at SOM, I got married to Peterhans in my lunchtime.

BLUM: Your lunchtime?

PETERHANS: Nobody knew about it. Well, I didn't want to waste any time. We got married at City Hall, in my lunchtime.

BLUM: Was Peterhans ill when you married him?

PETERHANS: No, he was fine. He had had cancer, cancer of the throat, because he had been a heavy smoker. But he didn't smoke anymore so he was okay. But my father found out about it, and he wanted to rescue me. Incredible stories, but you don't want to hear that. So anyhow, I married him in my lunchtime and went back to work.

BLUM: When did you tell everybody about your marriage?

PETERHANS: After some months. First I told Jane Graham. I was working for her at SOM. I didn't take it too serious, because, you know, I didn't really want to get married. My father had so much instilled in me that I wouldn't get married, that I really didn't want to get married. And so, marrying this professor of mine was kind of... and my father having a fit, it was kind of

awful. Anyhow, so, fortunately, I was very crazy about him through all my marriage, until now.

BLUM: Peterhans died in 1960.

PETERHANS: Yes, he died very soon. He died in my parents' house in Germany. He's buried near where we lived, in Stetten im Remstal. He was visiting my parents over Easter and suddenly he was dead in the morning. He had a heart attack.

BLUM: Were you with him in Germany at the time?

PETERHANS: I was here in Chicago. I came back. After my diploma in the fall of 1959 I returned to SOM in the winter of 1959 part-time at SOM while completing my thesis at IIT.

BLUM: When you say you worked on your thesis at IIT, was this the one on "Student International House"?

PETERHANS: Yes. Unfortunately, I don't even have my thesis. I can't find it. It was a modern version of the International House at the University of Chicago. It was well-known to me because several German friends had lived there while studying at the University of Chicago.

[Tape 2: Side A]

PETERHANS: I first began to work at SOM's interiors department in the spring of 1959. When they hired me I had no drawings to show for interiors, so I borrowed some from the students from Caldwell's class. And it was Davis Allen, the famous SOM interior designer from New York, who hired me. He looked at these drawings, and said, "Oh forget it. Who wants to see drawings?"

BLUM: Really?

PETERHANS: He had a little conversation with me, and then there was Jane Graham, who was the local head of the interiors department.

BLUM: Was she married to Bruce Graham at the time?

PETERHANS: No, she was still Jane Johnson married to Ken Johnson, a nice American boy. An architect too I believe.

BLUM: Was she head of the interiors department?

PETERHANS: Yes, I think so. It was small and just starting. And she and I could speak German, because she was Austrian. We were immediately good friends. And I was very lucky. After a while Davis made me work on the Inland Steel building interiors.

BLUM: Inland Steel?

PETERHANS: Yes. Bruce Graham was the only SOM architect I ever dealt with at this time. I didn't even know Walter Netsch existed. They said he was in Colorado, working on the Air Force Academy. And now there are arguments about who did the Inland Steel, Walter or Bruce. We were in a different building, in an old building across the street from where the architects were.

PETERHANS: I was very lucky, Davis Allen kind of liked me. He had come to Chicago from the New York office and he was now supposed to do the interiors of the Inland Steel building. The top floor was the office of the president, Mr. Leigh Block. His wife, Mrs. [Mary] Block, she wanted to have her own private little office in Inland Steel building, also done by Davis Allen. He made me help him with that small office for Mrs. Block. It was just one main room, a bathroom, a storage room, a conference room, a front office—she had an assistant—and a receptionist. And it was on one of the lower floors. So, I helped Davis, I even designed some of the furniture. She had a big Picasso painting for her office and lots of other art work which I had to place. And I designed this sofa—the first sofa I designed in my life, and Davis loved it. I made a little model. It was different from what Knoll was doing at that time, bulky leather with silk inlays. I had seen a painting of Mrs. Block. She was a tall lady, not fat but not skinny.

BLUM: Will you describe it?

PETERHANS: Well, it wasn't tufted. It was this boxy kind of thing, which did not exist at this time, and became fashionable later.

BLUM: Not even in ready-made furniture?

PETERHANS: No. It was designed from scratch. And he liked it. And I designed some other pieces so he took me along to a meeting with her. And she lived in a nice building by...

BLUM: I think they lived on Astor.

PETERHANS: Yes. In this lovely Art Deco building by Philip Maher. She lived in the building on the southwest corner of Astor and Goethe. She lived in the one on the west side of the street with this adorable little lobby with the little sculptures on a table. It was nice, very nice. And I went up there with him. And I, for the first time in my life saw a house, an apartment like this.

BLUM: Well, what was it like?

PETERHANS: You know, I came from poor postwar Germany, and she had this apartment with famous paintings all over. In her bedroom she had

*Waterlilies* by Monet. And in the bathroom she had a little Stuart Davis. I was thrilled about this, I thought, Oh, this is your best picture, why did you put it in the bathroom? I didn't dare to say this. She would show me all of the pictures. "This is the first picture we bought in New York. The first picture we bought, and carried it here in our hot little hands. We hand carried it from New York." Later Davis Allen said she didn't buy anything without a consultant and never hand carried it. But she sat in her living room on the sofa and he sat at her feet. I had to bring up the samples, and we put them in front of her feet, explaining the possible combinations. It was fabulous. And she was thrilled and so was I. And afterwards she showed me the whole apartment. Later when I had to go once more on my own and bring something over she just had the maid open the door, and came out for a minute, and said, "Is that what Davis made you bring here?" Okay, okay. But it was still quite an experience and it was also funny.

BLUM: So Mrs. Block was the woman for whom you were designing an office?

PETERHANS: Yes, she had this small office. It no longer exists and the Picasso is now at the Art Institute. But I had a fight with Bruce and Jane Graham because I wanted to keep all of the fabrics in subdued colors because of the artwork and they made me put a very bright turquoise blue on the foyer chairs. I had picked all the fabrics, and Davis had approved them. But then, they had another meeting and they picked some very gaudy color for the



reception. I was furious I remember. But on the other hand, it looked okay. I mean, I didn't have anything to say.

BLUM: That was a wonderful opportunity for you.

PETERHANS: Wonderful opportunity, you're right. Just to get an idea about this whole world. So, I don't remember what else I did in those years—at that time. And then, we went, in the summer, to San Francisco. And I thought I would have a job at SOM San Francisco, because Davis Allen was also there doing something special. I just called him, "I'm coming, can I have a job?" "Sure. Stop by when you arrive." We wanted to spend the summer in California, because Peterhans had two children who lived in California. I felt he should visit his children, being a family-oriented German girl. "You should see your children more often." So, we did go there. But suddenly I didn't have a job, because SOM had just laid off people. Things were not going so well. So, I had to find another job. Myron was there, working on his [United Airlines] hangar with his friend Jim Ferris. But they also had nothing for me. So I had to find some other work. I remember I spent days going from office to office but there was no work for me anywhere. But I got into the California lifestyle. It's fabulous, you know, all these picnics every weekend always in beautiful places. Peterhans was always studying, and very serious, but then he went along, because of Myron. They all liked Myron. He was one of the famous students, you know. And I met lots of their friends. I still am

friends with one of them; with the woman who did this vase. She's a famous American Arts and Crafts lady, June Schwarcz.

BLUM: June Schwarcz?

PETERHANS: Her husband [Leroy Schwarcz] was a very good friend of Myron's. He had worked at the University of Chicago, at the Fermi lab. He was a physicist. And I don't know how they got to California, to their adorable little house above Sausalito. Well, as we didn't have enough money and because I couldn't get the job at SOM, so I had to take a job first, at a model shop, then at a very small office, where I had to play the secretary, make coffee, answer the phone and do everything. But, fortunately, Myron and Jim decided to take a vacation and go to Italy. And they let us stay in their apartments. So we had Jim's apartment to live in and Myron's apartment to work on my thesis in my spare time. They were both close to one another in the most beautiful location of San Francisco. It was great.

BLUM: Was this only for the summer?

PETERHANS: Yes, right. We had the children over, which wasn't too successful, because, you know, they weren't that interested in their father. But it was nice. It was okay, I guess. Just not the way I was used to, you know.

BLUM: Well, you had very strong family ties.

PETERHANS: We had a very old fashioned family. Peterhans' son Mike studied at Stanford, he was almost twenty, and Nini was fifteen or sixteen. They were aloof, a little strange; and their mother wouldn't come, so I never met the mother, Gesine. It's a long story. She did not like Chicago. So, in the summer, she always went with the children to so-called Pond Farm. Have you heard about Pond Farm? It's a famous art colony in northern California, beautifully located. Several German artists were there, for instance, the famous Wildenhains, famous ceramicists. And Peterhans would also go there for a few weeks. And the second time, or third time, Gesine decided to not come back to Chicago and they got divorced. It must have been difficult for him, he was very extremely old fashioned, very loyal.

BLUM: Now, this was your extended year in 1958.

PETERHANS: Yes, right. Right. And then the next year in summer of 1959 we went back to Germany where I still had to do as I promised my father, to do my diploma. Peterhans always wanted to go back to Germany. He had gone once or twice before. In 1953 he went to the second Bauhaus in Ulm, Germany. He was there when it started. One of the famous *Geschwister Scholl* founded it.

BLUM: What is the *Geschwister Scholl*?

PETERHANS: There was recently a movie about it. They were a family of anti-Nazis, young students: two girls and one brother. *Geschwister* means siblings. Scholl, S-C-H-O-double L. Two of them were killed by the Nazis. Their anti-Nazi movement was called the Weiss Rose, or the White Rose. One girl, Inge Scholl, survived. She was younger. They were art students and after the war, Inge founded an art school in memory of her siblings. Her *Geschwister*, a second Bauhaus in Ulm.

BLUM: Was this possible because of reparations?

PETERHANS: Sort of, yes. Inge Scholl founded this school which she had built by the famous Swiss architect, Max Bill—sculptor and architect. And she invited Peterhans to teach one of the first courses there. But then—and I don't know that much about it—he, for some reason, did not want to stay. Even so, he would have liked to remain in Germany. I think he had problems with Max Bill. There's an exchange of letters, famous in Germany, between Peterhans and Max Bill, about teaching principles.

BLUM: Is that material at the Bauhaus archive in Berlin?

PETERHANS: I don't know. Maybe. Or at the Peterhans archive at the Folkwang Museum in Essen. And so he came back. I think it was also to do with problems with his next wife. And then we again went over in 1959, and he, again, was trying to stay.

BLUM: Was he looking for a teaching job in Germany?

PETERHANS: Yes. And he did meet some people who wanted him to teach in Hamburg, at the Hamburg *kunsthochschule*, an old art school, now a modern art university. He went there while I was still working on my German diploma, in my parents' house. And he wanted to see if we could manage living in Hamburg but he didn't have enough money. We still had this apartment in Chicago at the IIT campus, he had to pay his children, and he didn't make much in Germany. The mark and the dollar were the opposite from now. I also didn't want to stop work at SOM Chicago either. I really liked working here. I was working on the interiors for Upjohn in Kalamazoo, Michigan. I had just designed, just before I left, a table for Upjohn. It was a large conference table for the Upjohn boardroom. They had a model made of it by Gerry [Griffith]. That was my first big major different kind of—not Miesian—design success. And so I wanted to come back to that. We agreed that I would come to Chicago, and work a little longer here until Peterhans could see if he wanted, or could, stay in Hamburg.

BLUM: During all this time, were you still working on your diploma in Germany?

PETERHANS: No, the Upjohn table was before we went to Germany in the summer of 1959. When I returned to Chicago in the fall of 1959 I had just finished my Stuttgart diploma.

BLUM: What did you have to do to complete the requirements?

PETERHANS: It's a three-month project, on which you work on completely on your own. You have only one critique.

BLUM: So, it's like a dissertation, in a way, with an advisor.

PETERHANS: Yes, it's a big project. It was terrible. I had to do it all by myself in my parents' house, in my own little room at my old desk. I had to do the design, model building, and everything. Peterhans was in Hamburg. And then, during this time, he realized that he wasn't so sure whether he would stay in Hamburg. When I came here in the fall, after the German diploma everybody thought we were getting divorced, which wasn't the case at all. I never realized people were thinking that. But anyhow, during his semester break in Hamburg, Peterhans was visiting with my parents in south Germany during Christmas, and then during Easter. He was there during the Easter break. We have a holiday for two weeks. And he died there.

BLUM: And you had your diploma, but you were working here.

PETERHANS: I had my diploma and I was working here. I went immediately back for the funeral. Jane Graham bought me a plane ticket. After that I came right back to Chicago.

BLUM: When did you get your degree from IIT?

PETERHANS: The final degree I got after this, because I still had to finish the drawings. I had finished all the design work and the model, but I didn't finish writing the book. I had a problem with the writing. So I came back to finish that too.

BLUM: Now, this was after Peterhans had died in April 1960. Were there many German students at IIT at the time?

PETERHANS: No. There was only one in my class, but he went back after one year. There were several Germans earlier but they had already done their master's and had left for Germany or were working in Chicago offices.

BLUM: What was the student population like? Was it mostly women? Men?

PETERHANS: It was mostly American, not many women; Maybe in the whole school, five women, at the most, at that time.

BLUM: Foreign born, or American?

PETERHANS: While I was there, there were no foreign girls. And during the 1959 year, Mies retired. They kicked him out. There was this horrible story that... And Peterhans felt that they should all leave.

BLUM: Caldwell left.

PETERHANS: Peterhans felt they should all leave but only Caldwell did. Peterhans took a leave of absence for one year.

BLUM: And went to Germany?

PETERHANS: Went to Germany. And he was trying to stay in Germany and not come back here. He had those ideal ideas about Germany. Germany, right after the war, was very poor, but still quite decent. But then, when everything started to settle in, things were no longer as they were before. I said to him, "You know, it's not the same anymore like a few years ago." And then, when I came back here, I really liked it better than before. And so, I influenced him, and he decided to come back. He already bought his return ticket but he had to finish the current semester in Hamburg until June, when he would have come back.

BLUM: Had he lived.

PETERHANS: Yes. Right. So, then I stayed here and I did some more interiors. They were very nice to me at SOM, when I came back, after he was dead.



BLUM: Brigitte, before we leave this subject, you were saying that there was some information about the establishment of IIT in Chicago. Would you repeat it?

PETERHANS: Of the architecture department? Peterhans, Hilbs and Mies had never really taught together at the Bauhaus. They were all at the Bauhaus teaching separately.

BLUM: They had never taught together?

PETERHANS: Peterhans, Hilbs and Mies: they were all at the same time at the Bauhaus, but in completely different fields, right? Peterhans, was in the photography department; Hilbs was doing all sorts of things, including buildings; and Mies was the director. Then they started here. They didn't want to do it like the German Bauhaus. They were not so crazy about the Bauhaus. None of them felt the Bauhaus was the utmost, as it has become now. They thought it was just a place where interesting people came together.

BLUM: Well, it's my understanding that they were bringing a whole new concept to architectural education.

PETERHANS: Right. So, they wanted to start completely new—not like at the German Bauhaus. But when they came here, they really wanted to start an architectural school, which the Bauhaus was not. It had everything, the

Bauhaus was teaching everything: pottery, photography, painting, weaving, metal work, and everything. So, when they came here and happened to get together to do this architecture school, which Mies had been offered to do, they were given a clean slate. That was their lucky condition. Yet they were very unsure how they should do it in this foreign country. But they just had to simply start right away, Peterhans doing the visual training with photography, Hilbs the urban planning, and Mies architecture. They met—I know this—they met every week, twice or so, for lunch—for a very long lunch, two or three or more hours, in which they discussed how to do the school. They exchanged what they had experienced, what worked, what didn't work. And initially, they made changes all the time. They were very clear-minded and rational about this. And so, they built up slowly over several years, from what I know. This curriculum was used for a long time, and even to some extent, now, from what I know.

BLUM: Were there other people also consulted for their ideas in this development?

PETERHANS: I don't know but immediately they took on young assistants. And I really don't know exactly how they did that.

BLUM: Do you remember who some of them were?

PETERHANS: Well, one was George Danforth. There was [Earl] Bluestein. They thought very highly of him. I never met him. He got sick. He had tuberculosis, I think, and had to move to Arizona. He was married, I believe, to Dorothy Turck, who also taught for a while but then she went to New York. She's still alive. She would be interesting to talk to. But my problem is that I was too preoccupied with my own self, and what I was trying to learn. I was not asking many smart questions about the Bauhaus past, nor about how they started out at IIT. I thought I'd have a longer time with Peterhans to ask these questions. And I didn't. So, I don't know too much. I'm also not the type to pressure others with too many questions. During my first years in America I was quite irritated by being asked questions about myself all the time.

BLUM: Well, being in the middle of something, something important, I have the sense from people who attended IIT in the early years, that they had a real sense of a mission. And it was more than just going to a school. It was really a sense of purpose, and a drive, a passion, that other schools and curriculums didn't inspire.

PETERHANS: Right. Because in America, there was not yet modern architecture in a true sense. There were a few people who did some by themselves. When I came, of course, IIT was built. I had seen all these buildings in publications, and knew them by heart, but then when I actually saw them I was amazed. From afar, it looked totally logical. But in reality, there were a lot of things that were done by intuition and practicality. They

were not at all as mathematically logical as I had thought. This was fascinating to me. Smaller things like stair railings would not line up, as I thought they had to, and all this.

BLUM: Stair railings?

PETERHANS: Stair railings were not necessarily on the module for instance. So, the module, which I had from Germany, from magazines, I understood as totally religious was not as religious when it came to Mies himself. He made exceptions to the rule.

BLUM: That's interesting.

PETERHANS: And the same with the courthouse, my ordeal with which I described earlier was not in a true sense modular, the space was more important than the module, and logic. So, I began to understand this. But you know, I wasn't too smart. I came from this very different environment, you know.

BLUM: Well, you had a big adjustment to make especially after Peterhans died. You have said that SOM was really nice to you.

PETERHANS: Yes. When I came back after Peterhans died. I came back after a week.

BLUM: Were you actually going to SOM to work?

PETERHANS: Right. And they called me in Germany, and said, “Why don’t you start in New York?” And I spent two or three days in New York. They put me up in a hotel. And I went to some of these famous stores selling beautiful things. It was not for the building, it was for the interior for Upjohn.

BLUM: Now, what contact did you have with SOM prior to that, that they just felt free to call you, as if you were on their staff?

PETERHANS: Well, I was. I mean, I came back in the fall—in November 1959 and started to work full-time.

BLUM: In 1959 for SOM?

PETERHANS: Right. Before I had worked part-time. And I had designed that famous table, for which Gerry Griffith made a model in stainless steel. It cost something like five thousand dollars for the model. And they wanted me to come right back and work on the interior. Some of this furniture which, you know, I helped design with Jane.

BLUM: And as a student, you had worked on interiors?

PETERHANS: Yes, strictly. And already started on Upjohn in the last months. And that’s when I designed this table. I built a little model, and Peterhans was

looking at it, and said, "Well, I'm not sure, but I think it's okay." Yes, it was very un-Miesian.

BLUM: Would you describe it?

PETERHANS: I was very proud that I came up with this idea. It was a huge conference table, and I made a leaf shape like a tree. So the legs were underneath here and the structure came up and it showed on the top. It looked like a leaf. You know, it reminds you of the staircase by Kleihues at the Museum of Contemporary Art. He also had this leaf idea. But this was years later. But at that time this was rather unusual. When Peterhans first looked at it—I made a little model and I showed it to him. I said, "What do you think?" "Well, it's up to them." And the problem was how you would do the wood. How you would put in the wood of the top. It was put in the grain following the shape of the steel ribs.

