

**AN INTERVIEW WITH BRAD
FRIEDMUTTER**

An Oral History Conducted by David Schwartz

The Building Las Vegas Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV
University Libraries
University of Nevada Las Vegas

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Produced by: The Oral History Research Center at UNLV University Libraries
Director: Claytee D. White
Editor: Stefani Evans, Franklin Howard
Transcribers: Kristin Hicks, Frances Smith
Interviewers: Stefani Evans, Claytee D. White
Project Manager: Stefani Evans

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The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the Building Las Vegas Oral History Project.

Claytee D. White
Director, Oral History Research Center
University Libraries
University Nevada, Las Vegas

PREFACE



The Cosmopolitan, Red Rock Casino, and Ritz Carlton Lake Las Vegas represent different parts of the Las Vegas Valley and different corporations, but all were designed by Brad Friedmutter of the Friedmutter Group.

With a current client list that includes some of the biggest names in hospitality—Caesars Entertainment, MGM Resorts International, and Station Casinos, just to name those headquartered in Las Vegas—Friedmutter obtained his degree in architecture in 1973 from the Cooper Union School of Architecture in lower Manhattan.

After working on a number of small projects he began working with Steve Wynn’s design team in Las Vegas and Atlantic City on such iconic buildings as The Golden Nugget and The Mirage. In this interview, Friedmutter shares how he develops his projects, his philosophy of design, and the future of urban planning and casino design. Throughout, he recalls various owners and designers he has worked with—Henry Conversano, Homer Rissman, Roger Thomas, Donald Trump, Kenny Wynn, and Steve Wynn—as he made his mark on Southern Nevada and beyond.

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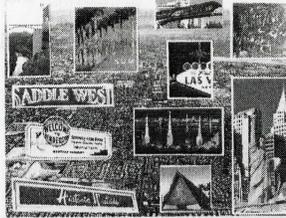
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September 12, 2016
in Las Vegas, Nevada
Conducted by David Schwartz

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Building Las Vegas

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D: Today is September 12, 2016, and I [David G. Schwartz] am with Brad Friedmutter in his offices here in Las Vegas and this is for the Building Las Vegas project. I would like to start by talking a little bit about your early life. Where are you from?

I was born in Brooklyn, New York and I grew up in Flushing, Queens.

D: Where did you go to school?

I attended John Bowne High School, and I was fortunate to get a scholarship to the Cooper Union School of Architecture in lower Manhattan, 1968–1973.

D: Tell me a little bit about architecture school. What did you do there?

I don't have much to compare it with because that is the one I knew. I was very fortunate that John Hejduk was the dean at the time and it was the whole New York Five. We had guest professors and speakers like Stanley Tigerman and Richard Meier that were practicing architects that came in. The whole thing about Cooper Union was not the technical side, it was the theory and philosophy, which is really a wonderful education. If you go to a school that is geared that way, it lays the ground work and the frame work to approach pretty much any situation in life beyond just architecture. It really addresses the basics that you learn in third grade of who, what, when, where, and why, and how you establish and approach challenges and projects, establish the givens, fix things, the variable things, how you put them together and how you work around them. At the time I was 18 years old, never had any technical schooling before that, it was all new to me.

Interestingly enough my mother was a Director of Cultural Arts for the Board of Education for New York City. She was involved in the programming and of

course the eternal quest for funds. Those were the first things to get done and that was when Mayor Koch was the mayor. I grew up with my mother in a very strong, political position in the education system, I guess the largest education system in the country, in music and art. I was very fortunate in that way.

D: What were the theories in architecture when you were in school?