[Tape 2: Side B]

PETERHANS: And when I came back, Gerry Griffith, who was the famous metal worker who did all the Barcelona chairs, who did all the Mies furniture here. He picked up Mies's Barcelona table and chair, and he made a fortune on that because they were immediately very popular.

BLUM: And this chair is the...

PETERHANS: Tugendhat. Gerry re-chrome-plated it once for me, but it's rusting again. It's ordinary steel, it's not stainless steel. So anyhow, they had made a model of this table and they called me. So when I came back, that was already there. And they put me on this team of Upjohn. I was only working on Upjohn interiors.

BLUM: Now, Upjohn was a Bruce Graham design.

PETERHANS: Yes. I think it was one of his best buildings.

BLUM: He has said that this job was going to be an exploration in a total design. He was going to do not only the building, but he was going to do the interiors, everything down to the ashtrays.

PETERHANS: Right. We did. I think they ended up not buying everything, but it was very important to Bruce and Jane. They sent me to Kalamazoo several times to go over details of the interiors of their different offices with their architect. It was the first flight in my life. Peterhans didn't want me to fly. When he found out that I was flying to Kalamazoo on my own, he had a fit. He made me go by train. He thought flying was not safe.

BLUM: How had you traveled to Europe?

PETERHANS: We went by boat to Europe, of course. Anyhow, so I had to take the train in a sleeping car to Kalamazoo, which was actually very nice. You arrived

in the morning, and they woke you up and gave you breakfast. But then when Peterhans suddenly died, and I was back in Germany, they called me in Germany, and said, "Why don't you stop in New York. This will be good for you," Bruce Graham said or Jane said. "And you stay at so-and-so hotel, where we always stay, right near the office. And Davis Allen will tell you where those shops are, where you have to go. I was supposed to pick out samples of what we were going to present, which was fantastic, you know, that they thought I could do this. I was there for two days and it took my mind off my... It was my first time really in a fancy hotel in New York. I had been in New York only when I arrived for the Fulbright; and then when I went back with Peterhans. We were there for two days, but we only went to the museums. So, I didn't know New York very well. And Davis Allen was very nice. And so, when I came back, they immediately made me work very hard, and took me to the meetings, even with Graham.

BLUM: And with the client?

PETERHANS: Yes, with Graham and Bill Hartmann. Even Bill went to these meetings for the main presentations. Another interior designer [Virginia C. Mosely] who Upjohn consulted was also involved so it was some sort of a competitive situation.

BLUM: Oh. Do you mean, their designer was doing the interiors too?



PETERHANS: She wanted to especially do the executive interiors, because she had been their interior designer for years. She was a well-known interior designer from New York, a middle-aged lady. But it was very nice of SOM to put me in such an interesting situation, which I wasn't really up to.

BLUM: Did you have anything to do with the courtyards at Upjohn?

PETERHANS: No, that was Sasaki Walker. He did all the courtyards and the gardens.

BLUM: And the landscape?

PETERHANS: Oh yes, the landscape was very important. Stuart Dawson from Sasaki and Sasaki himself would come and ask questions, architecture questions. They did all the gardens and courtyards. They are beautiful. I think that building is actually already a Postmodern building in a way. The Upjohn building had the quality of a Versailles palace.

BLUM: Do you think it was inspired by what Gordon Bunshaft had done with Connecticut General?

PETERHANS: No, it's totally different.

BLUM: Is it? It looks like a campus in the country.

PETERHANS: Not really. It's a single building and architecturally, it's totally different. It's totally different. Connecticut General is a very rational and modern campus. International style architecture. But this thing is like a palace.

BLUM: Upjohn is like a palace, while Connecticut General is rational?

PETERHANS: Right. Have you seen pictures of it?

BLUM: I have seen photos of Upjohn and Connecticut General. Do you know how SOM got the job?

PETERHANS: Well, Graham had done several buildings in this part of Michigan. He had done—I'll know tomorrow, I can't remember the name right now—he had done several very nice buildings.

BLUM: Was it Kimberly-Clark?

PETERHANS: Kimberly-Clark. Right. Well now, that was very rational, very Miesian. But for Upjohn, he wanted to do something totally different. It was totally different, it was palatial.

BLUM: Well, Bruce did say he was doing a total design. And apparently, up until now, furniture had not been designed for the building, but was just the furniture that was available, like Knoll furniture, or something like that.

PETERHANS: We worked with Steelcase and Baker Furniture, both located in Michigan. Baker Furniture is a famous company. So with them Bruce and Jane designed a tufted sofa. Graham now sits on the prototype in his house in Florida. Then, this chair Baker did not carry. I think this is the Riemerschmid chair. Jane Graham studied a few years in Germany in Munich right after the war. Jane Graham's story is a fascinating story. I probably should tell it. And she studied with Richard Riemerschmid, who was a famous German interior designer and architect, and did this wood chair in the thirties. It was not available here, but they somehow reconstructed it from photographs.

BLUM: Oh, that looks very Chinese.

PETERHANS: Yes, right. It was Riemerschmid. And this other chair, more or less, we designed, Jane designed with me. This also was not Knoll.

BLUM: It's very—very squared off.

PETERHANS: Very boring really in comparison to the Riemerschmid.

BLUM: Are these members wood or metal?

PETERHANS: It's wood. This was a wood chair. So, we did that chair. I think I did the first type. She did those desks. That was also not Knoll.

BLUM: Now, this is a slab desk, with metal legs.

PETERHANS: Right. Knoll didn't have this yet, Jane was very funny, she wanted the stainless steel to be perfectly square. The corner was supposed to be perfectly square, sharp. And I always thought that was kind of strange. But she had not studied with Mies, so she was more Miesian than Mies. And Gerry Griffith, who made the Barcelona chair, knew that. The Barcelona chair was also not stainless steel, originally. It had this connection in the center.

BLUM: The base for it?

PETERHANS: Right. And Gerry Griffith made this connection perfectly square—sharp. Jane had a great influence on Gerry Griffith. And she wanted this connection to be totally minimal and sharp. The Mies originally was rounded. When you weld something, such a connection naturally will be rounded. But all the Barcelona chairs now are square.

BLUM: Are they square because of Jane?

PETERHANS: Well, yes. Gerry Griffith who was very proud that he could do this. And Mies also went along with it. But the original Barcelona chair is rounded.

BLUM: The base is rounded?

PETERHANS: This whole thing is rounded. It's welded. When you weld, you put the weld in there. Now, with stainless steel this would probably not work so well. It probably had a technical reason too. Actually, they could have done it with stainless steel. But she had this obsession that it had to be perfect. And I remember that I would go to Peterhans, and say, "this is what she wants to do." He said, "Yes, do it. It's her job. It's okay," he felt.

BLUM: How did you find it working with Jane?

PETERHANS: Well, we were, you know, two Germans. Typical for Germans we had lots of arguments, but we were very good friends to her last day. She died in 2004 in Florida.

BLUM: Was it cooperation or competition between you two?

PETERHANS: It was cooperation. Right. She gave me a lot of chances. But also little arguments, like the colors of the reception room in Mrs. Block's office, which she changed from an austere gray to a green, which upset me. But Peterhans said, "don't complain, don't be so..." Whatever. He just told me I should shut up.

BLUM: Do you think that she took the initiative to change the color herself? Or, was Mrs. Block in on that?

PETERHANS: Maybe Mrs. Block didn't look too happy, or something. Anyhow, she and Graham changed it, and didn't tell me until the last. They didn't consult me. And I was a little mad. But I mean, it was okay. You know.

BLUM: It looks like you were given a nice opportunity, at a very early and inexperienced age.

PETERHANS: Right. It was like this all the time. Graham made me do a lot of things which—I don't even remember them all—I had to do a lot of little designs for him. He would give me a problem, and say, "On this plaza we have to—I don't like the way the stair goes," and many such things. "Why don't you look at it?" And so I made lots of studies. And then he picked one out, or he didn't. I was sort of his...

BLUM: His pencil?

PETERHANS: His whatever. Yes. So, it was interesting. And I didn't mind. I didn't mind that often my scheme didn't win, but sometimes it did. And it was a fabulous exercise, you know. I mean, I was not good in many things, I wasn't good at all, but just designing.

BLUM: When you got back to SOM, after Peterhans died, and you were working full-time, what was the office like? How large was it? Who was the head of it?

PETERHANS: Well, they had moved into the Inland Steel building, which, when I started working there, was not finished yet. And I had worked on some of the interiors.

BLUM: Oh, Mrs. Block's office.

PETERHANS: Amongst others. But I also worked with Jane and Graham on some of the typical floors. It was and still is one of the most interesting buildings. Did Graham ever tell you? The interior is a totally modular system; Modular and prefabricated, all metal. The ceiling was perforated metal with recessed lighting. The modular wall, again metal, factory finished, totally flexible, made by Hauserman. I think Hauserman was a Detroit firm; I'm not sure, but a Michigan firm, for sure.

BLUM: And the partitions for the workspace?

PETERHANS: These are modular metal partitions. The ceiling system was detailed so that it could receive the metal partitions. The modular metal partitions had every type: one with a door, one with a double door, one solid, one all glass, and one glass halfway up. There were four or five types of walls, and the doors came in bright colors. And we had a ¼" scale of an entire floor model in which you could insert these prefabricated walls. We could study the layouts in the model. There were also freestanding walls and scale furniture. It was fabulous. It was the most modern building in that respect in the late 1950s.

BLUM: You say all this was designed by Bruce? Did he design the partitions or just use them?

PETERHANS: I believe he designed them or at least he was involved with the design. They were convinced that they would make a fortune with this and it would be a system for the future. Eventually, they would sell all over the country. Everybody would start using this, there would no longer be messy gypsum or plaster walls. And since offices were constantly changing, this prefabricated system would be the future. Inland Steel's executive floor on the top of the building was done with these partitions. SOM had three floors in it. There were two floors, one big space mainly, on the side were offices, with these partitions. And then we had the so-called fifth floor, which had the partners' offices. And they did not use these Hauserman walls for their own offices.

BLUM: Why?

PETERHANS: Who knows. Maybe it wasn't good for the paintings. The Inland Steel executive floor, done by Davis Allen, did have the Hauserman partitions and they also had paintings. But for SOM's main floor—the executive floor—with something like eight partner offices—these partitions were not used. It was sort of ironic.



BLUM: Which floors did SOM occupy in Inland Steel?

PETERHANS: SOM had five, six and seven and part of the fourth floor. Half of the fifth floor was the designers' space.

BLUM: Now, there is the windowless service tower that couldn't be built like that today because of safety regulations.

PETERHANS: Really? You might be right but the building is still in use unchanged.

BLUM: Where did you work?

PETERHANS: In the design room at the north end of the fifth floor. We had these big tables all the way across, undivided, double-sided.

BLUM: Was that the drafting room?

PETERHANS: Yes, it was the designers' drafting room. Later for the office at 33 West Monroe, where SOM moved in 1980, I repeated these big tables there. I was the senior designer and I always liked these tables. They were forty to forty-two inches high resting on standard file cabinets. We sat on simple stools, high metal stools, without backs.

BLUM: And you were in the designers' drafting room.

PETERHANS: Yes, right here. Walter Netsch's office was on the west side and Bruce Graham's was on the east side.

BLUM: At the time you were working on this, was Bruce's group considered his studio or his team?

PETERHANS: They were called Graham's people and there were Walter's people. Fortunately, I never had to work for Walter. And there was the east and the west side, and they disliked each other. They each had a direct door from their private office into the design room, so you could sneak in there directly.

BLUM: Did Bruce's and Walter's conflict—and it is said they were in conflict a lot—did their conflict spill over onto other people in the office?

PETERHANS: Oh, of course. There were Walter's boys and Bruce's boys.

BLUM: Oh my. The teams.

PETERHANS: So, luckily, Gertrude, Peterhans' recent wife, worked for Walter. And I worked for Graham. That's very funny.

BLUM: Well, that was an even split.

PETERHANS: First I started to work for Jane who ran the interiors department. It was before we had moved in there; they were in two different buildings.

BLUM: When did Jane leave SOM?

PETERHANS: Well, in May or June 1960, Jane took me into her office, and said, "I'm marrying Graham." She had meanwhile been divorced. And Graham took me in the office, and he said, "Could you please—this is all coming in a hurry—could you please go to Jane's apartment in Hyde Park and move her things to my apartment?"

BLUM: Did he live in the same building?

PETERHANS: No, he lived in one of the Mies apartments on Diversey—he had a studio there. And she had a studio in one of the Pace-built buildings at the corner of 50th and Cornell in Hyde Park. I knew her apartment. I didn't know where he lived. He said, "because we are leaving tomorrow, and the movers didn't make it on time." So I went down there and supervised the movers, and moved Jane's furniture and boxes into his apartment. That's how fast it happened.

BLUM: I understand that there was a rule at SOM, if partner married partner, one had to leave.

PETERHANS: Right. So after they left on their trip, she didn't come back. And this is why just before, on that Upjohn project, she was so ambitious with that metal furniture. She was very involved, because she knew it was her last big job.

BLUM: And where did that leave you in the scope of their team?

PETERHANS: Well, so after this I had to finish up some thing on Upjohn but then I went to Graham, and said, "You know, I'm not really an interior designer, as you may have noticed. I want to work in architecture." And so, he put me to worked on some projects in architecture but you know, in a very minor way. They didn't know what I'd do, and I didn't know much. I had not built anything, except those little farmhouses in Germany, which when Myron saw them he said, "You'd better come to Chicago." So, then I worked with Myron on Brunswick.

BLUM: What were some of your earliest jobs?

PETERHANS: I did actually one interiors job still, I had started that, I think it was an accounting office, I think it was Arthur Andersen, or something, in the Harris Trust building, which already was under construction. And I did a whole floor.

BLUM: Did you do their interiors?

PETERHANS: Yes. But then, after that I wanted to get out and work as an interior designer.

BLUM: Did you custom design the furniture for the floor? Or did you select the furniture from what was available?

PETERHANS: Mostly select. I remember I designed a wood chair for the office because it was cheaper than the Knoll or Herman Miller chairs. A little Italian woodworking company located behind the Merchandise Mart made some tables and credenzas that I designed. Because I was good in woodworking I could go and tell the guy how to build it. We had a great time together, Al Mataliano and his son Franky.

BLUM: And that was what you did for Arthur Andersen?

PETERHANS: I think it was for Arthur Andersen. I'm not sure. It was something like Arthur Andersen, who were not yet so big at this time.

BLUM: How large was the SOM office when you went there the second time, full-time right after Peterhans died?

PETERHANS: Well, in those three and one-half floors we were about two hundred people: architects, engineers, interiors and some administration. The United States Air Force Academy was still in a special office. But they eventually moved back, as it slowed down. There were lots of projects at

that time and they had hired a guy, David Haid, who had been at Mies's office. He was a very good, very experienced architect and I was made to work with him. Graham said, "Work with him, he'll teach you."

BLUM: Did he?

PETERHANS: Yes, he taught me to the point that I went crazy. He was more exacting than Peterhans but without Peterhans' charm.

BLUM: Why was it so difficult working with David Haid?

PETERHANS: Well, I just had a hard time with him. But I learned a lot from him. I worked on a small bank which he designed. I did all the drawings. I learned how to draw from him. He was a real Mies boy. He built himself a very nice house, later in Evanston.

BLUM: He had a beautiful house.

PETERHANS: He also built an even nicer house, a weekend house, a wood house. After he got divorced, I know his wife Sheila very well. She was a very good friend of my best friend. During the time I worked for him I was baby-sitting for his little daughter when they were out-of-town and I took care of his two children for a long weekend. It was something else: my first experience with American children. And then later I did the same thing for Graham, but the Graham children were a bit less difficult.

BLUM: Did you have an ambition to become a partner when you began working at SOM?

PETERHANS: No. Never.

BLUM: Why not?

PETERHANS: I didn't want to sit in an office, you know. And I wanted to stay out in the drafting area.

BLUM: Did you have any idea that maybe there was a glass ceiling? That women at SOM could only go so far?

PETERHANS: No, I never, as I told you, I never had the feeling that women were less privileged. In Germany I had worked in some German offices, as a student already, before I came to Chicago and I didn't have a problem. And at SOM, I also never thought I had a problem as a girl.

BLUM: Some other women did.

PETERHANS: Yes, but I didn't. So, this is why also I never joined any of those women groups.

BLUM: Oh, you mean like the Women in Architecture group?

PETERHANS: Yes. If somebody called, like a newspaper would call and say, "I understand you're one of the few women working at SOM." I said, "Talk to me as an architect, don't talk about women in architecture. I never had a disadvantage, I felt I rather had an advantage.

BLUM: It's been said that there was a lot of competition between groups in the office.

PETERHANS: Mostly between Walter and Graham early on.

BLUM: Well, that was rather well-known but even on a lesser level. Did you feel that affected you or your work at all?

PETERHANS: No. After David Haid I worked with Myron—he was clearly my friend. Even so, I was not crazy about working for him, because he was so—oh, he was so—I worked with him on United Airlines. He was just so—every morning he said, "What did we decide yesterday about the doors?" I said, "Oh, we decided three days ago, and then we decided again two days ago, and now are we deciding again?" You know. And he wanted to go over it again and again.

BLUM: Was coming to a decision difficult?



PETERHANS: Sadly, I didn't have the patience. Yes, he was just too... He was Myron. So I was lucky. I said something once to Graham, and I no longer worked for Myron. He had his more loyal, more patient boys but then I left SOM and America.

BLUM: How long did you work for them in the 1960s, the early 1960s?

PETERHANS: Only until about 1962, I think, or 1963, when I went back to Germany.

BLUM: Why did you go back to Germany at that time?

PETERHANS: Well, my family urged me. They'd say, "What are you doing there? You have nobody there." And my father wanted me to become the architect for all the mental institutions in Germany.

BLUM: Was he in a position to give you those jobs?

PETERHANS: He could have, but I didn't want them. I said, "I don't like family jobs."

BLUM: Do I understand correctly that your brothers were in school here, in the United States?

PETERHANS: Two of my brothers had Fulbrights. They followed me.

BLUM: So you did have some family here.

PETERHANS: But they were gone by that time. The one, Peter, the theology student, was in Lawrence, Kansas in 1958 and Joerg, the engineer, was in Cleveland at—what is the name of the school?

BLUM: Case Western Reserve?

PETERHANS: Yes, Case, in 1960 to 1961. He did his masters in one year there. He was married already and his first son was born there. Both my brothers went back to Germany after one year. And the next ones didn't come. The two younger ones didn't come. Klaus studied law in Tübingen and Bonn; and Konrad studied industrial engineering in Munich and Darmstadt.

BLUM: Why didn't your brothers stay in the States?

PETERHANS: And they also felt America wasn't so hot. They told me I should come back. I would do better in Germany.

BLUM: Now, this was in the early 1960s.

PETERHANS: Right. Especially the engineer kept telling me, "I would have, to some extent, liked to stay, but I'm glad I went back, because you are always a foreigner in America." He went back and did very well.

BLUM: In Germany he's at home.