I remember the first year we spent an entire semester on the nine square grid and different ways to start with the grid, creating panels, flowing space. I remember that said if you took a little cup of milk and you took it on a board and you had these columns on a nine square grid and you tilt it and let the milk flow, how is it going to flow? If you added a panel and a partition, how would that change the flow? That whole theory as it developed over time was really instrumental. You would get into half panels. It is the whole concept of defining space using walls, proportion, light, materials and the interrelationship. Of course most of it was white. You could make any color you want as long as it was white. I was right out of high school and I did not go to a technical high school. Half of the students, there were 23 students in a class, at least half of them were already working. They were coming back to get their degree so they could formalize it and get a license. I was in classrooms with some very talented, knowledgeable, accomplished people, coming to refine their education. I didn't know nearly as much as they did. You rise to the level of your competition.

D: After school where did you start working?

In 1973 when I graduated there was a smaller recession than the one we are currently experiencing and I was in New York and I could not find a job in an

architect's office and I was very disappointed. I said, "I graduated from one of the best architectural schools in the country and I can't get a job." I was very disillusioned and frustrated about that. Fortunately, because of the scholarship I had no student debt, which was a nice thing. My first job was not in architecture. It was in the stock room in Macy's on Queens Boulevard but I needed a job. Everyone I knew said it was a great time to go to Europe and see Europe. I couldn't afford to do that. I would have liked to do that and am still waiting to do that. I worked in Macy's stock room which was very, very interesting. Then the first job I got was from a friend of a friend of a friend and it was a contractor that did their own architecture in the city. My boss was a MIT graduate who was a little older than me but it was a family business and that was my first job. I got to see firsthand the kind of nitty gritty of the reality of architecture. I went from the theory of architecture to very nitty gritty, working for a contractor in New York City, where they are doing jobs with unions and inspectors and field guys coming in later in the day asking for field drawings from my boss. I got to see the contractor side and the architecture side in reality. This was very real now. They weren't monumental projects but they were getting built. I had a lot of friends who were working for firms where they did projects that were in the concept phase and they never got built. I was very lucky in my early 20s, after school, to see things actually happening and to see it from both the construction and architecture side.

D: What kind of projects were you building?

They were commercial. Some of them were restorations. There are obviously a lot of old buildings in New York. Some of them were dismantling old brownstone,

cast iron buildings, documenting all the pieces coming off, adding a floor, putting it to another floor. Then there were restaurants in buildings. It was all commercial stuff. They didn't do any new high rise construction.

D: At this time did you have an idea what path you wanted to take in architecture?

Not at all. I was totally lost and totally confused. I was in a recession wondering if I had made the right decision. I was making minimum wage, and if memory serves me correctly, minimum wage was about \$1.85 in those days. I remember thinking, "Holy mackerel, what did I do?" I remember looking in the newspaper at sales jobs, saying, "Gee, maybe I can make more money in sales." I stuck with it and even the place I was working started losing work so I had to go on part-time work. I was working two to two and a half days a week. Work-wise there was nothing keeping me in New York. At the time I moved to the West Coast to the Bay area in quest of better times.

D: A little digression here. You read a book like *The Fountainhead* and you get this idea of the architect as this single minded visionary. How true do you think that is to the profession?

There are some architects very true to that. I certainly had classmates that were like that in the late 1960s and early 1970s, everyone was either a radical or an idealist or something in between or something beyond that. At Cooper Union in those days computers were just starting and actually I did have some computer classes, but not anything like what we have today. You would sharpen your pencil, not with a pencil sharpener but on some sand paper.

D: Why is that?

To get that chisel point on the pencil. So when you drew you actually tore all the pencil. This is if you are not doing ink drawings. There were hours and hours and days and days of that type of discipline to learn the craft part of architecture. Of course there were people that were way better than I was.

D: What were the radicals radical about?

Remember, it was just at the end of Vietnam. There were two or three of my classmates that had served in Vietnam. They wanted to strike and some of them did. Really? Strike about what? I'm here to go to school and get an education. Some of them did strike. Oddly enough, at Cooper Union, which goes back to the 1860s, Abraham Lincoln spoke in the Great Hall. They had graduation in the Great Hall every single year. The year I graduated, 1973, was the one year it was under renovation, so it made us unique. There were some very outspoken who wanted to make a point, even if there was no point to be made. I saw all that. I just wanted to work.