PETERHANS: Right. And my father wanted me to come back to take this job, because he felt I would be good at it—you know, build places for handicapped people. He said, “You grew up in it.” We lived in the middle of it since I was two. All my friends were mentally retarded people. So, this is why I still now feel very close to such people. I have picked up quite a few mentally retarded or bipolar, crazy people here in the streets, and have taken them to safety. Many of the street people are very good, just helpless. I have a very strong relationship to mentally troubled people.

BLUM: So did that offer tempt you enough to go back?

PETERHANS: No, I said I don’t want to do this, because I don’t want to have a job that is family-related.

BLUM: What was your thinking behind that?

PETERHANS: I just didn’t like that; as I didn’t want the women’s thing, you know. I wanted independence. And I didn’t want a family deal, you know.

BLUM: But you went back anyway. Why?

PETERHANS: I went back, because they convinced me I should come back, especially because my mother's health was poor. And so, I went back. But before I went I bought a Volkswagen for seven hundred dollars, and made a two-

month trip to Mexico and the southwest U.S. all on my own. This was my farewell trip to America.

BLUM: Where did you go in Mexico?

PETERHANS: All over, including Yucatan. I drove. For the first part a little Italian girl architect who worked in the SOM office wanted to come along. But she couldn't drive. I thought I wasn't coming back, so we took a trip all the way down along the Mississippi: St. Louis, Memphis, Natchez, New Orleans. It was fabulous. At that time, you know, there was nothing. All the plantations were still falling apart, and only a few black people living in them. Now, everything is touristy. So, we went through Texas, did again all the sites.

BLUM: What did Bruce say when you told him you were leaving?

PETERHANS: He said I could always come back. "Just call me." And that's what I did. I finally called him. I had to get a new visa, and everything. He immediately wrote a letter to immigration, and I came back. I had stayed in touch with Jane and him. He was doing a building in England in the mid 1960s.

BLUM: Oh, for the tobacco company?

PETERHANS: No, for Boots [Pure Drug Company]. The tobacco project came later. They came over several times, and I once went to meet them in London where I also met those British architects, especially Brian Henderson, who took me to see the Nottingham construction site. It was my first visit to England.

BLUM: So, when you were in Germany did you have a job?

PETERHANS: I had several jobs.

BLUM: Did you work with any of your brothers?

PETERHANS: No. My brother Joerg, the structural engineer, worked at that time for a famous Stuttgart engineer whom Myron had come to visit in 1950. When the 1972 Olympics were to be in Munich, I helped on the competition for that, with the Stuttgart office of Heinle-Wischer and Partners where I worked from 1965-1967.

BLUM: Was that for a stadium?

PETERHANS: For the whole thing. Yes, the stadium, and...

BLUM: And planning the grounds?

PETERHANS: The whole thing. We won the second prize and we built the Munich Olympic Village and the sports academy. I started to work on that until 1968 before leaving again for Chicago. The stadium was won by another Stuttgart architect, Guenther Behnisch. It was one of these lightweight structures influenced by Frei Otto. My brother became the engineer with the office, Fritz Leonhardt, in which he worked. He was the junior project engineer for the 1972 Olympics.

BLUM: Was this your brother Joerg?

PETERHANS: My brother Joerg. And Myron came over during construction. They knew each other from Myron's visits in the 1950s. He wanted to see what they were doing.

BLUM: And where were you working?

PETERHANS: From 1965 to 1967 I was with HWP in Stuttgart, a big German office. We did universities and hospitals, and also I had to do their own houses and their office. I was one of the main designers. They offered me partnership but I couldn't stand them.

BLUM: You couldn't stand them? What was the problem?

PETERHANS: Complicated story. I liked the one boss, but not the other one. When I left and they offered me partnership and everything; they just threw money

after me. They afterwards came to visit me here several times but I never went back. But that was the second office I worked for in Germany after leaving Chicago. First, I did a house for a friend and started a house for my parents.

BLUM: Were the houses Miesian-inspired?

PETERHANS: Of course. Flat roof with lots of glass. Except the third house, for my brother Joerg, which I did last and which couldn't have a flat roof, because it was located in an old village where the authorities insisted on sloped roofs.

BLUM: Were there codes that you had to comply with?

PETERHANS: Yes, right. But all three houses were very modern. They are all doing very well still. So, but then I first worked in Munich for Peter von Seidlein. He's a well-known German architect, who studied at IIT before me. I didn't know him before Peterhans' death, who thought he was a good architect.

BLUM: And he was in Germany?

PETERHANS: In Munich. Peterhans once visited him in Germany during his Ulm time. So, when Peterhans died, he immediately wrote me and said if I ever

wanted to go back to Germany, he would be very happy to work with me. Then he offered me partnership. But he was a real German.

BLUM: What do you mean by that?

PETERHANS: I mean he was really a real macho! His own wife was a very rich woman, very sweet and smart. She was kept like a little dog. Anything I did, he looked at five times before he said, "Yes, it's okay." I couldn't handle it. So after a year and a half in Munich, I quit. And then went to this other office in Stuttgart, Heinle-Wischer, which was partnership. They had a lot of public jobs with Peter von Seidlein. I worked mainly on one project for Siemens in Saarbrücken.

BLUM: On your brief bio at SOM, the years, 1963 to 1968 in Germany, list you as a free-lancer?

PETERHANS: Yes, I worked for all these offices free-lance.

BLUM: So you just took jobs that appealed to you?

PETERHANS: No, no, it's not like this. For instance, the Munich architect with whom I was supposed to form a partnership, but he could not make up his mind how we would share the pie. And he was very rich. He did not have to make money. His wife had the money. I would have been his first partner. But she warned me. She said, "Be careful with him."



BLUM: His wife warned you?

PETERHANS: Yes, I was very good friends with his wife, which was probably part of the problem. I knew all about him. She said, "Be careful with him, and make a very precise contract, because he'll cheat you wherever he can." Even though it was her money. So anyhow, I was a free-lancer in other words, I didn't have a contract. I was paying my own insurance and my own expenses, and so on. So, later on, when I joined an office in Stuttgart, I did the same. I was doing still some projects on my own on the side—these houses—so I wanted to be not totally tied down. But when I left, they were very nice and offered me also the same kind of everything. When I left Seidlein, he didn't even pay me a day of vacation, which I had coming. He was just like his wife said. But we remained sort of friends and later when he became a professor in Stuttgart he wanted me to become his assistant. But then I was at the HWP office, They had terrific jobs, mostly for the government.

BLUM: Very big jobs should have given you good experience.

PETERHANS: Yes, but one had to deal with the government architects, and some of them were still Nazis too. They were impossible. I could not stay polite. So, I resigned again and returned to Chicago.

BLUM: And what prompted you to leave?

PETERHANS: Well, mainly I just missed the professional quality of SOM at this Stuttgart office. And I was working day and night, trying to keep things together but I just couldn't.

BLUM: Do you mean you didn't get enough pay for the time you spent?

PETERHANS: Oh no. I got a lot of pay, more than ever, but I couldn't achieve the quality of work I was used to. And in Germany you cannot fire people. During the time I looked there, the office had shrunk just before I came. And then they suddenly got very busy and hired lots of new people. You couldn't even have a try-out time. So, some of the people were so bad and so lazy that you wanted to fire them but you couldn't. You had to give them, I think, a six-month notice. And then you still had to pay them severance. It is still the same now. So, it was impossible. I mean, Some were the laziest employees yet. You couldn't even tell them a piece of your mind. And I couldn't, I just couldn't handle it.

BLUM: The efficiency that you say—or the standards that you say you couldn't find in Germany, was that...

PETERHANS: No, professionally.

BLUM: Was that by SOM standards, or American standards?

PETERHANS: No, SOM's. I never worked anywhere else in the U.S. except that one summer in that little office in San Francisco. That was incredible. And at SOM you had everybody right there, all the engineers, and everything. But in Germany it was not that way.

[Tape 3: Side A]

PETERHANS: In Germany, as an architect, the bureaucracy is horrendous, spec writing for instance. While here in the U.S. you give written descriptions mainly of things that cannot be drawn or require additional information to the drawings and where you list manufacturers and their products you want to use in your building. Everything is shown on drawings. For instance, you show the wall elevations in the bathrooms with the tiles, baseboards, electrical outlets, lights, mirrors. The bidding contractor takes from your drawings the quantities, the square footage, the linear footage, as it applies. Now in Germany, the architect has to supply in the specs the exact quantities for everything and the contractor's price will be based on these quantities. Then afterwards, when the job is done, everything has to be once more verified as installed. In other words, measured on the job by the contractor with you on his side as witness. Only then is a final bill written and when the quantity on which you based your bid is no longer the same, be increased. Incredible! One spends more time and money with this system than you can imagine. The bureaucracy is unbelievable. And then if you deal with government, they want you to do this and this, and this, and this way rather than that way. It just felt ridiculous. So I was

frustrated. And I thought it may just be in my head that things are so much better in Chicago at SOM. So I wrote Graham, I wanted to come back for one year, and see. Maybe it was a wishful dream? I came with one little suitcase for one year, and I never went back. Yes, because professionally, no comparison.

BLUM: What kind of jobs did Bruce offer you?

PETERHANS: Well, he first said, "Oh, you better come back fast, you can have a terrific job." But there was nothing. "Not yet" he said. So, I did little things for about three-quarters of a year, or more.

BLUM: And then?

PETERHANS: At that time he did this housing project.

BLUM: Will you explain that housing project?

PETERHANS: Yes. It was an American—it was an effort towards low-income housing, I think, from HUD. It was an appeal to architects to come up with really low-cost housing: prefabricated, small but private houses at a very low cost. We can ask Tom Rosengreen about this, he was the senior designer on that. He left SOM shortly afterwards and opened his own firm. They tried to do a wood house with this Madison firm, Marshall Erdmann.

BLUM: Were these all prefabricated houses?

PETERHANS: Yes, prefabricated. They also did a prefabricated concrete house but I believe the wood house turned out to be less expensive. They worked on it at least two years and spent a fortune.

BLUM: Well do I understand what you're saying? That Graham, on his own, was developing this sort of urban renewal area with low-cost houses for HUD?

PETERHANS: Right. I believe so. It was this HUD challenge, a challenge on which many firms participated without pay.

BLUM: Was it a competition?

PETERHANS: I think it was a kind of a competition. SOM would have had a big job afterwards, if they succeeded.

BLUM: Did you work on that with Bruce?

PETERHANS: Very little, unfortunately.

BLUM: Who worked with him on that?

PETERHANS: As I said before, Tom Rosengreen who later on after he left SOM, established a kitchen furniture company.

BLUM: Kitchen cabinets?

PETERHANS: Yes. I don't really know why he left. I think he was frustrated. He was counting on doing this housing development.

BLUM: They didn't have a commission. Did they do it on their own initiative?

PETERHANS: I think so. It was not on commission, it was a nationwide competition. Could you come up with a solution? Other architectural firms worked on it. They also did site plans to show how the houses should join as double or even row houses. Marshall Erdman built one prototype, two houses next to each other in Evanston, west of Ridge, which stood for a long time. They did also put the furniture in, and everything. They were on display for a while and later were occupied. But they didn't succeed. I really don't know why. Maybe they couldn't make them cheap enough. Bruce was obsessed. It was his main interest. By the way, the Hancock was one of the main reasons, why I came back. Faz Khan, in 1966 or 1967, gave a lecture in Stuttgart University about the Hancock. And it was terrific. Afterwards, I met him with his wife.

BLUM: Was he working for SOM at the time?

PETERHANS: He was. The Hancock was already far into construction. He was, you know, the main engineer. He was the most active and nicest man. Nowadays Bill Baker comes to Stuttgart and gives lectures about SOM's high-rise buildings. My brother is retired now, from university and [Werner] Sobek, who was a student of my brother's, was the first recipient of the Fazlur Khan Scholarship. When Faz died, SOM put up an international scholarship in his name for engineers with architectural interests. The first guy who won was Werner Sobek.

BLUM: Why did Fazlur Khan's lecture have such influence on you?

PETERHANS: All of a sudden he appeared in Stuttgart and gave a lecture. I found out. My brother Joerg called me up, and said, "Did you know that Faz Khan is here giving a lecture? I can't go myself," he said. "Please you go, and say hello to him." The lecture was terrific. It made me ever more homesick for SOM. I thought it may be in my head that things are so perfect here, as sometimes happens, right? The faraway grass looks greener.

BLUM: And did your memory prove to have served you correctly?

PETERHANS: Right. And I moved into the Hancock.

BLUM: When you returned, did you work on the Hancock?

PETERHANS: No, it was not quite finished, but it was done. I had nothing to do with it. Bill Hartmann lived one floor above me. When I found out that he was going to live there, I made sure I was one floor below. I became good friends there with him and Benta, his new British wife.

BLUM: Was Hartmann a protectorate for you?

PETERHANS: Not really. He was famous for when you had worked all night for a presentation, and you had everything up in a conference room ready for the client, for the presentation. Bill would arrive fifteen minutes before, all groomed and fresh smelling; while we were dirty, after having worked all night. And he would walk in, and find right away the only misspelled word, just like that.

BLUM: That's amazing.

PETERHANS: That's how I met him, first really. You were ready to kill him, you know. But then, I got to like him, in spite of the story with Mies.

BLUM: When you came back, and returned to SOM, what job were you given?

PETERHANS: Well, first I was working on odds and ends. I developed the details for the interiors of the Sears lobbies: escalator details, wall and floor design, lighting, elevator cabs and entrances, etc. Then I had to work with the graphic designers who did the signage that was quite involved in a



building with double-decker elevator cabs. I designed the fountains for the initial Sears plaza. All this has meanwhile been changed.

BLUM: The years, 1963-1968, that you were in Germany were tumultuous in the United States.

PETERHANS: Right.

BLUM: There were assassinations, and there were protests and there were demonstrations. And almost everything was in a state of flux.

PETERHANS: Well I still was here for the Kennedy assassination.

BLUM: Yes, that was all part of the upheaval. Did you sense that there was anything like that developing in architecture?

PETERHANS: Well, one thing I sensed was that when I walked in at SOM for a job, as a student, I wore sandals and no stockings. It was summer; it was hot. The receptionist, whose name was Betty, was a very elegant lady with mink coats, said, "We have no work." And I was out the door. She looked me up and down, and said, "We are not hiring right now." And out I was. I realized that part of it was probably my attire when I was trying to get my first job in 1957. But, somehow I got in after all. I remember how she looked up and down at me when I came from the inside after I had been hired after she had kicked me out. So, you know, you had to be really

dressed up for the job. The country was still very formal in the early 1960s. Remember the story with the dean of women at IIT? All this had gone away. Things were really liberated when I came back. There was a whole different attitude. People would even wear sweaters in their office, before it was strictly shirt and tie. You didn't have to wear stockings in the summer. But you know, that is superficial stuff. The country had gotten much more liberal on every subject.

BLUM: What had happened with the African-American issue in the office? Were there any African-American architects on staff?

PETERHANS: There were still hardly any. In fact, I'm trying to think... David Sharpe was there and Andre [R.] King. He became SOM's graphic design chief. He's from New Orleans and now one of my best friends. Every year he makes a little house for me at Christmas. He is a very light, very elegant black man. When I met him first at SOM he was still a boy and he did the graphics. Graham and Walter both liked him and he worked with both of them. In fact, he was a very good friend of Walter's until he died. He visited him regularly. And then there was Bob Page who was even younger, and he started working in the mailroom.

BLUM: Was he an architecture student?

PETERHANS: I don't know. He later on went to the Art Institute. I think Graham kind of protected him. The story I heard was that he had been in trouble...

BLUM: With the police?

PETERHANS: Perhaps. Graham had contact with some ministers. It also could have been Walter who helped him. Walter built a church near Cabrini Green during this time, a very beautiful small church center. They took him in because someone must have asked them to take in this kid and try to see what he can do. He later became a successful fabric designer. For a while he taught at Randolph 37 and wanted to open an art center. I helped him looking at the small old factory he had in mind, measuring it and making drawings of it and preliminary layouts. Charles Duster was another African-American at SOM. His grandmother was a famous civil rights lady. There were not many at SOM.

BLUM: Was there any informal sensitivity training within SOM?

PETERHANS: Not really, but there was another young black man, Leonard Hilary, who is now a professor at IIT, like David Sharpe. Hilary sent me a Christmas card and he said that he saw a photograph of me, that I am getting fat. And there were some others. Eventually, you know, there was a general partner, Bob Wesley. He was a very good friend even though he was one of Walter's boys. He built himself a very beautiful house on the far South Side. Now he is retired in Arizona.

BLUM: Well, I'm wondering how did SOM respond to the issue?

PETERHANS: Again, there were very few blacks. But I believe that it was not that SOM did not want to hire black architects but that there were very few black men and women studying architecture. I was told that it was not considered a successful profession among blacks.

BLUM: At the same time as African-Americans were trying to find a voice, so were women.

PETERHANS: Right. That was the time of the women's lib.

BLUM: How many women were in the workforce at SOM?

PETERHANS: On the design floor, in 1962 at most three, besides the two or three in interior design jobs. Natalie de Blois came. This is before I left for Germany, Natalie was brought to Chicago from the New York office. We worked together for a short while on the Equitable building. She claims everything on this building but it really was Graham. In fact, she fought him on many things. So, he made me do the window wall mock-up, where I had to go to a small local shop who made wood porches for residential buildings with classical wood columns, painted white. Equitable wanted to have granite on the façade. So, Graham's idea was to make the spandrels granite under the glass windows. We chose a granite of a color, which from a distance looked like glass, like opaque glass. So, I had to find this granite and put it in the half-scale model, where it looked

like granite from close-up. They didn't realize that from afar it would not look like granite anymore. So, all the spandrels are granite on the Equitable. And Natalie's main contribution was the grayish, greenish color of the anodized window wall that went well with that granite. But she claims the round stair. The round stair was Graham's idea for which I did the detailing, which is not so hot. She says it's her stair.

BLUM: Well, I thought the team—the studio, quote unquote, was the organizational approach of SOM. In that way, no one got much personal credit, but everyone got credit.

PETERHANS: Right.

BLUM: And as a result, the project was enriched, because of shared ideas.

PETERHANS: Right. Yet Graham played a very strong role design-wise on anything major. Anyhow, so I worked on the Equitable before I left, with Natalie. And I learned a lot from her.

BLUM: Well, she had been a protégé of Gordon Bunshaft's. What did you learn from her, for example?

PETERHANS: Stone detailing, for instance. How to coordinate the structural and mechanical engineering. She was very experienced and very professional.

BLUM: When you were on, say Equitable, if you were doing some work there, was there ever a reason to go to City Hall and talk with the politicians?

PETERHANS: I never had to do that. Never. My German accent...

BLUM: Do you think that your accent was a deterrent to opportunities for you?

PETERHANS: I don't know. I don't know why I was not sent to City Hall. Once I was. I didn't find it a big treat being sent there.

BLUM: Were other women on the job invited to go to City Hall?

PETERHANS: I have no idea. But, as I said, there were besides me for a while only three interiors girls: Dolores Miller, Judy Costas and Audrey, whose last name I've forgotten.

BLUM: And when SOM office was in Inland Steel?

PETERHANS: At Inland Steel, in architecture, there was Gertrude Kerbis, for a short time. Then she left and went to C.F. Murphy to work on the Seven Continents restaurant at O'Hare Airport. Then with Natalie or a little after, Luigi [Mumford]. Luigi came from one of the famous universities.

BLUM: Luigi had studied at Cornell.

PETERHANS: Oh, yes. And she got married during this time. And she was from a famous old Chicago family.

BLUM: Mumford?

PETERHANS: Mumford. Yes. It would be Mumford, right. She seemed very smart, but she was not a real—she didn't really get very far. I don't know why. She left when I returned in 1969, when Nancy Abshire was there. When I came back there were a few more girls. But I almost forgot Karen Thompson. She studied at IIT in the early 1960s. Black and brilliant from Washington D.C., where her mother had been an architect on the Washington Cathedral. She was an expert on Gothic architecture but she died early. She worked for a short time with us, extremely talented but troubled. She also had asthma. I tried for a long time to be of help to her. After I came back in the late 1960s she studied at the Art Institute and introduced me to Dennis Adrian's lectures. When I returned from London she had disappeared.

BLUM: When you returned in 1968?

PETERHANS: Yes. Nancy Abshire and there was one or two other girls. Nancy from Ohio, studied at Northwestern and became and still is a very good friend. She's still working. She's over sixty-five, and she's still going. She just came back from Dubai this week. She had to go there. She's a project manager although she started out as a designer. They channel you as you

get a little older, they channel you, and you find out sooner or later what you are. You're not being told.

BLUM: Who makes the decision that you would be a good project manager and moves you into that position?

PETERHANS: There are lots of boys too, you know, who are moved into management or technical coordination.

BLUM: Who makes those decisions?

PETERHANS: I don't know. They must have their meetings, you know.

BLUM: Do you mean the partners?

PETERHANS: Right. But I never was in such a meeting where that was decided. Later when I was an associate I would go to meetings where you'd decide who would get fired or laid off. It was terrible. You had to work with those people still a week before they were thrown out, within an hour. It was terrible. But I was never in a meeting where they said, this guy now, we'd better move him out of design. It just sort of happened. Well, I never managed to get out of design, you know, because it's all I could do. Everyone started the same way. You didn't start as a designer, or a working drawing person.



BLUM: Well, you started in interiors.

PETERHANS: True, right. That was because I thought that was all I could get a job at, as a student, you know. And they hired me only because they saw in my resume that I had worked with a cabinetmaker. Jane saw that, and then they called me. I sent in my resume, in spite of this intimidating woman at the front desk, Then Jane called me up, and said, "Do you have some experience in cabinet work?" I said, "Yes." "Why don't you come in?" And she hired me. And so did Davis Allen, with those fake drawings.

BLUM: What was your first big job?

PETERHANS: Baxter. And that's what he wanted me to come back for.

BLUM: Now this design was the campus idea.

PETERHANS: Right. See, he knew that I had worked in Germany on laboratories in hospitals and universities. So he thought I would be... Baxter wanted to build new laboratories, besides offices originally.

BLUM: In Deerfield?

PETERHANS: Yes. So we went to study their existing facilities, and their whole company, labs and offices. We made design studies. A laboratory building is a science in itself, worse than hospitals. It would have been

interesting to do labs but we had to show them what you have to do. For modern you have to make practically a double floor. The famous example is Louis Kahn's famous Salk laboratories in La Jolla, California. All double floors.

BLUM: Why is it necessary to have double floors?

PETERHANS: Well, because there is so much technical installation involved. Every station has all these media come to it, not only water, distilled water, gas, special exhaust. I forgot what else. There are five or six different medias coming to it. Then there has to be an exhaust for this whole thing, because they are burning stuff there, you know. And this stuff has to eventually be changed. One laboratory group, all of a sudden, needs twice as much oxygen, or twice as much... I forgot all these names of the stuff. It's a science. And so, the plumbing, which comes down onto each desk, has to be accessible and changeable. And the only practical way is if it is on a special floor. So there is a nine-foot high laboratory floor on which you have your tables, and all of this. Down from the ceiling above, there's probably a seven-foot high accessible space where a person can walk in and work in, and change all that plumbing. It's very expensive. And only that really makes sense.

BLUM: It's a highly specialized field.

PETERHANS: Right. Well, at Baxter's existing plant they still had an old-fashioned set-up. They were in a fifteen-foot high, fourteen-foot high old shed, an old factory. There were very tall spaces and all the media were just hanging over their heads with lamps underneath.

BLUM: So, SOM was hired to do new laboratories?

PETERHANS: It was supposed to be both laboratories and offices. Well, after we made these studies of new laboratories, they decided to stay where they were with the labs and to only build new offices, their office headquarters.

BLUM: Were you project manager and senior designer on that job?

PETERHANS: Senior designer, yes, under Graham I was making the studies. Technical architects were also very involved. Baxter has just now decided to expand again. They originally had a huge site out there; but after I understand, they have meanwhile sold one-half. The next problem was that they wanted to build out there in the nowhere but now the entire area is all built up. Yet they wanted to build out there. They claimed that the people that worked for them had to be quality people which they could only find in the suburbs.

BLUM: Why do you think they felt that way?

PETERHANS: Well, they considered them to be more reliable. For the laboratories they needed to have professionals: doctors, chemists, etc. In their offices, they needed professionals too, because they were dealing with pharmaceutical work. So in spite of building on a site, not close to any public transportation, no CTA, no Metra, they insisted on building out there. The site was right on A94 with an exit nearby. Everybody was going to drive to work. And even so, they were making efforts to make people carpool, still two out of three employees came by car. So in other words, out of eight hundred employees, seven hundred came by car. So you had to park seven hundred cars.

BLUM: So where did they have the space to park all those cars?

PETERHANS: Right. All these cars had to be parked so that they could walk to their office within minutes without getting rained, or snowed on in the winter. And also, they were not working in shifts; all the people had to be able to come in the morning at eight-thirty. There was a small grace period, about three quarters of an hour. Everybody got in within three-quarters of an hour. Everybody had to be able to drive in and out within that period morning and evening. Some offices have shifts, like some people would come at eight, and some would come at ten; and they leave at four, and others left at six. At Baxter everybody had to be there at the same time. So this resulted in a huge garage, with an approach that could handle this. We ended up with bridges and a double helix ramp. The same thing for the cafeteria. They did not want to have shifts. They didn't

want to eat in shifts because they worked together. They didn't want their people to be away from their desks more than forty-five minutes. They had to be able to eat at the same time and in an attractive space with choice food.

BLUM: Did their needs require a much larger facility?

PETERHANS: Yes. That's why we had to design this huge dining hall, a very fancy dining hall, eventually. And then they wanted—Mr. William Graham, who was, you know, a Chicago number—he was on the opera board and on everything, I found out later. I had no idea then. He was CEO of Baxter and he wanted a significant building. And so, the cafeteria became this funny cable structure, which you know.

BLUM: The mast-hung roof. Did you have any experience with that type of construction before then?

PETERHANS: Not exactly, perhaps more than most because of my brother's involvement with the Munich Olympic roofs, also with cables and stuff. And I knew the student who did a cable supported roof for his thesis. It was a railroad station, much bigger than the Baxter cafeteria. We always credit him and his thesis for having influenced this design. I knew Larry Kenny very well. He's a good friend of mine. But it basically made no sense for a building like this to do such cables from masts. Here is a photograph of the mast-held roof of the cafeteria taken from the

expressway. Well, it shows the significance. We had developed a system where the garages were in the center and were accessible very easily and fast. And the buildings were sitting around, connected with bridges. We called the buildings, pavilions. Anyhow, the buildings were only two or three stories high and to facilitate their access they were connected with small links so that you could keep adding more pavilions. And we decided to make the buildings without any columns.

BLUM: Were columns inside?

PETERHANS: None. It was similar to the Inland Steel building, no columns. That was because I always thought the Inland Steel was fabulous as a building.

BLUM: Because of the free space?

PETERHANS: Yes, right. And within the columnless plan, you know, you can do anything So I remember I suggested, "Why don't we do free span?" And Graham said, "I think it's a good idea," or something like this. But they always had to go through him, always. He was really very involved in all these projects. Which also, when you read about his work with Faz, was in Mir M. Ali's book.

BLUM: Whose idea was it to mast-hold the roof?

PETERHANS: The mast? It was Bruce and Faz together. But the significance was still missing for [William] Graham. And I remember when they got together, Graham and Khan, we were there all together and there was a technical guy, Richard Smits. We were all talking about how could we make this building... How should we build this building, the big box, big dining hall significant? And all of a sudden Graham said, "Why don't we make the masts, Larry Kenny's masts?" Larry was Faz's student at IIT. And Faz jumped at it, just like it's written up in his book. And I remember, I said, "It's a little too much, isn't it?" because Larry Kenny's was a railroad station, and there were lots of masts and at Baxter we could have only two.

BLUM: The quantity differed but the concept was the same.

PETERHANS: Yes, right. His was a railroad station and there were three or four rows of them. And Faz said, "Yes, it is a little problematic, because with only two, they will have a tilting problem, making them stand up." And he said, "Oh, but we can solve that." Bruce asked, "Can you solve that, Faz?" Yes, he can solve it. It was sort of like this, you know. They were just like boys. It was great. And then the other thing that I remember, Bill Hartmann walked in with his pipe. "Oh, what are you doing? Oh, masts? Oh, why not? Let's try it."

BLUM: And were you in on these meetings?

PETERHANS: Oh yes I was. I was right there in Bruce's office. And then I had to draw it up, and work it out, you know—how this would work within the area. And we worked it out, and Mr. [William] Graham liked it. I remember there was one meeting before with Mr. Graham—where he said he wanted something significant. He was not crazy about what we previously showed him. He said, “Couldn’t we put the executive building on top of the cafeteria?” And I said, “Yes. And add it as a little tower, and call it Baxter City.” And he said, “Shut up!”

BLUM: Who said that to you?

PETERHANS: Mr. Graham. “Shut up.”

BLUM: Were you poking fun at the story Bruce tells about the cigarette packs and how Hancock took shape?

PETERHANS: Well, to say Baxter City, you know, was kind of not nice. I was kicked out of the meeting. Bruce Graham and Bill followed me.

BLUM: You were kicked out of the meeting?

PETERHANS: I ran out after he said, “Shut up.”

BLUM: Was it good-natured? Or was he angry?



PETERHANS: No, he was mad. And I immediately left the room. I refused to go back in. Bruce and Bill Hartmann followed me. And I said, "I'm not going to work for this man again. Why can't I say something like this?" They said, "That's a little too much. You have to tone it down. But later on, when I was in meetings again [William] Graham was very friendly to me and I heard from [Bruce] Graham years later that this Mr. William Graham said to him that he thought I was great.

BLUM: Really?

PETERHANS: Yes. But I'm not sure it's true. Bruce may just have made it up. But here is one more nice thing about Baxter. These links became tearooms—the links between the pavilions became the so-called tea base for coffee and tea during the day. They couldn't go to the cafeteria, that was too far. So we had a little tea base there, where they had automats and with nice furniture and plants.

BLUM: It sounds like a nice arrangement to keep employees content.

PETERHANS: Very nice little arrangement. And then we put artwork on the walls. We had glass on three sides and one outside wall. And I suggested photography. And Mr. [William] Graham thought it was a great idea. And I said, "Chicago photographers, of course." I went around and looked for photographers. And I met lots of photographers, some through the Art Institute and some through the Institute of Design and

Columbia College. And eventually, Mr. Graham liked best the one I liked best, Barbara Crane. You know her, right?

BLUM: Yes, I know her work.

PETERHANS: This was her first big success. And she did all these for the tea bases, each a different thing. Most photographs related to Baxter, some are abstract too. They are all lots of fun and most inventive. And we became very good friends.

BLUM: Why did you select photography of all the arts?

PETERHANS: Well, because you know, I always liked photography as art.

BLUM: Did you take photographs yourself?

PETERHANS: Not much. Well, yes, of course I did. Architecture only. But it was fun to meet all these photographers. And I still have some pictures from the time. I bought some of the ones that didn't succeed. We presented three photographers to Mr. Graham of Baxter and he picked Barbara Crane. One of the most unusual things he picked, in fact, was an abstract thing. He said, "I like this the best, but most people in my company won't understand it. So couldn't you come up with something relating to us?" And she made some fabulous stuff. They were glued to the wall.

BLUM: Was this for security reasons?

PETERHANS: No. Because we felt as soon as you put it in a frame, you could take it off and sell it. There were some artists who don't like their work to be in frames. It was at this time when these considerations came up. That a work of art bought from an unknown artist that was sold after ten or twenty years for thousands without the artist getting any of it. And we kind of all agreed, and Mr. Graham agreed on this too. So they are glued to the wall. So then, for the main entrance we wanted a huge mural on the wall and I called up Larry Rivers. And he was dying to do it. But Mr. Graham thought that was over-the-top.

BLUM: Do you mean too modern?

PETERHANS: Too expensive I think. Anyhow, he had a friend who did it, a Chicago artist, not bad. It was nice but I thought Larry Rivers could have done an outstanding job you know, something which is historic, with Martin Luther King in one corner, and Kennedy in the other, or just history, or whatever. It would have been great, this huge mural. But it didn't fly.

BLUM: Did you do any of the furniture for Baxter?

PETERHANS: Well, SOM did the whole interior.

BLUM: So it was another job, doing everything?

PETERHANS: Right. We did all the interiors. And it was Margaret McCurry, who started out but then left. I don't remember why. George Larson continued where she left off. He is to this day, a good friend of mine. Margaret, for instance, suggested that all the toilet partitions should be dark blue. And I think the metal furniture is dark blue. George Larson did the executive offices. And we had a glass wall by Duane Valentine there.

BLUM: Who selected white for the color of the building? How did that come about?

PETERHANS: Graham and I.

BLUM: Hancock was black and Sears was black. Why was Baxter white?

PETERHANS: But see, that was in the city. This book quotes Graham why he wants black in the city. While out there in the country, white was clean and seemed right. We also had the Farnsworth House as an influence. Sasaki did the landscape. They had a little forest in front. We had it already in the layout, basic site plan. Sasaki convinced Baxter that we should keep that little woods and make the main entry road curve around it. Very simple, minimal. We also were concerned about the water run-off. You know, the problem the Farnsworth House has with floods. All these suburban developments have severe run-off water problems because miles of paved areas and no proper drainage. The rainwater has nowhere

to go. We made it a feature. We have ponds all around. It turned out we needed a huge amount of ponds to provide properly for the run-off water. One could not landscape lower than two and a half feet above the water. No plants could exist in this flooding area.

BLUM: Was this Sasaki's idea?

PETERHANS: Right. Together we laid out the whole plan, the whole series of ponds. And again, in front of the executive building, the huge pond with the entry drive going around it, is full of ducks and geese. The grass is everywhere and is left uncut except right at the buildings. Wild grass is left and only mowed once a year or so with lots of wild flowers. It was very nice.

BLUM: Do you think there was any carry over from Baxter to McCormick Place II?

PETERHANS: The cables? No, not really. They're totally different. They're in one direction and these are in all directions. We didn't have much money, so we detailed them very crudely. I didn't mind. My brother Joerg when he saw them was shocked.

BLUM: Because it wasn't finished very finely?

PETERHANS: Well, German companies do it better. They do very meticulous work, too much, in my opinion. I think our Baxter details for the cable are very simple, on brown brick floors for the cafeteria. For the service counters we picked hand glazed colorful tiles. I drew every tile at full scale, there were no computers yet, to be cut exactly to fit.

BLUM: Did you design any furniture for Baxter?

PETERHANS: I myself? No. That was George Larson but we discussed everything together. I had to fly to Florida to select the big indoor trees, for the lounge area in the cafeteria. They were growing somewhere south of Miami in the nowhere, crocodiles walking around! The trees were fifteen-to eighteen-feet high and had to be of a shape that would allow them to be tied up to fit through the building's doors.

[Tape 3: Side B]

BLUM: Brigitte, you mentioned Jane Graham while we were off tape. Would you speak about that, please?

PETERHANS: Well, she was a very good friend of mine. I don't know but I may have not lasted at SOM so well, because I was controversial, if she didn't tell Graham that he should stand up for me because some of the very American boys did not like me.

BLUM: Why?

PETERHANS: I don't know. I think I was too outspoken and sometime I didn't like to compromise. But Jane—well, I might as well tell the story about Jane now. Jane was from Vienna, Austria. She and her parents were in Poland visiting in August 1939, at the beginning of World War II. Her father was Slovakian and a banker, and her mother was Viennese. Jane grew up mostly in Vienna. But at the beginning of World War II, they happened to be in Poland, visiting some friends when suddenly Hitler attacked Poland. They escaped into Russia but did not realize that Hitler had made a pact with Stalin. They immediately were arrested and shipped to Siberia in a cattle train where her parents had to work in a gulag in the forests. Jane was eight or nine years old and she was put in a Russian school. They had, in the gulags, good schools for prisoners' children. Otherwise it was a terrible life in those gulags in extreme climates. So she was there until Hitler attacked Russia. Then they were freed, and they...

BLUM: They were freed by the Germans?

PETERHANS: No, no, no. They were still in Siberia at the very north end. This was in fall of 1941. Hitler never got to Siberia. I always wanted to write down her story, but she refused to really tell details.

BLUM: Well, I'm glad you have this opportunity right now to put on record what you remember she said.

PETERHANS: But she refused to give me really details; even in the last weeks of her life, she would not. She said, "Oh well, who cares about it?" To continue—they were freed by Russians and shipped down to south Russia, in the area of Samarkand, which was a Muslim area. And she, all her life, was very much in love with that Muslim architecture there. Her parents started to work in a factory, and after saving every penny, they opened a little weaving shop of their own, from what I understand. Jane again went to an excellent Russian school. But anyhow, everything in the south of Russia was very, very, very primitive. And when the war ended in 1945, they went straight back to Austria and on to Germany. She had an uncle—her mother's brother who was in the American army in Munich—and they met up with him there. Obviously, both trips in and out of Russia were in cattle cars. She had an unbelievable life. And she spoke quite fluently, Russian and good Polish. Then they came to Munich, where her uncle got them an apartment in a house with some Germans. And she always told me that these Germans resented having to put up a foreign family in their house. But that happened all over Germany at this time, all these fugitives. Millions. Not all of them German. The Abends, Abend was Jane's maiden name, also were resented by these Germans at first, but since they were such nice people and they spoke fluent German they ended up being friends with those Germans. And Jane went to Munich University and studied architecture. The chair, which I showed you in the photographs from Upjohn, was the chair that she redesigned. It was not a Doellgast. He was her favorite professor, who is very well-



known in Munich. He had survived the Nazi period. And he reconstructed the half-bombed Pinacoteca, which is still one of the best reconstructions ever done in Germany after the war. The chair, which I showed you at Upjohn, was a Riemerschmid chair that Jane redesigned. It became a very popular chair for a while. Anyhow, she eventually came to the States with her parents to New York first. Again, you know, they started from scratch. And she went to an American college where she met her first husband. When I first met Jane, she was still married to him.

BLUM: Was this Johnson?

PETERHANS: Yes, Ken Johnson. And then she married Graham suddenly, after. I told you the story already of how they suddenly took off, and I had to move her furniture. When she married Graham they went straight to Austria, to the places she loved as a child. They always went there, later too. They would go to very rural places, and Graham had to stay in farmhouses, in little bed and breakfasts, because she loved this rural Austria.

BLUM: You had so much in common including language. Were you good friends?