D: Was there any discussion of *Learning from Las Vegas* yet?

No. I didn't even know what Las Vegas was. As a matter of fact, I didn't even see a casino until my first job with Henry Conversano. I hadn't been to a casino before. I always hear people say, "When I was young my parents went to Las Vegas." I went to the Catskills.

D: So let's go to San Francisco. You are in San Francisco and what are you doing there?

I remember trying to get a job as a waiter at the White Whale, which is a tourist restaurant, and I put down that I had a degree in architecture. They said, "Oh, you are just waiting to get a better job so you can't work here." I was over qualified. On the other hand they said, "Have you ever been a waiter before?" I said, "No." and they said, "Well, then you don't have enough experience." I was over qualified and I didn't have enough experience. I started to fine tune my interviewing skills.

The first job I got was in Hayward, California, with Mervyn's Department Stores. At the time Mervyn's Department stores were on a growth pattern and they were eventually purchased by Dayton Hudson out of the Midwest. They were building medium-box-size stores for retail. I had a reverse commute from the city down to Hayward. It was very interesting because I got to meet a lot of people from New York because it was a retail organization and I got to meet buyers and all these people were from New York and they would go back and forth. I also got to meet construction people again and I was very comfortable with them and I got to meet other architects. The whole idea there was that was an in-house planning, as we get to Atlandia Design when I worked for Steve Wynn, not too unlike that. An owner's in-house division. When the projects got approved and financed and they hired outside architects, I interfaced with them and represented the owner.

I did that for a while and then got an opportunity to work for BA Premises Corporation, which was Bank of America. That was in San Francisco on Samson Street. That was a similar type job but with branch banks. I was very good at meeting with local towns and people and working with them and architectural

review committees and this and that. In those days not too many people in coastal California or Tahoe area liked to do that, it was a very controversial thing.

Then I worked for a place, to get some more straight actual drafting, called Store Planning Associates. They were on Gold Street in San Francisco. I learned some good retail design experience. They also did Mervyn's and Diamond's and Macy's. That was interior. I understood the whole idea of putting the necessities in places in the store to attract people and draw them beyond other things. It is not too unlike casinos. Instead of slot machines, it is a hanging rack or bin, and you are drawing people past it to go to things they need, socks and underwear and T-shirts (depending on the type of store, who the client was, the level of the detail finish, and the money that was spent for the space). There were some that said, "I don't want them looking up at a beautiful ceiling. I want them looking down at the goods on the table." Then there were others who said, "We want to create these great spaces that people want to come in and hang out in." It was very interesting because it was the same lessons I learned coming to Las Vegas.

I said to myself that I still wasn't making any decent money here. It was very frustrating and I was working very hard. I couldn't see where a future was. I didn't think of myself as having my own firm at the time. I was going paycheck to paycheck. A friend of mine that I met at Bank of America said, "Basically we are doing preliminary development for the bank. I bet you that there are small developers out there that could use our services and maybe we can make some money that way and get in on development." We had zero funding, minus zero, we were in debt. We started it and called it Development Services in San

Francisco. I don't think we ever made a penny and there were people who took advantage of our offerings, which we did with open eyes. Then we realized that wasn't going to work.

For several months I wasn't making any income so I had to get a regular job. I called some people I had met over the years and someone I had met at Store Planning Associates, her husband worked for a guy named Henry Conversano. This is when we enter into the casino world. I called him up and I did not have a resume and I did not have a portfolio because I was always in management, overseeing things. I was able to chat with him. It turns out he grew up not far from where I grew up in Queens. He was 20 years older than me. I was now a licensed architect and he was doing Harrah's Casinos in Lake Tahoe [Nevada] and in Atlantic City [New Jersey], in the late 1970s. I hadn't been back to visit my family and friends in New York in quite a while. He asked me if I was OK with traveling and I said yes and he asked if I was OK with traveling to New York and I said yes. He said, "Well, there is this thing called Atlantic City. They approved gaming and I work for Bill Harrah. We have a project back there and we do the interiors but I need somebody who is an architect to add credibility to my staff because the interior people they just draw cartoons and they don't know anything." I was there to add credibility. I am just as capable of drawing cartoons as the next person.