PETERHANS: Oh, yes. We'd always talk German. And often, when they came to Europe, and later too, in the 1990s, after Bruce and I retired, I would meet them in Austria or southern Germany or in Tuscany and we would go sightseeing. She just loved Austria to her last day—old villages, churches,

castles— even when she was going blind from a brain tumor and I stayed with her. But yes, that’s about all I can say about her.

BLUM: Okay. You know, we talked a little bit about the social unrest of the late 1960s, with the civil rights movement, and feminism, and the Vietnam War. All of this was taking place at the same time as Modernism was loosing favor. And also there was an energy crisis followed by inflation. Early in the 1970s, Nat Owings published *The Spaces In Between* in which he wrote that SOM used to do very good cutting-edge buildings; but at this time, in the 1970s, he said, “They’re just order takers.”

PETERHANS: It was completely out. Right. There was Stanley Tigerman's famous collage, you know, who had worked at SOM, and who made his famous collage, *The Sinking of the Titanic*. Crown Hall was going down on a slope into the ocean, sinking. And people like him, you know, became totally anti-Modern, anti-Mies. Eventually, even Graham had to compromise, because the partners, I think, pushed him to get jobs because the clients no longer wanted modernist buildings. So he designed and built the One Magnificent Mile and Three First National. I don't remember them all. I blocked this period out of my mind. We worked on a housing project for Louisville [Kentucky], which was a suburban development and Postmodern. But fortunately, I did not have to continue working on it. I was lucky. I got out without any Postmodern buildings.

BLUM: How did SOM cope with all of these changes? Was this change reflected in their commissions, in their design?

PETERHANS: Yes but for some reason, I was lucky. After Baxter, I left the firm for nine months. My problem was my parents at home, and I was a good German daughter. My mother was not a very healthy. She was often very sick. So every vacation, at least once every year I had to go back home. And I only managed on the way to make a two-day stop and look at some architecture: Lisbon, Madrid, Barcelona, Brussels, etc. somewhere. But after Baxter, I took a nine-month leave of absence to take care of my mother who was very sick, and when I came back Postmodern really had set in. I only worked on small, intermediate projects. I don't even remember what I did. One of them was in Louisville, this urban thing where we made a circular plaza. Fortunately in the late 1970s already came that Egyptian project.

BLUM: Well, how did SOM, collectively, cope with all these transformative changes?

PETERHANS: Oh God, I try not to remember all those Postmodern projects. They did a Postmodern building in Ohio, in Columbus, Ohio. But they managed to always have a few clients left which stuck with them, like Hines.

BLUM: You know, Nat Owings implied in what he wrote in his book in 1973 that SOM has grown so big that they now have a formula, and nothing is distinctive or individual about what they're doing.

PETERHANS: Well, Owings hated Sears Tower. And the Sears Tower was not yet Postmodern. And SOM was going to move into Sears. SOM's office had gotten quite big, and so were in different buildings: one group was still left in the Inland Steel, one in a building next to it; and earlier, the Air Force Academy had their own space in a building on Wabash. And then eventually, we opened another for the Hajj, another big office on Madison. It was very impractical. The partners and the engineers had to run forth and back. So, when Sears first finished, Bruce had the idea to move into one of the lower levels of Sears, so we could all be on one floor, one of these huge floors. But Nat Owings said, if SOM moves in there, he's going to fire Graham.

BLUM: Why was he so opposed to it?

PETERHANS: Well, he hated Sears. He thought it was a monster building, and it was bad for Chicago. SOM Chicago and Bruce Graham, he was trying to resist Postmodern.

BLUM: But Modernism had enjoyed decades of popularity, and for some time everyone wanted to build modern. But it ran its course and was followed by Postmodern.

PETERHANS: Right. And Postmodern really was something like a twelve, fifteen year period, where everybody ran the other way. Michael Graves's and Robert A.M. Stern's old-fashioned buildings, became very fashionable. There were people in the office who had no problem with these things. Graham had problems, but he eventually also was pushed in this direction, and we mentioned the One Mag Mile building.

BLUM: Didn't Adrian Smith pick up the slack at that point? He was doing Postmodern.

PETERHANS: Yes, for instance, the one in Boston in which Graham was involved, by the way. Adrian was not yet a partner when he did that Boston work—what is it called?

BLUM: Rowes Wharf?

PETERHANS: Right. And the office in Chicago was lucky, because at this time, the Arabs showed up with the Arab International Bank in Cairo. It was not Saudis, it was Egyptian, Kuwait and Libyan money. We got very involved in Arab culture and architecture. I was the senior designer and I went to Spain, on my own, to see the Alhambra, Cordoba, Seville and so forth. And Graham was very interested and knowledgeable because he had spent his youth in South America, in Peru where the colonial architecture was very influenced by the Moors. So this was a whole new

field. And also, at the same time, shortly afterwards, came the big Mecca project.

BLUM: Yes. Could we just step back? Before we get into the Middle East and the jobs there, what was happening in, say, Chicago or New York? According to what I've read, the developers became the clients. And that's when the quality of what SOM designed was dictated by someone who was only interested in the bottom line. What is your understanding of this issue?

PETERHANS: Yes, that's how we felt. We felt that in order to get jobs, we had to do what developers asked for. Graham compromised, and even Myron Goldsmith did the building in Philadelphia, in red brick with—I forgot whether they had arches or not. But then Graham was lucky. He had some smaller projects like the one in Madison, and the one in Wichita, where he could still kind of come up with some really new ideas, which were not exactly Postmodern. They were quite interesting, in my opinion. But I hardly worked on any of these buildings, because at that time already, after I came back from my nine-month leave of absence in Germany, I started immediately working on this Arab International Bank [AIB]. And we had Egyptian architects coming here, young architects, something like ten of them. We also had to take care of them. We had to, you know, show them around, and I was sort of the mother hen. We had to have them over on weekends and at night, for dinner. They were not used to an American environment. And it was winter, a very cold winter.

We took them over to John Deere on the Mississippi, and then up to Minneapolis on two-day trips, to see America. It was fun.

BLUM: How did SOM get the job in Egypt?

PETERHANS: They came to us. I don't know exactly why and how. I think it had something to do with one Egyptian architect working for Hyatt.

BLUM: Was SOM doing work in Egypt for Hyatt?

PETERHANS: No. Wagih Hanna was a son of a well-known Egyptian engineer, and he had worked on hotels for Hyatt in Cairo. He may have brought them to us. I don't know. The AIB project included a big Hyatt hotel. It may have also something to do with the other big Arab project SOM Chicago was supposed to build, a women's university in Mecca.

BLUM: Were you in that studio?

PETERHANS: No, only on the side.

BLUM: What do you mean, on the side?

PETERHANS: Only sort of once in a while. No, I didn't really work on that. I only was sometimes helping out, because I knew something about Arab architecture.

BLUM: And you think that could have been the connection for SOM to get this job for the bank?

PETERHANS: Could be. I don't know. The problem is, I had never anything to do with the business part. And I wasn't even interested in it. I knew nothing about it, I'm ashamed to admit. I was sent over to Egypt to see Muslim architecture in Egypt, to see the site. I was taken to Luxor, and Cairo, including old Cairo. And it was ironic that they would not let me travel alone.

BLUM: Do you mean because you were a woman?

PETERHANS: Because the Chicago architect thought it would be dangerous for a woman. They were more chicken than I was.

BLUM: Oh, you mean they were protecting you?

PETERHANS: Yes, right. But I was protecting them, because they were so intimidated by the environment in Egypt, because it was a little different. And I didn't have any problems, because I'd been in Turkey and other places before.

BLUM: Did SOM do anything to help their people who were going to do the jobs? What did SOM do to help you understand the Arab culture, where you were going to work?



PETERHANS: They first sent me over alone. I had to meet the project manager in Munich at the airport so I could travel with him and not arrive in Cairo alone. I had been visiting my sick mother on my way. In Cairo I had to meet and get to know the local architect.

BLUM: Was this project manager to be your counterpart in Egypt?

PETERHANS: Yes, it was before we started the designing. Before the Egyptians came over. It was in the early design phase. There had been a preliminary phase before, an urban feasibility study done mostly by the planning group with Roger Seitz in charge. I was not crazy about this first site proposal, it was a monster project on the Nile.

BLUM: Why do you think of it as a monster project?

PETERHANS: It was a big pancake directly on the east bank of the Nile on the *corniche*, rehabilitating a slum area. It was monstrous: three apartment towers, an office building, and a huge hotel, all connected by a shopping mall three stories high. It was huge. During the preliminary design period we went over several times with models and everything. And when we started to work out the final design a team of Egyptian architects came to Chicago. One of the conditions was that Egyptians would be involved. There was a local architect involved, Ali Din al Nour Nassar, whose daughter and son-in-law, both architects, came over with a group of about twelve

architects and a few engineers. Most of them were just out of school and they were all put up at the Allerton Hotel. The final design was done in Chicago, with the Egyptians working with us. It was a huge project. After we finished the design, we went back to Cairo with the Egyptians. Some ten or eight of us, three couples with several children included, were sent to Egypt.

BLUM: Did SOM open an office in Egypt?

PETERHANS: Yes, we had to. First we moved into one of Ali Nassar's offices centrally located in the city, near the Nile on the east bank.

BLUM: How large a group were there of SOM people?

PETERHANS: Design architects, a technical coordinator, two structural engineers. We also had a project manager who came from the New York office plus the fifteen or twenty Egyptians. Twenty people at least.

BLUM: Who was on the team from SOM, besides you and Bruce?

PETERHANS: Well, in Chicago it was Bruce Graham, the design partner, Bill Hartmann who came over several times. The mechanical partner in charge was Sam Sacks—Jewish—who came over, with no problem, and he was the engineer the Egyptians liked the most. The Egyptian loved Sam Sacks the most, the Jewish mechanical engineer. When they were in Chicago they

were often invited to his home. And this was before Camp David, at a time when Egypt and Israel were not on speaking terms.

BLUM: That makes me think about Gordon Bunshaft who never saw the airport he designed, never saw the bank building he designed in Saudi Arabia, because he was Jewish and couldn't get a visa.

PETERHANS: Yes, but in Cairo things were already different. Now to go to Mecca, of course, one who is not a Muslim, a believing Muslim, could not go. But that has nothing to do with being Jewish.

BLUM: So, Sam Sacks was on the team.

PETERHANS: And they adored him. We were there for almost a year. We all lived there in different places. Most Americans were first absolutely petrified by the Egyptian life conditions.

BLUM: What do you mean?

PETERHANS: Well they couldn't talk about anything but how poor the sanitary conditions were, how often the electricity came off, how they would find little bugs in the bread, and about people praying on the floor. No one in our office did, none of those working with us. None of the girls wore veils. But they were petrified.

BLUM: Well it's a very different culture.

PETERHANS: Not that different. With my two friends, Robert Turner and John Burcher, we always, in the evening, entertained ourselves with comments we had heard during the day. We were laughing our heads off.

BLUM: How were you treated, as a woman?

PETERHANS: No problem.

BLUM: Were you treated as an American or European?

PETERHANS: I don't know. American, I guess, because I was working for an American firm. But we had Egyptian girls in the office, several girls.

BLUM: In Cairo or Chicago?

PETERHANS: In Cairo and here. Three Egyptian girls came here. There were no scarves and no veils, almost nowhere. That was before the Muslim thing became so important again. None of them were even thinking about wearing veils. Unfortunately most of the people we had working for us were inexperienced. So, at night we had these strange business hours. Egyptians go home for lunchtime from one to three o'clock, and they come back again, about four and they work until eight at night. Dinner is very late so every night we had to go through all the drawings done that

day to make sure they were not carrying on any strange mistakes. Eventually, things got better. But we had a great time in Egypt. And even the people in the beginning who were petrified, after a few months, loved it there. They are all still talking about how this was the best time in their life, in Cairo.

BLUM: And your specific job as a designer: how did that work?

PETERHANS: Well, I had two or three American boys who were also designers with whom I got along well. We tried to find Egyptian companies for sanitary equipment, for ceramic tiles, for lighting, etc..

BLUM: Were you looking to find that in Egypt, of Egyptian manufacturers?

PETERHANS: Yes. Initially we, including the clients, were very idealistic. The president of the bank was a Dr. Khalil was a very idealistic, very intelligent man. Graham was very impressed by him and was very friendly with him. They wanted to do everything in Egypt, Graham and he. In fact, we wanted to open a factory to make windows, doors, kitchen cabinets which then would remain after the project. We wanted to open a quarry for the stone, local stone. And we wanted to do everything possible with local firms. And then all of a sudden the whole thing came to a stop.

BLUM: Why?

PETERHANS: After about ten months, we had already started to put caissons into the ground, everything came to a sudden stop because the financing broke down. There was a fight between Libya and Egypt, or whatever, Khadafi... It was never quite clear.

BLUM: Which countries had financed this project?

PETERHANS: It was the Arab International Bank, which was a kind of an Egyptian world bank, with high goals. Supposedly, some of the money came from Kuwait and some from Libya. We never saw these people. But then things suddenly broke down. We suddenly stopped. Some of us had been asked to stay in Egypt during construction, and they were already all set up to do that. We were just finishing when suddenly everything came to a stop.

BLUM: Well the dates on this project are 1975-1978, and then it picks up again in 1985 and goes until—what is it—1990, for completion. So it really was stretched over fifteen years.

PETERHANS: Right. Actually beyond. 1990 was the end of the first construction phase, which was still without the hotel. The hotel got built around 1993-1995. It was no longer a Hyatt but became a Conrad and had to be redesigned but this was after I left SOM. Nothing happened for several years. And then, every two or three years, a group from Egypt from the AIB would come and say, "We're starting again, but we have to make some changes to save

some money, and stuff like this." Most of them were no longer the same people. They were already—well, I don't want to use the word, but they were no longer so idealistic.

BLUM: What changes did they request?

PETERHANS: Well, first to save some money. And then they wanted to have only two apartment towers. And the hotel, all of a sudden, it was no longer a Hyatt, but it was not clear what it would be. They were going to build the office tower for the bank, the two apartment towers, and this main central courtyard—the main drive-through courtyard—all connected by a commercial bank with an atrium. The hotel with its roof garden and swimming pool was to be phase II. Every few years they would come here, spend days with all their wives in the hotel—a fancy hotel—they would shop like crazy and go back again. We had the feeling that this was no longer very kosher.

BLUM: Did you think the project would ever materialize?

PETERHANS: We weren't sure. But then all of a sudden, in 1985 or so—

BLUM: Is 1985 when it picked up again?

PETERHANS: Right. Picked up again seriously. At that time, I was working on the Perimeter Center in Atlanta, and also on the little Artigas Foundation. So

the younger designers who had worked with me, Robert Turner especially, did some of the redesign. I was only consulted and asked if I agreed, or so. I was not really working on it. But then, when the Perimeter work was reaching completion—the Perimeter was an interesting project too. Well, then it completely changed the make-up.

BLUM: Because of the change in people?

PETERHANS: Because of the change of people in Egypt. No longer was the work to be done by Egyptian companies. Suddenly Bechtel was in the picture, Bechtel of all people. Even the structural engineer, which used to be an Egyptian was no longer Egyptian.

BLUM: Oh, was Hal Iyengar involved?

PETERHANS: Right. He was involved. But then, it all switched to Europeans, even the structural concrete was to be done by Europeans, by a famous Spanish firm. Hardly anything came from Egypt. The windows were made in France. The tiles, the lighting came from Italy. Nothing came from Egypt anymore.

BLUM: How do you account for this drastic change?

PETERHANS: Well, perhaps it was the beginning of globalization.



BLUM: Globalization?

PETERHANS: It is what's happening now everywhere, right? It was disgusting. Even this older Egyptian artist who was hired by Wagih Hanna to help us find and meet Egyptian artists refused to continue to work with the bank because he said they are all corrupt.

BLUM: The second group of Egyptians?

PETERHANS: Right. He refused to work for them. And no Egyptian artists showed up anymore. They didn't want to have anything to do with it.

BLUM: What had they planned to do with Egyptian art?

PETERHANS: Well, we were having lots of art throughout the project: murals, fountains, carpets. We were just beginning to meet young modern artists when it all came to a stop. When it started again, art was put on the second shelf to be discussed later.

BLUM: Well, but it was the Egyptian job that really sort of pulled SOM out of financial difficulties, was it not?

PETERHANS: I think it was several things. It was the Haj, it was the Saudi university.

BLUM: But didn't that come a little later?

PETERHANS: Oh, in the mid-1970s when Egypt started, it was a very big job and it gave SOM Chicago a big boost.

BLUM: The clients who commissioned work, before the Egyptian job, were developers.

PETERHANS: I did not realize that. I was totally ignorant about this sort of thing, about business and politics.

BLUM: I understand in about 1980, or the early 1980s, that architects were investing in the buildings they were developing.

PETERHANS: I have no idea. Let me tell you, I have no idea about money, or anything.

BLUM: Well, in 1980, they opened the [SOM] Foundation. Did you know about that?

PETERHANS: I did. I was sent by Graham to look at the building when he thought about buying it.

BLUM: The Charnley House?

PETERHANS: Yes, the beautiful Charnley House. He made me go over for two days and look at everything, and write a report of what I think had to be fixed, and

what one could sort of let go for the time being. And if I thought it was a building worth buying and saving.

BLUM: What did you recommend?

PETERHANS: Well, I thought of course, it was worth it. I had no idea how things had to be fixed really—you know, in the ground in the foundations. In the beginning, they didn't do anything. They just fixed it up so it looked okay. But later it had to be done from ground up once more, the building foundation and such had problems. Then John Eifler eventually did the real renovation.

BLUM: What was the purpose of the SOM Foundation with headquarters in a landmark house?

PETERHANS: From what I understand, again I never quite understood what Bruce wanted to do there. We said to each other, it is his reaction to... He never wanted to teach. Bruce didn't believe in architecture schools. He said he never wanted to teach. Of course, he didn't know where he would have taught. Who wanted him?

BLUM: Well, he did do some crits over the years.

PETERHANS: Oh yes, he did that, right. He even sent me once to Philadelphia to the University of Penn for a crit. But he didn't want to go to IIT to teach or to

University of Illinois at Circle. He didn't want to leave Chicago. And Jane probably didn't want him to travel every week to teach. So instead of teaching this was to be his contribution to the development of architecture.

BLUM: His contribution was to the academic side?

PETERHANS: Right. Remember I am only guessing. We felt that he wanted to make his own little academy there. He was first going to get one of the Kriers, who turned him down, I believe. And then he got another Englishman—what was his name?

BLUM: John Whiteman?

PETERHANS: Whiteman, yes, and some other British people. And they were going to study aesthetic architectural and urban problems on a high and philosophical level. I don't think he had a really exact program.

BLUM: In New York Peter Eisenman had opened...

PETERHANS: Something like this. And it was a very controversial thing. But I never experienced Charnley House in operation. Bruce's secretary, Sonia Cooke, whom he made to take also some extra courses in administration and fundraising, became the managing director. It lasted only a few years, and later Ricky Burnett was there. He is also from London.

BLUM: Ricky Burnett?

PETERHANS: Yes. He's British... I knew him and his wife very well later in London. He gave a lecture here a few weeks ago in Crown Hall at IIT, but I was in Germany. He's an interesting British theorist, involved in all sorts of things today at the London School of Economics. I don't think he builds. And Graham had him here, and another guy... But didn't Graham tell you about this himself?

BLUM: Not in quite as much detail.

PETERHANS: I'm sorry I'm so uninformed about the SOM Foundation but I was already in England. But before, in late 1979, after the Arab International Bank, when the work suddenly stopped, I went again to stay with my mother for half a year. And then when I came back to Chicago, I started to work on the Perimeter Center outside of Atlanta.

BLUM: What was your role in the Perimeter Center?

PETERHANS: I was the senior designer with young Jeff McCarthy at my side; he is now a general partner. Before we started, or when we started to study how to do the architecture, I said, "I think we should go back to the..." I loved always the Hartford Building on Wacker Drive with the very simple concrete structure, granite clad on the outside, and the glass set back.

And I said to Graham, "This is one of your best buildings, you know, not famous best, but your simple and very practical best."

BLUM: Did he agree?

PETERHANS: Yes, at least he said he liked it too. And I said, "It stands up so well. Why don't we do something like this again?" He agreed. And also, we were all sick and tired of tinted glass. We had, in the meantime, moved into the 33 West Monroe building, which had something to do with the energy crisis. And we hated that dark glass, because inside—even inside you felt like you were in a cage. And so I said, "Let's go back to clear glass, and set it back. Then we can add some sun shading." Which is what we did.

BLUM: Now, is this the project that has the frame in front of the glass?

PETERHANS: Yes. It has clear glass set back. Same like Hartford, except Hartford didn't have sun shading. Now if we used clear glass, we have to be aware of the energy problems. We have to put sun shading in front of the glass.

[Tape 4: Side A]

PETERHANS: The 33 West Monroe building is a very energy saving building. It's design came straight out of the energy crisis.

BLUM: Oh, will you explain what features of it save energy?

PETERHANS: Well, number one, it has very dark double glassing. And it's a very massive building, just opposite the Inland Steel building, across the street, built twenty years before.

BLUM: Well it does have a very large footprint.

PETERHANS: Right. So, and then it has a hole in the center.

BLUM: The atrium.

PETERHANS: A big atrium. So, all these offices that look into the atrium have clear glass, they don't need sunshades, they don't need heat, they don't need sun protection, or anything. Only on the outside it needs dark plus thermopane double glass. Structurally, it is a very economical building. Because, a fat building like this, not very high, almost stands by itself. Almost.

BLUM: Well, it also had a stepped configuration on the exterior.

PETERHANS: Yes, it's shaped like a cash register that gave it the nickname. And it steps towards the north, where it does not have a sun problem. So this building does not need any heating, or sun protection on the inside, while the offices looking into the atrium still had the feeling you were not in the inside. You're looking into this large atrium space.

BLUM: Were there other projects that were built to be energy efficient, such as 33 West Monroe?

PETERHANS: Well, the one in Wichita, Fourth Financial Center, is similar. The Wichita atrium has two sides facing outside, but a big part of the typical offices again face the atrium. Later, Perimeter Center has such atriums and some of the London buildings at the Liverpool Street Station have atriums. All are very energy efficient.

BLUM: Did you work on 33 West Monroe?

PETERHANS: I did the interior for SOM there. SOM decided to move in there. I did the entire interior.

BLUM: Any furniture?

PETERHANS: Well, for the furniture I worked with George Larson on it. But I did a lot of the interior systems. For instance, I repeated the big drafting tables that I liked from the Inland Steel.

BLUM: The drafting tables?



PETERHANS: Yes. And I made the same big tables again. And then toward the inner atrium, I put very few small offices and in between there were open spaces, with the so-called kindergarten tables.

BLUM: What was that?

PETERHANS: They were relatively low tables with a big square butcher block top. And there were low chairs around it, MR chairs. They were for the studios to have a table where they could sit around and talk, next to pin-up cork walls for the drawings. These tables are still now in use, even though since then the SOM office moved twice. They still call them the kindergarten tables.

BLUM: Now were these designed by you, and built? Or were they bought and you just selected them?

PETERHANS: No. I designed them. They were simple tubular polished stainless legs screwed under butcher block, so you could make a mess and have it cleaned up again and again. You could have lunch there, and everything. You could work at the kindergarten tables if you needed more space. They were all over, all around this atrium, which I drew here. Each studio had one.

BLUM: Around the atrium?

PETERHANS: Right. Yes, and I also made the wood partitions, extra low for the semi-private offices to be able to look over them when standing. They were made by Woodwork Corporation in Chicago, and installed very economically. After that we go back to Perimeter Center in Atlanta, which was influenced by the Hartford building. The glass is set back and on the outside is a sunshade which protects the clear glass.

BLUM: This system was used in a few buildings.

PETERHANS: Yes, for instance, in West Germany on the postwar universities on which I worked at that Stuttgart office in the 1960s, we did this all over, in concrete, prefabricated concrete sunshades. For Perimeter we studied first many site plans. The site was a beautiful sloped site with tall trees and we ended up with two buildings joined by an open, open in front and back, atrium. They were structurally very efficient. And in the atrium, we put the elevators in the center. And the floors were done by Artigas, Joanet Gardy Artigas.

BLUM: How did you come to work with Artigas?

PETERHANS: It's a long story. Artigas is a ceramist from Spain. His father was a famous Spanish ceramist working with Miro. He did all the ceramic work for Miro. Miro did a lot of murals in ceramic. And when SOM picked the little Miro sculpture for Brunswick, you know, that little woman?

BLUM: I know the sculpture.

PETERHANS: It is an enlarged piece of a Miro sculpture, and it has small areas of color ceramic tiles. Young Artigas came to put these tiles in, after he had supervised and engineered the enlargement of the Miro sculpture of his father's friend.

BLUM: Do you think it complements the Picasso?

PETERHANS: Oh yes. But it's much simpler than the Picasso. Less famous perhaps but at least as fine.

BLUM: And it is across the street facing the Picasso.

PETERHANS: So he was there and he was staying in a little cheap hotel. At this time I was just back from Egypt and Graham said, "You have to take care of Artigas."

BLUM: Oh, once again you were the house mother.

PETERHANS: This was not the only time. When we had this sculpture done at 33 West Monroe, in the atrium, hanging down in the center with light in it. It was by Chryssa, a famous New York artist—famous. Graham also made me take care of her. Recently, John Burcher, who works now with DeStefano, remodeled the lobby, and took it out and threw it away. And nobody yet

has picked up on that. It's unbelievable. All of a sudden it wasn't there anymore. People had heart attacks, but it has not been publicized, because obviously—you know, what's going on. It's unbelievable. Chryssa is a very famous artist, the first to do sculptures with neon.

BLUM: Do you think it has been destroyed? Or someone else has it?

PETERHANS: From what I know it has been destroyed. He threw it out. We were together in Egypt; He was a very good friend of ours but we no longer talk to him and he no longer talks to us.

BLUM: Can you tell me more about Artigas and how you came to work with him?

PETERHANS: Well, Artigas had been here to do this Miro sculpture opposite from the Picasso next to the Brunswick, and later the ponds at the Perimeter Center. He had done the tile work there. And when he was in the office for the first time for the Miro, we also had to take him out in the evenings, because what was the poor man going to do in the evening? It was winter and Graham took him home a lot. He also had the students at his home a lot. At least once a year, he had a party for his favorite young architect, at his house. Jane was doing all the cooking and all of the service.

BLUM: And were you always included?

PETERHANS: Of course. I had to help, officially, a little bit. So it was fun. Artigas was one of them, and so I knew... When he did the lobbies for the first Perimeter Center, it was with his beautiful tiles. They looked like an oriental rug from above. Artigas did a fabulous design for that. So when you look, you see all these colors. And there are little ponds also done with his tiles. Artigas has a ceramic shop in the hills behind Barcelona, and from his father he has learned to do glazing. You normally can't use glazed tiles on the floor where people walk because the color glazes wear off. But Artigas does glazes that don't wear off. He has such fabulous glazes and unique techniques. And in the second Perimeter Center he did a mural of glazed tile, very big and beautiful.

BLUM: Well, now Bruce built Artigas's studio, the Artigas Foundation Studio.

PETERHANS: Right. One day Artigas said, "I want to sell some of my Miro paintings, which I inherited from my father, and build a foundation for the ceramic arts. There ceramic artists can come and spend a year, or the summer, and use my kilns, and work together." He said, "I have this site in the mountains behind Barcelona." He lives there in an ancient building during the summer next to a little old chapel in a beautiful remote location. And he asked Graham to do his foundation building. Graham said, "Why? There are good Spanish architects." "Yes," he said, "but one problem is who am I going to let do it in Barcelona? They are all my friends. So they'll get mad if I pick one and not the other... And so, the

best solution is I will ask Bruce Graham." And Bruce, I think, did it for nothing.

BLUM: Well, he probably had a good connection through the language and they understood one another.

PETERHANS: Yes, of course. They always talked Spanish. Well, so eventually, Graham and I designed this little foundation, and I went there quite a few times.

BLUM: These were little studios, sort of nestled in the landscape.

PETERHANS: Yes. We have the pictures. He wanted four studios, four little apartments and then a main building where they could congregate, and have exhibitions, and eat, and so forth. I had to go there from London, while it was under construction. Everything was done by small local people; it was done with local contractors, not even contractors just masons.

BLUM: And were the materials local too?

PETERHANS: Right. Everything was local: the stones, bricks, wood beam roofs. For the roof Artigas found and bought tiles from old buildings. This ancient system, we call it "monk and nun" in Germany; I believe it is something like *guastavino* here.

BLUM: Was it your job to oversee the foundation buildings?

PETERHANS: Right. I did it while I was in London, where I had moved in 1988 on a new project, the Exchange House. I was close by. I went there mostly over the weekend, so no time would be wasted, and I stayed with Artigas and his family right next to the site of the foundation. And it was fun, but quite wild.

BLUM: What do you mean, wild?

PETERHANS: Well, there were local masons, and we had to explain everything to them. And the buildings were in the woods, often nothing but mud on a steep slope. Artigas was overseeing the whole thing, some things didn't work out, and we had to come up with other solutions. It was fun. Most interesting were the tile works with him. And so when we went back to the Cairo project eventually... I also was in London when they started to build—when it was under construction. And I went from London all the time by myself.

BLUM: Was this when the bank in Egypt was under construction?

PETERHANS: When the bank in Egypt finally started again, the first phase, without the hotel, I was in charge. I would go many times to Egypt and spend the night in a cheap hotel. We had no money. And we had to fight with those Bechtel people. It was ridiculous. We had to go to Italy to some little shops because they not only made the basic lights, they also made some

decorative lights. I had to deal with all the people. I did the landscape with an Egyptian garden company who provided the plants for the roof garden, and jobs like this. But at the same time, there was corruption. It was unbelievable.

BLUM: Was that the way in which things are done in the Middle East? Or was it just this project that was corrupt?

PETERHANS: No, that's suddenly what was done there.

BLUM: So, that was a cultural difference, or was it?

PETERHANS: I wouldn't call it that. In the 1970s, when we started, there was none of this yet. There was Dr. Khalil and one or two other persons we dealt with. Sometimes they would all of a sudden disappear behind their desk and pray on the floor. With Dr. Khalil in 1977 there was none of this, everything was very high class originally. But then these guys, who use to pray on the floor, took over.

BLUM: I understand they are expected to pray five times a day.

PETERHANS: Yes, but none of the kids who worked with us ever prayed, at that time when they were here or we were there. Only one of the bank people prayed. He was a modest little employee, and he once invited the three of us—Robert, John Burcher and I—to his house. It was a simple house.



But later on when the project started again, he picked me up in a white Mercedes. He lived in a house with marble floors and fountains. But the project itself was pinching pennies. Unfortunately, there had been an earthquake in the meantime, in Cairo so everything had to be redesigned and made more earthquake resistant. So we made a lot of structural changes. In spite of all this all the work was done by foreign companies, we at least thought we could have the tiles done in Egypt. We already, originally, wanted to have tiles. And we were going to open a tile factory.

BLUM: To make tiles for the bank?

PETERHANS: Especially for the atrium, the interior atrium, the center of the commercial floors of the shopping center.

BLUM: Did that materialize?

PETERHANS: So then we looked for Egyptian ceramists, but they did not want to do any tiles for the floor. So eventually, we got Artigas from Barcelona. And we went around to these ceramists again with him. And he said, "You know, if you do this and this and this, you can do it." They said, "We're not interested."

BLUM: Oh, it was something unfamiliar to them.

PETERHANS: Or whatever! So we ended up with Artigas designs for the special areas, inside on the atrium floor and outside above the main entrance to the shopping center. He made these tiles in his kilns in Gallifa. And he helped us design tiled walls for the entire atrium, standard colored tiles from Spain. It was inexpensive and very oriental looking. It was fabulous. It was very successful at first. The shopping center was a big success initially, full of the best stores. The coffee shop on a raised platform in the center of the atrium was the most popular. It had the first escalators in Egypt. The elevators and the escalators were made by Mitsubishi from Japan. And they did a fabulous job. I even had to go to Japan to inspect the elevator cabs.

BLUM: But how were these new innovative features cared for after they were built?

PETERHANS: Yes, the Egyptians loved it at first. But now it's run down all of a sudden. And it seems like the bank who is the owner, is not taking proper care of it. It's not technically falling apart, but the maintenance is lousy. Lights are missing, etc.

BLUM: Do you think that maybe a cultural difference?

PETERHANS: We don't know what it is. But first, even my Egyptian artist friend who refused to do any more work for these bank people, because they were so corrupt—he was impressed how it worked. Last time I was there, I no

longer wanted to go and see it. It's so badly maintained. However, the Conrad hotel that was built a little later after I had left SOM, is doing well. And the apartment towers are also doing very well. They are all run by the hotel. They are this kind of—what do you call this?

BLUM: An apartment hotel?

PETERHANS: Yes, They are doing very well. They still look okay. But somehow, the atrium and the shopping center are dirty, dusty, the landscaping neglected...

BLUM: Would you consider this one of SOM's successful projects?

PETERHANS: Good question. When it opened in 1991 it seemed very well liked. Except when I saw it last time, in 2006 or 2007, I was disappointed.

BLUM: Is it the condition that you're talking about?

PETERHANS: Yes. It's on the Nile, right on the Nile, on the *corniche*. I found a lot of palm trees, which we had planted, they took such poor care of them that some of them had died and so forth.

BLUM: How did this project in Egypt coordinate time-wise with your work in London?

PETERHANS: During this time, I was already in London working. I was there from 1988 until the end of 1990. I was working on phase II.

BLUM: The Exchange House in the Broadgate development?

PETERHANS: Yes, phase II of Broadgate, the Exchange House. It was the only modern building SOM did around the Liverpool Street Station. The others were all Postmodern. Nearby Richard Rogers had just built that wild bank [Lloyd's], which our client disliked so that they didn't want to do anything like it. But then he let us do the building with the arch, phase II.

BLUM: Where does that fall design-wise?

PETERHANS: That was considered modern again. In London, it was one of the first really modern buildings again. And they loved it. From then on things in London became modern, at least some of the buildings.

BLUM: Bruce has said of that project, that it was a combination of modern—the Exchange House was modern—set in the setting that was very sympathetic to what was already in London.

PETERHANS: Right. The old beautiful Liverpool Street Station had to be preserved and repaired by the developer, Stuart Lipton, as a condition to permit new buildings around it. It was, still is, a very busy station and hooked up to the subway. Most of the new buildings around it were done by SOM

Chicago. They were Postmodern, "sympathetic to the setting" as Bruce called it. For our building, for phase II, that was crossing the tracks leaving the station we made this big arch with the train tracks running underneath, untouched. Even so there was some cheating involved. Symbolically this big arch spans the tracks and became a high-tech modern building. But it symbolically crosses the tracks, which run underneath it.

BLUM: And this huge interior was necessitated by new banking regulations.

PETERHANS: Right. But we didn't do the interior. We just did the entrance lobby and the toilets, which I designed.

BLUM: Did SOM create the interior space?

PETERHANS: Right. I did the desk, a round desk. And we dealt with a lot of British artists for the entire Broadgate project and I met with several artists in and around London. I was in charge of finding artists or art work for our buildings. There were so many interesting young artists in London at that time. But the client didn't like most of them so we ended up with those two Jim Dine *Venuses* in a lobby. I believe it was phase V that had Jim Dine and the very nice *Family* rock sculpture by Corbero. Artigas did the colorful tiles at the corner fountain of phase II annex. And the Botero, his big nude, just outside phase II. He wanted a Botero.

BLUM: Was this Stuart Lipton?

PETERHANS: Yes, Stuart Lipton. The Botero lady looks like his sister. He looked like a Botero himself. He was unique. But he went bankrupt shortly after. And Graham left SOM at this time, and luckily my brother Joerg wanted me to return to Germany. He said, "Now you're so close to Germany, and I want you to do a house..." So I left SOM from London.

BLUM: And you retired from SOM?

PETERHANS: I retired prematurely. Half a year after Graham left. I had always said that I'd leave when Graham leaves. And so I did. I left on—January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1991. I quit. I left London.

BLUM: And went to Germany?

PETERHANS: And went to Germany straight from London. I had kept my apartment here in Chicago in which student friends stayed. From then on, I had to pay for it. Up to then, SOM paid for the expenses, when I was away, so I could let my friends stay here for free.

BLUM: Well, before we let you retire on this recording, there were some new American ideas about construction that apparently Bruce brought to the work of Exchange House.

PETERHANS: Oh yes, that was very interesting. We wanted to have this steel arch exposed. But for a twelve-story building, it had to be fire-rated. So Hal Iyengar with Arup engineers—the famous British firm—worked out a system where it didn't have to be fire-rated. It didn't have to be boxed in, only painted with a fire retardant paint. The glass enclosing the offices, the window wall, was set back far enough so that if there was a fire inside it would take long enough before reaching the steel arch and melt it, long enough for people to get out of the building before the arch and the entire building would start collapsing. So, when I, by accident, was watching the World Trade Towers on 9/11 I became most puzzled by what was happening. I immediately thought, Why are they telling fire men to go in there, and I even said, "This is absolutely insane." With a huge fire on the inside a tall building like this with an airplane flying in and capping the core, there was no chance that it could stand up. So immediately from the first minute, I knew it had to fall down within a short time. Normally in a building, if a fire breaks out only the carpets and furniture burns. But this was not a fire like that. At Exchange House with a normal fire it would take long enough to get to these arches, allowing all the people to get out.

BLUM: Did the special paint that was fire resistant and used on Exchange House add to the evacuation time?

PETERHANS: The paint coating which had some fire retardant, added another half an hour, before the arch would fail. And it was designed in a way with extra exits and stairs on the outside reached by bridges. And Arup, who is the

British God on construction, if they say it works, in Britain it gets accepted by the authorities. So Arup helped Iyengar on this and together they developed this which allowed the steel arch to remain with the steel exposed.. Iyengar made a lot of solutions with Arup, and got it solved.

BLUM: So are you saying with a different kind of construction, the World Trade Towers wouldn't have fallen?

PETERHANS: Well, my brother, who's the engineer, says, "Yes." Like if the same thing would happen to the Sears Tower, it would not fall down like that. I mean, these terrorists were extremely lucky that they went into the building like this. There is a huge amount of literature that's been written—in the professional literature—about why this building collapsed so badly.

BLUM: In the literature about the Exchange House they talk about a SCOPE system. Would you explain that?