He hired me and literally the next day I go from unemployment to flying first class on TWA [Trans-World America], staying in New York City at the UN [United Nations] Plaza Hotel in a two-story suite. I am banging on the windows at

everybody in Queens saying, "I am here. I am here. Look at me. Look at me now." We then drove down to Atlantic City and met with the Harrah's folks. It was the old Chalfonte site. It was going to be a very interesting project. They are going to tear down the Chalfonte, which was an historical thing for Atlantic City. They were trying to keep certain buildings and not keep certain buildings. I think sometimes hanging onto nostalgia hurt them ultimately, because they couldn't bring in a contemporary, competitive product. I understand, having worked in Manhattan restoring buildings the importance of it, but not in the entertainment world, entertainment architecture. We worked with the Cambridge Seven Associates and we worked with Peter Chermayeff and we were going to do the interiors and they were going to do this whole thing hanging the Harrah's auto collection.

D: How big was that going to be?

It was big. I don't remember if they consolidated any lots, but I do remember because of the museum expertise of Cambridge Seven and Peter Chermayeff's, putting Harrah's auto collection and suspending it was going to be a big deal. This was very exciting. I am going from a week and a half before of "Oh, how am I going to pay this bill?" to now meeting these people in New York and New Jersey area. I was catapulted. I thought, "This is an exciting business."

D: Would they hang it in the casino?

Yes. Not unlike Circus Circus. There was going to be a giant space and they were going to suspend them and that was going to be the attraction, which was relevant to Harrah's. We worked with them. They were located in Cambridge,

Massachusetts, so I spent some time there, which was kind of fun. I am staying in a real hotel and able to do things and worked with those folks there for quite a while. I had two or three other people from Conversano with me and it was a lot of fun. We put this whole package together and I remember, being back in Oakland, which is where Conversano is, and we had models together and we had this whole presentation ready to go to Atlantic City and the project was cancelled. I don't recall the exact reasons. I thought, "Hmmm. OK." It can go from zero to a hundred in two seconds and from a hundred to zero in another two seconds. I thought that was the nature of this industry, but very exciting. I continued to work with Henry Conversano and then he said, "Come on, we are going to go down to Las Vegas. There is this guy, Steve Wynn."

D: Before we get into that can you tell me a little bit about Henry Conversano and his office and what that was like?

He was a very cool dude. He was able to, literally, in a presentation, read the room. He was not scripted. He was able to read the room and read the mood. Someone would say something and he would be able to pull something out of his magic bag that was relevant to what was being said. I would just watch him and say, "How does he do this?" I'm sitting there and he would bounce things off of me and my thing was a little back and forth, repartee with him. I just hung on the edge of the seat because I wouldn't know where it was going, how it was going, or anything. It was always positive. He was able to control the situation, control the meetings and it was very interesting to watch and be a part of. In my career, of the big people that I was in front of and had the privilege of working closely with,

was Henry Conversano and Steve Wynn, and they were my formative influences in this industry. I saw what was important and what was not important and how you work with a myriad of people. He was very, very good at it.

D: Now we are getting to Steve Wynn.

I was 28 and Steve was 10 years older than I am. It was a young Steve Wynn. I knew at the time that it was an exciting time. You wish you could kind of freeze it, but you can't. I tried to pay as much attention as I could. They created some great things together. There was a project, I think originally it was called the Palm Bay Club, which is where the Wet 'n Wild site was, which is where the Turnberry is now. We worked on it a bunch of years and Homer Rissman was the architect, Conversano did the interiors. We came down to Las Vegas. We had an office on Arville and that is where I met Roger Thomas; he was working for Steve at the time. We put this whole project together and Sierra Construction, which was Gus Rapone, Kitty Rodman, and Bill Koerwitz; they were the owners and they were going to build it. I had the pleasure of meeting them. When the budget was announced, if memory serves me correct, I believe it was \$400,000,000. They said, "Ah, it doesn't pan out in today's market." I'm thinking, "Here we go, zero to a hundred, hundred to zero." Now Golden Nugget in Atlantic City was kicking in.

D: Was this around 1980ish?

Yes.

D: I want to back up a little bit. Tell me your interactions with Homer Rissman.

Homer was a very interesting man. He always wore white and was well-likes. He had the formula of casinos, in those days, down pat.

D: And what was that for that time?

He used to talk about putting in a buffet with 99 cent shrimp and you have your casino and your slots. It is interesting because the formula then is not much different from the formula now, it is just scaled up. They had a sundry shop, they had a fur salon, and they had a jewelry store and maybe one or two other things that is the retail. They always had a gourmet steak house, they had an Italian restaurant, Chinese restaurant and a buffet and a 24-hour coffee shop. Those were the restaurants and the food was always very good and plentiful, but they didn't necessarily have celebrity chefs or brand names. There was a headliner lounge or show room and there was a king's row and those were held out for the best players so they always had a seat. It was pretty basic and straightforward. The hotels weren't gigantic, so they were easily managed. He was just a very, very nice guy. His offices were at the Hilton.

D: What do you think his place is in the architectural history of Las Vegas?

I don't know the complete list of his works but definitely being from here, he was not from LA [Los Angeles, California] or other cities, certainly created a sense of dealing with the nature of that client at that time. It is different than it is today.

D: How do you think he compares with Martin Stern?

I never met Martin Stern but I did know Joel Bergman, of course. I can't really say how that was. I just know that Homer was very steady. You have to be able to

take the venting of casino ownership management. He was able to do that very well.

D: What are they venting about?

They are spending a lot of money and they are on the cusp of something new and they would vent to people that would listen to the venting. If someone crumbles then they will not vent to them anymore. If someone pushes back too much then they don't want to vent to them. I would say it was the combination of the excitement, the uncertainty, and the fear. They are spending a lot of money and in those days I am not sure there was as much of a guarantee that if you build it they will come. There was a great scene in Bugsy where they are talking about the wall looking out at the pool. Whoever the writer spoke to about that, Del Webb is there, and the whole thing. It is made up but not so made up. What is the important thing? There is also the scene in the movie Casino about the blueberries.

D: Which really happened.

Is that a true story?

D: I heard the guy who at the time was his body guard that that absolutely happened.

When I watched the movie I say, but of course that should happen. That is that caring about the customer that all owners and upper management have and that consistency and that taking the meritocracy away and the not caring. Some people look at that and say that is overbearing and controlling, but I look at it and think that is what makes it great. That is why these properties and this city is so unique.

D: Can you tell me about the Palm Bay Club?

Palm Bay Club, I don't know if that was the last name, but it was almost set up like a pinwheel or wagon wheel. The casino was in the center and there were going to be a series of straight slab hotels like spokes of a wheel coming together. It was fun being part of that whole thing, getting the press release out. I am not exactly sure the main reasons why since I wasn't privy to why it didn't happen. You look at the location and it was kind of on the northern side of the Strip. I don't know if that had anything to do with it or not.

D: Do you remember meeting Steve Wynn?

Yes.

D: What kind of impression did he make?

Being from back East, I felt very comfortable being around him. I felt, and I hope he shares it, an instant chemistry with him. I understood him. I understood why he said the things he said, why he wanted to do those things and I liked what I heard. I felt very at ease, but not being cavalier, and knowing you have to do your job. It is very simple, just do the job you are hired to do.