PETERHANS: Yes. SCOPE became very fashionable in the Chicago office in the early 1970s. I believe it was invented by Bruce and Faz. We already used it at Baxter.

BLUM: What was the system?



PETERHANS: It's a system to save time in the early phases of a building's design and cost-establishing period. It may already be used during the bidding process for selecting the general contractor. It's also called fast-track. In England it didn't exist until we arrived there in the late 1980s. I believe it was one of the reasons Stuart Lipton, the developer, came to SOM. The big advantage of SCOPE is that you can price a building long before all details and the selection of all materials are available. This usually takes a long time involving not only the architect to develop, but also the owner to approve, and finally the contractor and subcontractor to price. In other words—you may go out for bidding with drawings showing only the main elements of the buildings and site-plans, sections and elevations, but not yet any secondary details. Those you only describe in SCOPE you'd write, The lobby should have the quality and materials comparable to the lobbies of the Inland Steel building, and the elevator cabs like the Sears, the toilet fixtures and finishes like Brunswick, etc, etc.

BLUM: This is an estimate, but not a final price?

PETERHANS: It's to be the final, total price, by which the general contractor is selected and then can start with construction preparation. That takes a lot of time, during which time the architect continues to develop details. However you do this by talking with the client and also with the contractor, by comparing the price for what you want to do with the price he has in his budget. I loved this system. It depends on honesty and trust. At the same time it is very real, let's you learn about manufacturing, material,

installation and all other expenses and problems. From the start you must have clear and firm ideas and foresight regarding the design and details of your building, to not ever having made a precise drawing for it. Yet here is your chance and challenge; you can trade. For instance, you may be able to have the owner allow you to have less elaborate mirrors in all the toilets, and get a more beautiful railing for the stair in the main lobby or do the cafeteria floor in simple bricks while having special ceramic tiles for the counters. Sometimes it takes a lot of persuasion within your team, with your technical coordinator, the structural engineers and all this makes you aware of the contractor's thinking. It is fun.

BLUM: So it's a way of producing an estimate. Is this typically an American method?

PETERHANS: I guess.

BLUM: And SOM brought it to the Broadgate job.

PETERHANS: Yes, but I don't know where it was used the first time. As I said, we used it already at Baxter.

BLUM: Could a building like the Exchange House be built in Chicago?

PETERHANS: I see no problem. Even so, nothing really modern and high-tech has been built here. Perhaps the Jewish museum, Spertus Museum, on Michigan

Avenue. The façade is rather daring but I just heard that they spent so much attention and money on the façade that they ran out of money for the inside. Also, I find this façade's design not very rational. The Exchange House is.

BLUM: What is the advantage of working for a firm that is as large as SOM?

PETERHANS: Well, the great advantage of SOM is that they have a big office, and there were lots of people who watched—who checked everything you did. You could consult any time with the structural engineer, or with a mechanical guy, or the electrical. They would come in and look at what you were doing, so it was a lot of professional know-how. That's why I went back to SOM, because the professionalism was incredible, especially SOM Chicago.

BLUM: Well, I understand that for the engineering—structural engineering—there was a group, headed by Fazlur Khan, that was based in the Chicago office, but worked on SOM projects wherever they were.

PETERHANS: Right. Fazlur became very appreciated everywhere. He was a genius. He could look at something and right away say, this is going to work or this is not going to work. And he very seldom made a mistake.

BLUM: What happened to that group of engineers after he died?

PETERHANS: Some of them are still around. And Hal Iyengar was also very good. Graham didn't like him at first as much as Faz but Iyengar really stood up very well. And Graham eventually appreciated him a lot.

BLUM: Was he Faz's second in command?

PETERHANS: Yes. He was Indian, right? I think he probably is Hindu, but I'm not sure. Faz was Muslim. But they got along very well. Then there were two younger men, Stan Korista and John Zils, and later, Bill Baker, who was a very young guy. Bill Baker is now SOM's Chicago high-rise architect. Like Faz, he does lectures about tall-building engineering all over the world. They are doing tall buildings all over the world now, especially in China and Dubai.

BLUM: So was it really globalization that saved SOM? And it started with the project in Cairo.

PETERHANS: To some extent, probably you are right. I never thought of it this way. I don't really like the idea, because it has been going so bad in so many cases.

BLUM: Globalization?

PETERHANS: Well, starting with Cairo. Cairo is already an example of how globalization could have been positive, but turned negative. Because

globalization could help these countries stand on their own feet. They could learn from American know-how instead of knocking out all local skills and local possibilities. But too often it goes wrong like it happened to us in Cairo, where things went contrary to what we wanted. At the end, I tried to only do a few things. Like I, for instance, built up a garden around the building for which I insisted on finding some very interesting local stones that we would just go and get. It was a major effort. They came and brought me stuff from Italy. I said, "No, I want stones from here out in the desert. There is a petrified forest." But it was so much easier for Bechtel to call up a guy in Italy and ship it over, or in France, or Spain, instead of just driving a hundred miles into the desert to pick up local stones there. So they killed local initiative, and local possibilities. I did also manage to get some lamps there. Again, it was a major effort.

BLUM: What is that story?

PETERHANS: Well, eventually for the AIB, Cairo, for the main atrium, we designed a huge candelabra with shaped glass lamps hanging down from a frame following their old tradition. And I found a local glass factory where they still blew glass.

BLUM: Hand blown glass lamps, how nice in a commercial place.

PETERHANS: But Bechtel was trying to not let me do this. Well, I just went in a cab on my own. I refused to go with them, and I found this young man whose

father owned this factory, and he was enthused. They did everything for me, and did very well. But Bechtel thought it was stupid, you know, crazy. I could have it much easier from Italy. Well, I got it at a quarter of the price in Cairo.

BLUM: How many large organizations, such as SOM and Bechtel, were involved in that project?

PETERHANS: Well, it was mainly Bechtel and SOM.

BLUM: And did you eventually figure out a way to work with Bechtel, and they with you?

PETERHANS: Well we had to. Oh my God, these guys were flirting up to us. They came to take us out for lunch, and all of this. And they wanted to put me up in a fancy hotel. I said, "I stay with my friends and I eat there." Bechtel is now playing the main role in Iraq.

BLUM: What was your motivation to leave SOM when that project ended?

PETERHANS: Well, I always said, When Graham leaves, I leave. And all of a sudden he left.

BLUM: Why did you have that in your mind? Did he protect you?

PETERHANS: Well, I would say so, but I really had only worked with Graham. There was DeStefano. When I went to London, he was in charge of the London office. He was impossible. Ah, he was going to sell the window wall of Phase II to Gardner. Gardner is a German company I knew very well. They had just opened a factory near London. And he was just going to let them do it the way they wanted. Fortunately he soon disappeared. At one point Wildermuth came, and he also didn't stay long.

BLUM: Well, I think he retired.

PETERHANS: Wildermuth was okay. He helped me a lot on the Arab bank. He was in Chicago when we worked on the working drawings for that the second time, for phase I. He helped me a lot with Artigas. He agreed that we take Artigas as a consultant, while we were still trying to get Egyptian ceramists to do it. It's sad.

BLUM: There was a bridge that is on your list of projects. The Max-Eyth Footbridge in Stuttgart.

PETERHANS: Right. When I was home for nine months because of my mother's illness, my brother was doing his first little bridge. And he made me help him, and I built a model and everything. I got involved. I went to the site with a balloon to measure the height of the trees. And it won a prize, a prestigious architecture in Germany.

BLUM: So you designed a beautiful, mast-hung footbridge.

PETERHANS: Well the masts—the engineering was my brother's. But then the shape, and the way you enter it—you come from above, and then how you leave it in two directions. That was me. It's for pedestrians in a park-type landscape across a pretty river.

BLUM: And you said this was very much influenced by...

PETERHANS: By Myron's bridge [Ruck-a-Chucky bridge], which also had a little curve.

BLUM: Does this echo Baxter?

PETERHANS: No. No, not Baxter.

BLUM: McCormick Place II?

PETERHANS: No, nothing. No. No, just Myron's bridge.

BLUM: One thing we haven't talked about yet is the role of computers.

[Tape 4: Side B]

BLUM: Were any of the commissions that you talked about thus far designed on a computer?



PETERHANS: No, not designed, only drawn.

BLUM: Drawn on a computer?

PETERHANS: Yes. But not too much. I tried to learn computer drawing already before London. They were teaching it at the office. Most of the younger people drew on the computer.

BLUM: Was this for the Egyptian project?

PETERHANS: No, not yet, it was in the later 1980s for the Perimeter Center. I would have liked to be able to use the computer—I took lessons—but you had to really practice a long time to be able to do it. It was very complicated still at that time.

BLUM: You were in London, when you decided to retire soon after Bruce did. So you left and went to Germany.

PETERHANS: Yes. And my brother Joerg saw the writing on the wall. My brother, in Germany, also saw the writing on the wall, because shortly after I left at the end of 1990, things in London started to go less well. Originally, in London it was a very generous life. We had very nice apartments in the city. I could walk to work, and all this. But then, I think it became obvious that there were not many new projects coming up.

BLUM: In London for SOM?

PETERHANS: Yes, from the same clients, and from other people. On the Canary Wharf, the Canadian developer, seemed to still be doing very well. But then shortly afterwards, it all fell apart. The Canary Wharf developer [Olympia and York] went bankrupt.

BLUM: Was this Stuart Lipton?

PETERHANS: No, it wasn't Lipton. It was the Reichmanns. They were Canadian developers.

BLUM: When you left, did you come back to Chicago? Did you go to Germany? What did you do?

PETERHANS: No, I went straight to Germany from there.

BLUM: Did you intend to stay there permanently?

PETERHANS: I retired from SOM. I was not yet sixty-five.

BLUM: So it wasn't a mandatory retirement, this was elective on your part.

PETERHANS: Remember, it was my brother who said, "Now you are already in London, and why don't you now just come back? And I have this project for you."

BLUM: Oh, was that the bridge?

PETERHANS: No, no. That was long before. That was when I was on a leave of absence when my mother was ill. I did the bridge on a little kitchen table at my mother's house.

BLUM: What was the project your brother had for you?

PETERHANS: He had bought a property that was in my family, from relatives who could not afford it, or did not want it.

BLUM: Was it a house?

PETERHANS: It was a house, a small old little house, on a hillside in Stuttgart, where we, as children, had often visited. It was one of our favorite uncle's. And his children, they could not buy each other out and also didn't want it. So my brother bought it. And he wanted to see what we should do with it. And so I lived in this little old house first, and then eventually redesigned and rebuilt it. I built a house. That was quite a job, because I arrived with nothing but a pencil. I had no literature about German architecture. I'd

been in the States for twenty-something years and I had not followed any of the German developments. So I started from scratch.

BLUM: Was your brother a big help?

PETERHANS: Oh no, except for the computer, nothing. They were engineers. I, at the same time, redid his office, the interior. This gave me a little money at first, because it took me a while to decide what to do with the site and the old house.

BLUM: Were you debating whether you should stay or not?

PETERHANS: At this time I had to stay to do this job, right. But I was debating whether I should save this old little house, which I adored, and just add something to it, or not. It was on a very steep hillside, above Stuttgart. So it took me a year to decide how to do it. During that time I redid my brother's office to make some money because, you know, I no longer had any income. I had no social security yet, or anything.

BLUM: Did you get a pension from SOM, when you retired?

PETERHANS: After sixty-five, now I get a pension, fifteen thousand dollars a year.

BLUM: That helps.

PETERHANS: Yes, it helps. It's very nice. So then I did this house eventually there. I did everything. I was the contractor. I had to find all the companies. I didn't know anybody or anything. I had no specs, no *Sweets*, no catalogues, no samples, nothing. But it was interesting.

BLUM: So that was your early retirement.

PETERHANS: Yes. After I completed this house in which I was supposed to live, I didn't want to stay in Stuttgart permanently. I still had my apartment here. And I had also a very good friend, Liesl, a German Jewish lady from the same area where we are from. She spoke the same dialect, and she was Myron Goldsmith's friend. She came to visit me often while I was in London and later in Stuttgart. Liesl Landau. She was older, much older than I. Her younger sister had died suddenly and I became her substitute sister. She wanted me to come back so badly, so after I finished the house, I decided to come back to Chicago for a few years, while she lived. Well, she decided to live a lot longer, and I decided to really stay here.

BLUM: And in 1996 you formed a partnership with Neil Anderson and Sae Oh?

PETERHANS: Oh yes, but that was not really... I didn't even know I was.

BLUM: What was that?

PETERHANS: He was a younger Korean who worked at SOM, and then when Bruce Graham retired, all the young men that had worked with him, also the not-so-young men, were kicked out of SOM.

BLUM: Were kicked out?

PETERHANS: Yes. Ferd Sheeler, one of the technical coordinators, for instance, and Sae Oh, Freddie Lo, a Chinese. They were all laying off people, preferably laying off people who had been close to Graham.

BLUM: Who became the power in the office after Bruce?

PETERHANS: We don't know. Most likely Adrian, at least in Chicago.

BLUM: And now Adrian's no longer there.

PETERHANS: Well, they keep doing this. Somehow the philosophy changed after Graham left, and they kicked Graham out. He was not ready to retire yet.

BLUM: Oh, I thought that his retirement was elective.

PETERHANS: No. I know that from Jane.

BLUM: So, a gentleman called Sae Oh...

PETERHANS: Right. He was one of them too; They were loyal to Bruce. He and another one, Anderson—Neil Anderson—formed a little firm. Sae, being Korean had very good connections to Korea, his home country. And he started to do work there while Anderson was supposed to bring in local work. When I returned to Chicago in the mid-1990s, Sae was doing competitions, even some buildings, in Korea and Anderson didn't do anything for him.

BLUM: What could he have done?

PETERHANS: Well, get local jobs. He was a project manager at SOM.

BLUM: Well, where were you in all of this?

PETERHANS: Well, all of a sudden, I was helping Oh a little bit on some design. And Anderson disappeared within a few weeks. They split up. However, he still called his firm Anderson and Oh. Even so, there was no more Anderson. I don't know how that worked. All of a sudden I found myself being the design principal. He never asked me.

BLUM: What kind of work did you do with him?

PETERHANS: Designs only. But I didn't win any competitions though we tried some big projects for Korea. It was fun. The Koreans came over. But I was never sent to Korea and I was not working full-time. But I was just coming to

his office. I think I made in the whole time just a few thousand dollars. I didn't want him to pay me, because he didn't have any jobs. Eventually, he did get some local jobs, and I did do one building with him. But he would not let me get involved in working drawings, so it turned out quite bad, because I was expensive. Anything I do is expensive.

BLUM: What happened to the office?

PETERHANS: He went out of business recently. He's still a good friend of mine.

BLUM: What was your contribution to the work at that point?

PETERHANS: Only design.

BLUM: You said you did one building.

PETERHANS: Well, it was a funny building out in the woods near Aurora, a very pretty site in the country next to a small river. We had made some designs together. The client could pick it, and they picked mine. But then he revised so much on it to make the price come out right that it became terrible. I saw it once. I never would go near it again.

BLUM: Was that a high-rise building?



PETERHANS: No, no. It was a small project. Some sort of a farm where they raise animals for hunters. They raise pheasants, and fish that eventually are put out in the forest, and lakes and rivers so the hunters have something to hunt and fish. This is a real industry in this country. I had never heard of it before.

BLUM: No, I haven't either. Well, it's like farm-raised salmon.

PETERHANS: Something like that, right. But they just make it for the hunters.

BLUM: And you designed the building for them?

PETERHANS: Yes. It was a little building, you know, in which they had their offices and meeting rooms, and storage, and space for interns. I made a design that looked a lot like a farm and fitted it into this very rural site.

BLUM: When did you leave that architectural office?

PETERHANS: Well, I kept going there only when he needed me. Very seldom. All these past years I fly to Germany twice a year for several months, and from there I traveled a lot. I went to Iran several times. It has fabulous architecture. I have a friend in Iran. But I traveled almost all the time on my own. I never take a tour. I have been going to Egypt at least every year and every other year to Poland, Russia, Yugoslavia, Greece. And of

course, Italy, France, Spain and last but not least, China, India, Syria, Jordan. I have friends in most places.

BLUM: So what comes next? You retired from this office because there wasn't enough work.

PETERHANS: Well, it's finished. I don't know. I found it very strange that Oh put me on his website into the computer, and all this. I never knew about it.

BLUM: What comes next for you?

PETERHANS: Dying. I'm almost eighty.

BLUM: Other than that? That's too final.

PETERHANS: I don't know. I know I'm going to Cairo at the end of this week, right?

BLUM: Do you see any of the young people who worked on your project?

PETERHANS: Only one here in Chicago I see regularly. The others sort of vanished. Well, no actually, it's quite a few that I see or phone or write to. I have done several little projects in Berlin and Stuttgart during the past years.

BLUM: Did you work out of your brother's office?

PETERHANS: No, not really. Most of this domestic work is for my brother's children. They have bought old houses and I have redone them. It was an experience in East Berlin.

BLUM: And did you do it long distance?

PETERHANS: Yes, I did it long distance by FAX. Sometimes I would then go there for several weeks for construction supervision and stuff in critical phases and to find local firms to do special work in wood or metal. Nearby I remodeled another house for one of my nephews near Stuttgart. It's almost finished now. I'm getting too old.

BLUM: When you were active at SOM, did you belong to clubs like the Arts Club or the Cliff Dwellers?

PETERHANS: No. I didn't want to. in Germany we don't have clubs. And the only club I ever belonged to was the Hitler Youth when I was ten to fourteen years old. That was more than enough. After that I never joined any clubs even though SOM paid for one or two clubs. I didn't do it. People criticized me for being so uninvolved. But I just couldn't. I felt I did my part. You know, instead of belonging to a club or to a women's organization, I always had enough other things to get involved with. I organized trips for our interns in the summer. Architectural trips to Cranbrook and to Detroit, to John Deere, to the small Sullivan banks. And many other events like discussions in my house. I also got involved with homeless

people like Lee Godie, you know. You saw her paintings in my bathroom. She stayed here over night.

BLUM: Lee Godie, the artist?

PETERHANS: Yes. I was one of the first who bought pictures from her. And she stayed here several times. Once when she was out in the cold one night, I took her home with me. She slept on the daybed, and in the morning she came in with a cup of tea in her hands and she said, "Excuse me, Brigitte. Only you and the Queen are being served tea in bed." Can you imagine, a homeless person doing that?

BLUM: Well, she was a fixture for many years on the steps of the Art Institute, selling her paintings.

PETERHANS: She became famous later on. Right. I had lots of her pictures, the best was a four feet long banana screen. Wild! Friends of mine, young people, and kids love them. I said, "Take it" and they did.

BLUM: As you look back, what are some of the biggest changes that have occurred in the field of architecture, during the years you've been practicing?

PETERHANS: Well, I have a nephew—my godson—who all of a sudden wanted to become an architect.

BLUM: Were you his inspiration?

PETERHANS: Not really. But I traveled with him when he was young and with all my godchildren. I either invited them to come here, or traveled with them to interesting places. I took one to Tikal. And I took the one who became an architect—when he was younger, to Syria, Aleppo, Damascus, Palmyra and also to Egypt. But what was it that you asked me?

BLUM: What are some of the biggest changes over the years?

PETERHANS: In architecture? Well, I mean, obviously, you know, architecture has become so irrational while I still am old-fashioned. I was with Mies first and then with Graham; and I still think that the Hancock and the Sears are the best skyscrapers in the world. And nobody has realized that, to the full extent.