D: How about Roger Thomas?

I met him at the same time and I didn't know anything about him prior to this. Later I found out about the large family he comes from. His brothers, one is in banking, one is in real estate, and one is a doctor and Roger is in design. He and I got along very, very well. At the same time I also met Steve's brother Kenny and Jane Radoff. I actually met Joel Bergman a little later.

D: What was Kenny like?

Kenny is a very complex guy that I consider a good friend. He is very, very smart. Everyone knows he speaks multiple languages. He was basically there as a family member to keep an eye on things, especially with something as important as construction. That was his role. You are in a pressure cooker of things. Some of the people that might have vented to Homer, and I am sure to Martin Stern, and I am sure to Joel. There is a lot of venting going on. You have to be able to be in that environment. You need to enjoy it, even though it may not be fun. When you stop enjoying it, if that day ever comes, then you know it is time to leave.

D: Back to Atlantic City and the Golden Nugget, tell me a little bit about that.

Conversano designed all of it. In the lobby they had animated birds in gilded cages. Steve brought the services of a guy named Rolly Crump from Disney on board. Rolly, because of his Disney expertise, he did *It's A Small World*, I got to work with him. My recollection is that I became liaison between him and Steve. They did the animated birds and it was a big hit. The Golden Nugget was kind of at the far end of the Boardwalk and they said it was at the wrong location. I remember Steve giving a quote acknowledging that. He said, "The location isn't where you are on the Boardwalk, the location is that you are in Atlantic City." Of course in those days there was no other competition. Las Vegas and the lines of people at buffet, and using meeting rooms to set up temporary food outlets. It was an amazing scene at the time. Someone would have to look at that and say this is not sustainable. In retrospect. At the time we were saying, "Wow. We hope this

lasts forever." We know that history says that didn't happen. I originally worked with Conversano on some of the penthouse suites, which were highly themed.

D: What were some of the themes?

They would have an Asian theme, different coloration, and different themes. I worked with the mill work contractors and getting the stuff transported out there. Not that budget wasn't the issue, it wasn't the primary issue. The feeling in those days was that there were people to stay in these things. The faster they could build them, the faster they could be stayed in, then the faster they could get paid off. Although quite a bit of attention was paid on the cost, it wasn't the primary decision factor. You look at the work Roger did after I left there and look at all the Wynn properties, it was similar to that, to some degree or another.

D: What was that like, getting that opened?

It was fun. I remember one of the things that happened. The mill work was made in Burbank, California and the truck taking one of the penthouse things was all pre-fabricated and it crashed, and all the stuff was spread on the highway and had to be remade. Those are the kind of things that nobody can predict, but they already had all the measurements. They made it very, very quick. I wasn't involved in operations at all, purely in this end of it. Once you get the job done you move on.

D: What was the next job?

The next job after Atlantic City was the Spa Suite Tower. Then I was hired away from Conversano by Wynn.

D: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

Sure. It is something I fear today with my employees. I was working there so he got to know me and I got to know him and Kenny and they got to see what I could do, what my limitations were, and what my potentials were. I was in Las Vegas and he said, "Do you like Las Vegas?" I said, "Yes, I love Las Vegas. Las Vegas is very cool. You guys are spending a lot of time and money and doing great projects and I could have an easier life style here in Las Vegas than in New York or San Francisco and it is nice here." He said, "Would you like to work for me?" I said, "Yes."

I technically worked for Kenny, and I was vice president of design and construction for Atlandia Design. We began another project in Atlantic City and I was going back to Atlantic City. They had this small place on Brigantine Beach [New Jersey]. I was in this little beach house in the winter time with electric baseboard heating. Atlantic City is now growing and busy. Because things happened there so fast, offices were in old motels and apartment buildings that were quasi abandoned and people were selling. You had all these offices, HR [Human Resources], accounting, all over the place. Part of what I did initially was to go back there and help organize that and get them consolidated.