BLUM: They were award-winning buildings.

PETERHANS: Right. I know. But you know, compared with some recent, very tall buildings in Dubai or London or in the Far East. With my brother Joerg we commiserate a lot about it. He just gave a lecture at a symposium in Venice between architects and engineers, and he showed some very crazy new buildings. He said, "What should engineers do? Because, it's us who

have to make those buildings stand up. Should we refuse when it gets too crazy?"

BLUM: What did he think? Should they refuse?

PETERHANS: They could. For instance, the Beijing Olympic Stadium, the Birds Nest, by the Swiss architects Herzog and de Meuron. They are quoted as saying, "Only in China could we do this building". Of course, because a Chinese construction worker makes a single dollar a day. My brother was in China recently, where he has a lot of former students from Mao times. They are professors and invite him for lectures, honorary degrees, etc. And when one of his former students not long ago took him to the construction site of the Birds Nest a little piece of steel was just going up to be installed, he said with tears in his eyes, "I could build two schools in my village for the price from that little piece."

BLUM: How do you feel about their priorities?

PETERHANS: It's under construction and almost completed. Well, I do not mind small crazy buildings by private owners but when it goes out of hand, especially tall buildings, it's crazy.

BLUM: I understand that's slowed down, because of financing.

PETERHANS: I could imagine. I think it would cost at least ten or fifteen times as much as a rational building of the same sort.

BLUM: Brigitte, did you ever want to, or did you ever teach?

PETERHANS: I taught for a little while in Stuttgart during the time I was with my sick and old mother. I substituted for a friend of mine. And IIT has asked me to teach when I came back here. But I don't think I'd want to. I could teach design. But I would not quite know what to teach. I feel I'm not strong enough to say, do it this way or this is the only right way.

BLUM: Maybe you could adopt Mies's method and say nothing until the student sees how to improve the design himself. It was an effective way for you to learn.

PETERHANS: Yes, but I am not structurally inventive like Graham was with Faz next to him. Alone I don't think I would be a strong enough teacher to really bring across something worthwhile. Now, of course, just about everybody is doing that right now. But they don't need another teacher like that, an old lady. So I refused.

BLUM: Have you been on juries?

PETERHANS: Yes, for a friend of mine at the University of Illinois Circle. They were doing a large span building; it was at the end of a course. The students' efforts in all of this was amazing but most of the structures I didn't like. They were structurally uninteresting and visually often not worked out.

They had all passed the course. How could you come in and critique and be negative about it? So I was trying to find something positive, and I mostly addressed the site, and I just commented on that. After I did that once, I never wanted to do it again though they wanted me to come back. They thought I was doing very well, picking out things they hadn't really thought about. I picked something out which was not offensive, and at the same time, not totally negative. I thought it was very hypocritical on my side, but also realized that I would not be much better teaching such a course and subject. I just feel I'm not that strong. I was lucky to work with somebody like Graham, who would say, This is okay, but on this one, you'd better think up something else. We also had fights and sometimes I won. But other times I lost and he would say, "Sorry, I'm the boss," and we'd have a laugh but often I was furious.

BLUM: But you shared ideas with him and sometimes gave him ideas.

PETERHANS: True. I think I'm as good as many and I'm better than most average architects, but I don't think I'm good enough to teach.

BLUM: Did you feel teaching is a heavy responsibility, because the next generation of students will be the architects?

PETERHANS: What I thought when I came to Chicago at first was that at IIT there was this very strong philosophy. It was not like that at my school in Germany: one year this was fashionable, the next year this, and then this. There was



no real philosophy. And I think there is no philosophy now. And that makes it very difficult to teach. Yet, to continue exactly the same, like in 1957, is also not possible. So I don't know. I just don't know what would be right except that I believe that the most important issue now is to develop sustainable architecture, green architecture.

BLUM: Do you think that architects are well paid?

PETERHANS: Well, the average architect will never be rich, whether he is employed or on his own. I think that SOM paid quite well.

BLUM: Did you feel you were well paid?

PETERHANS: I have never asked for a raise in my life. And I don't know how much others earned.

BLUM: Did you receive any raises?

PETERHANS: Yes. Without ever asking. But I think, on the other hand, if I had a family with two or three children, I probably would have not been that satisfied at SOM. In Germany I made a lot more money in the years 1965-1968 when I worked in a large office in Stuttgart, for HWP.

BLUM: Do you know if SOM made any effort to have their projects published, so that not only the profession but the layman would know about what SOM was designing and building?

PETERHANS: Of course. There were and are all these books. Every few years SOM did a book.

BLUM: Was there always a public relations office?

PETERHANS: Yes. They had that and they still do.

BLUM: From the beginning, when you went there?

PETERHANS: No. In the very beginning, I don't think so. There was someone in the New York office. She was this older, very strong lady and she knew everything, Marion Vanderbilt. She was famous. I met her a couple of times and if you wanted to know something, you could always call her up, and she knew it. She arranged for me visits of the famous East Coast buildings of SOM New York. I went to see Connecticut General and Emhart on my own when we started Baxter. Marion Vanderbilt knew everything and everyone from A to Z. Later the promotional department in Chicago, the ladies who ran that were not that knowledgeable. I don't think they are so strong. Are they? Maybe they haven't been there very long. But I think they're smart and polite and very conscientious. I don't

know how much they do to promote themselves. I think they mainly do it, you know, for projects. They put up these brochures.

BLUM: Do you think they have had a hand in encouraging critics to look at what SOM is building and to write about it?

PETERHANS: I don't know whether they do that. Blair Kamin sure doesn't write much about anything.

BLUM: Were there other architecture critics?

PETERHANS: There were some. Phase II in London got good criticism in the early 1990s. SOM gives lectures around the world for instance. Bill Baker gives lectures, the engineers do that better and more successfully as Faz did. I have been to one of Baker's lectures in Stuttgart, and I know that recently he gave another lecture there. After I retired I organized at the university in Stuttgart, a lecture for Myron. And so to make his trip financially feasible, I got three universities for him to lecture: Hannover, Karlsruhe and Stuttgart.

BLUM: How were his lectures received?

PETERHANS: In Stuttgart it was a great success. In fact, we had to open up another bigger auditorium for him. He had something like eight hundred people.

My brother Joerg introduced him. It was great. He sure was, you know, very modest, and not a big speaker but students loved him.

BLUM: Who were SOM's biggest competitors?

PETERHANS: You know, I don't really know. Early on there were Dinkeloo and Roche, Philip Johnson and Saarinen. From a distance we all adored Luis Barragan and Felix Candela in Mexico. When I traveled through Mexico in 1962-1963 Bruce Graham made me visit both.

BLUM: Were there any local firms?

PETERHANS: Harry Weese.

BLUM: Was Harry Weese competition for SOM?

PETERHANS: In some way, yes, because he was different, you know. He had very strong and different opinions. I think Harry Weese was competition. Perkins and Will a little bit, but I don't know. I'm the wrong one to ask. Who built Yale? Paul Rudolph?

BLUM: Yes, Paul Rudolph. He designed the Art and Architecture building at Yale.

PETERHANS: Then came Louis Kahn, he became competition. Louis Kahn.

BLUM: He was competition for SOM?

PETERHANS: Yes, I think so but not in a commercial sense. As far as I know he didn't do any corporate buildings, but architecturally he was a strong competition. There's this famous story. Before I went back to Germany in 1963, Jane Graham and I made an architecture tour. Jane was pregnant with their second child and we went to see all the buildings at Yale, especially Bunshaft's library and the Kahn art museum. And we went to Baltimore to see the Mies high-rise. We went to Philadelphia, where we saw the Louis Kahn laboratories at the University of Pennsylvania and as we walked down the street downtown we see this little building with a little sign: Louis Kahn, Architect. We stumbled up the stairs. We were both rather young women, you know, in our early thirties, and we said, "We are European architects, could we just have a quick look at your office. We just saw Mr. Kahn's laboratory." Within no time we were sitting opposite from him. He lectured us, he showed us the models of Bangladesh, and the other Indian projects of his. And we were just so embarrassed; we didn't know what to say, you know. We came from Chicago. We had never seen this kind of architecture before and we didn't know what to do with unusual, totally different architecture. Finally, we said, "We have to catch a train." And everybody told us, he adored—he was always very friendly to young women.

BLUM: Well, I suppose he welcomed your overture.

PETERHANS: Oh boy, it was so embarrassing. He was so cute, and I guess it was funny for him. From there we went to Washington and saw that famous airport by Eero Saarinen. That was a competition, a very big competition. Saarinen won the competition. That airport was fabulous, at that time. So that was our architecture tour.

BLUM: Brigitte, as you look back, you worked so closely with Bruce Graham. What was the most important lesson you learned from him?

PETERHANS: Oh God, that's like asking me...

BLUM: Do you want to think about it?

PETERHANS: Yes. I think about such a question as what do you like best? At school? Which color? Which book? But that question, What do you like best at school? You know, I never knew an answer. You know, I never knew what I liked best at school. I just had to make it up. I don't have this kind of definite answer for anything. I'm not sophisticated.

BLUM: What has been your greatest opportunity in architecture?

PETERHANS: I think my best opportunity was coming to IIT and to Chicago. It really woke me up. Just getting out of my local German environment, living with my parents, and then suddenly to become completely free. It was

fab to go to school where every day there was something new and different. And then shortly afterwards, getting to work at SOM.

BLUM: How would you like to be remembered?

PETERHANS: Not at all. I have no legacy obsession at all.

BLUM: What would you tell a student today, as advice for the future, in architecture?

PETERHANS: I would no longer give advice to young architects or students for study or for work, to come to the U.S. to escape.

BLUM: Where would you advise one to go?

PETERHANS: There's, right now, architecturally, there is very little to learn in the U.S., not in schools or in offices. Perhaps in some offices, they still know how to put buildings together. But the architecture is almost everywhere nothing to be informed by.

BLUM: So you would discourage a student coming here?

PETERHANS: Yes, I would advise young architects to work in small European firms, for instance there are some small British or German or Swiss offices.

BLUM: You think he would be better trained there than in an office in the United States?

PETERHANS: Right now, yes. Unfortunately.

BLUM: You think they're doing more innovative things in Europe?

PETERHANS: No question. Every American will tell you that. Unfortunately the U.S. industry is not up to it. My brother gets called to consult American offices on complicated work. He's doing some bridges on the East Coast, and he's won some prizes. Joerg now has an office in New York and they are very busy. It started out with the new New York Times building, by Renzo Piano. He wanted a tall needle on the top that was supposed to swing with the wind. Fascinating. Well, my brother was called to engineer it because it was very complicated. And he solved it. But it was too expensive and the bank turned it down. And now there's this stiff little needle standing on top of the building that's good for nothing. He was also called for Daniel Libeskind's solution for the tower of the World Trade Center, Ground Zero, to engineer it's open, symbolic, structure on top. Well, Larry Silverstein, the developer, who inherited the insurance money, realized that that would become too expensive, so he fired Libeskind. And my brother now is still doing something for the new design by David Childs. Unfortunately. I'll never forgive him.

BLUM: For what?



PETERHANS: The square tower by David Childs. I can't stand him, even though he keeps telling my brother how he likes me and sends his regards. And I don't forgive my brother for not getting off that job. But he's also doing some bridges here and is working with Vinoly, Cesar Pelli, and others. Gehry too.

BLUM: Do you think we have the talent here to do it?

PETERHANS: You do, yes, but things have fallen so far behind. The industry is so rigid. My brother says it used to be the opposite. Things used to cost a lot less here to build than in Europe. Now it's the opposite. My brother says it's unbelievable how much the simplest steel piece, or something which is a little different—they are treated as special—costs more here compared to Europe. They can ship steel from Europe to here, cheaper from Europe or from the third world. It's ironic. It's very strange.

BLUM: If you had a chance, would you do it again, just the way you did it?

PETERHANS: Architecture? Oh yes, I would do architecture again, of course. It's a terrific job. It never gets boring. Never. Even if it's only a kitchen, or a door, or a little stair, it's always interesting.

BLUM: Is every job a challenge?

PETERHANS: Yes, it's always something that you can come up with, even if you have no money, you can do it simple. It's not a matter of money.

BLUM: I have asked many of the questions that are interesting to me and I hope the reader. Is there something that you would like to talk about, that we haven't talked about yet?

PETERHANS: Not really. Good question. I don't know. Same thing as the other question about what I'm like. This to me was a famous line—Greta Garbo was once asked, when she looked so mysterious as she did, what was she thinking? And she said, "Nothing." That's about how I feel. I feel the same. I mean I'm not very sophisticated, at least not off the top of my head.

BLUM: Well, I thank you very much for the time and effort you have given to this interview.

PETERHANS: I would like to say this, American cities are really not taking care of themselves. It is very upsetting how Chicago is being ruined these days and how the great opportunities are being missed. All these new tall apartment buildings without any sense for the environment, no more green open spaces anywhere. No new parks in between. And the city in addition is expanding faster and faster out into the best Illinois farmland.

BLUM: Well, let's hope the next generation of architects recognizes the problem and feels motivated to do something about that.

PETERHANS: Yes, and feels and fights for it.

BLUM: Brigitte, thank you for sharing your memories with us.

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## BRIGITTE PETERHANS

- Born:** 27 August 1928, Sulz am Neckar, Germany
- Education:** University of Stuttgart, Dipl. Ing.Arch., 1960  
Illinois Institute of Technology, Master of Architecture, 1962
- Award:** Fulbright Fellow, 1956-1957
- Registration:** Registered Architect, Germany, 1966
- Work Experience:** Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, interiors, part-time, 1957-1959  
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, architecture design, 1960-1963  
Free-lance with Peter C. von Seidlein, Munich, Germany, 1964-1966  
Free-lance with HWP, Stuttgart, Germany, 1966-1969  
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1969-1990  
Associate 1973  
Associate Partner 1979  
Head of design studio, 1979-1990  
Retired from Skidmore. Owings & Merrill, 1990  
Consultant, Anderson & Oh, Inc., 1996  
Private Practice, Stuttgart, Germany 1991-2000
- Projects:** Arab International Bank World Trade Center and Hotel, Cairo, Egypt,  
1976-1978, 1985-1990  
Artigas Foundation, Gallifa, Spain 1985-1989  
Baxter Travenol Headquarters and Laboratories, Deerfield, Illinois,  
1973-1980  
Broadgate Exchange House, London, 1987-1990  
Max Eyth Footbridge, Stuttgart, Germany, 1989  
Perimeter Center, Atlanta, Georgia, 1981-1986  
Sears Tower, Chicago, Illinois, 1970-1972, 1980

APPENDIX  
AN ESSAY FOR MYRON

It is through Myron that I came to America, to Chicago and to IIT.

During the summer of 1950 or 51 in a youth hostel in Zurich, we met at the laundry room where I was aiting for the only iron with which he was trying to press his wrinkled slacks, for a visit at the revered ETH [*Eidgenossische Technische Hochschule Zurich*]. He needed help badly with his ironing and while I asked him to get me a moist handkerchief instead of his soaking wet terry towel, he told me that he had been biking thtough the Alps from Italy up through Switzerland, seeing as many Maillart bridges as possible, and that his luggage had to be so minimal because al all the steep mountain roads leading to them. After Switzerland he was going to Germany, one stop of his itinerary being Stuttgart. "Stuttgart?" "I have just begun to study there!" "What subject?" "Architecture." "Oh isn't that wonderful! Then you must know the *Weisenhofsiedlung* and Fritz Leonhardt?" I had never heard of Fritz Leonhardt, Maillart or the revered ETH. I was out of Germany for the first time since 1938, working as a farmhand in a Swiss mountain village between semesters. When Myron arrived in Stuttgart some ten days later, quite exhausted from crossing the Black Forest during a heat spell, and when post-war bombed out Stuttgart's youth hostel turned out to be a tent, my mother agreed to bring him home to Stetten, a remote village, some 20 miles away. [Peterhans died there in 1960.]

Myron Goldsmith in our house was the very first American we knew and a fascination to my four young brothers: "He has no towels with him, and only 2 changes, but 3 peotry books and *ein Tagebuch!*" He also had a box of slides; first construction photos of the Farnsworth House and of 860/880, mostly, mostly steel details which he tried to explain to me—their precision and workmanship. He said that he had shown them to Nervi in Rome and that he had been "enthused". I had to look up the word "enthused" in the dictionary, and I was flabbergasted, not to say dumbfounded by all this; it was like a glimpse into a new world. I only know the few steel posts under the Le Corbusier buildings at the *Weisenhofsiedlung* and their flat roofs. But all walls were made of masonry with stucco and nearly fifty percent were still in ruins. No one had ever heard of or seen Farnsworth or 860/880. For Myron's appointment with Professor E.H. Fritz Leonhardt, described by him as the "inventor of poststressed concrete". My brother Joerg, 15, was selected as his guide and had to wear his first tie. He was thrilled to be allowed in their meeting and to the office tour, without a clue that he would later study and work with Leonhardt and eventually inherit his chair.

Back in Stetten, Myron loved my mother's garden, with her berries and vegetables and he spent 2 extra days helping her preserve, can and dry them. He also took long walks into the hills, woods and nearby villages where he liked old wood frame houses but none of the new buildings. During these walks he told me to study in Chicago with Mies and to get there with a Fulbright scholarship, which he too was going to pursue to go to Rome to study and work with Pierre Luigi Nervi. Then he left to attend the first post-war Hannover Messe.



This was the beginning of our life long friendship around architecture, sustained during the following years by few letters and many clippings. We met again in San Francisco in 1958. His UAL hangars were going up and we went out to see them often, followed by wonderful California picnics. For a few weeks, Peterhans and I had the good fortune of enjoying his and Jim Ferris' apartments with the best views over the city and bay. We lived in Jim's and I studied in Myron's while they went on a Italian vacation. In 1962, Robin and Myron took me along to see Aaron Siskind photograph the details on the huge concrete roofs of UAL Elmhurst, poststressing concrete details. It was an ice cold, brilliant winter day. In 1976 when he was hospitalized with heart trouble, I visited him during my lunch break. Next to his bed on a tray, a complete menu was waiting for me. In 1979 after his bypass, when I was in Germany with my mother who was very ill, he came for a brief visit and I took him to Vierzehnheiligen at last. Driving on a rural road on a hazy morning, the Vierzehnheiligen hills with the church still hidden in the woods appeared to the east. Myron suddenly stopped me to turn back. "I think the pilgrims' path is branching off here!" A beautiful old trail winding between the fields and meadows led to steep steps straight up through the forest towards Balthasar Neumann's masterpiece; candle filled chapels and prayer stations along side. Often had I come to Vierzehnheiligen, but never found this beautiful approach.

Only in recent years did I come to realize that for Myron entering a German home of total strangers, only a few years after the war, could have been very awkward—perhaps even threatening. No such thoughts had entered mine or my family's mind way back then—not the faintest. We didn't even think of him a Jewish, nor whatever else—strange indeed!

During one of my last visits this past summer, I dared to ask the question. So frail, yet so upright he sat in the den of his Wilmette house and we again talked architecture and hardly anything else. He seemed to be puzzled by such a sudden change of subject and took a moment to focus. Then after turning to Robin with a smile, he said, "No, I never thought of this, because I knew you."

Brigitte Peterhans  
October 1996

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