Then I remember that I was called to a meeting here in Las Vegas [Nevada]; I was commuting back and forth to Las Vegas. I went to the meeting and Gus Rapone was there. I thought it was about Atlantic City. So I was thinking that Gus was going to build something in Atlantic City. It had nothing to do with Atlantic City. It had all to do with the Golden Nugget downtown, the Spa Suite Tower. Actually I created the concepts of those two story suites.

D: Really? Tell me about that.

I presented those to Steve. I did think Fred Doriot was the architect at the time and Roger was doing all of the interiors and I was vice president of design and construction. But I was an architect and I thought like an architect. Here he is doing the Spa Suite Tower and I know he is open to any creative ideas.

Sometimes, just to have time with him, you could fly with him on the plane just so you could have an hour or half hour with him, and then jump on a commercial flight and go back. I started to learn very quickly that the flight isn't the important thing, it was the time with the individual. It doesn't matter where it is. If you figure out how to do that, these are all very invaluable lessons. I don't even know how I had the idea of a two story suite, interlocking.

D: What does that mean, interlocking?

In a two story suite, if the hallway of a regular hotel is right down the middle of the building, and there are hotel bays on one side and hotel bays on the other side, the depth of the rooms are the same. When you come in on the lower level, which is where the bar, the dining room, and the living room is, you want the depth of the bedroom and the master bathroom, which has to be really big, deeper. The plans always suffer. I am looking at the plans through the building and I am saying, "Gee, if the hallway is staggered, instead of straight up and down, you could come in the hallway doors into the living room, dining room on one, you have the spiral stairway going up, but then the hallway moves over eight feet, you have eight feet more depth upstairs, for the bedroom and bathroom configuration. I would venture that most people today don't have any idea when you are in the

building that the hallway is staggered. On the first floor and the top floor they are not two stories so they made those bigger, more base. I called Steve and said I wanted to present this. Actually I presented it to him on one of these trips on the plane and he liked it. He said, "OK. Let's do that."

I brought it back and the structural engineering firm was Martin Peltyn, and my good friend Roger Peltyn worked with him on it. The whole project developed. Roger did a beautiful job and a lot of the promotional materials in those days featured the butler standing on the spiral stair. Those were also the Chairman Suites, where Frank Sinatra stayed. I was there during that whole period where he was promoting all that stuff. The Spa Suite Tower was an absolutely beautiful space. And then there was a ballroom. When you really think about it, it was the precursor on a much smaller scale, to what we did, six years ago, at the Cosmopolitan. It was an urban, vertically stacked, rooms, spa, meeting rooms in a vertical situation. Whether or not that came from just growing up in New York, living in that or thinking like that, it is kind of fun to tie those dots together.

D: I never knew that about the hallways. So that is the Spa Suite Tower.

What did you work on next?

I go to this meeting that Steve calls and it is supposed to be about Atlantic City and it turns out it is for the Golden Nugget Las Vegas, now the 1500 rooms on the other side of Carson Street. I got out of the meeting and Kenny Wynn calls me. He was in Atlantic City, and said, "How did everything go? When are you guys coming down?" I said, "I don't know. Steve just talked about doing this whole

new big project down here." I had told Steve, "I am ready to move to Atlantic City. The movers are here." He said, "Call them and tell them not to come." I said, "Oh. That's simple. Simple solution."

We stayed and we did that and that is when they vacated Carson Street and that whole connection. Then there was a very interesting thing. One of the things that was of deep concern to Steve and everyone else at the hotel, if you remember that beautiful lobby coming in and you turn to the right and there are elevators and then you go into the casino. By adding the 1500 rooms, which is to the left, he didn't want people going into those rooms feeling like they were going to a secondary property, but to get there you had to go through the elevators, make a left, and then another left through that glass walkway that looks out at the pool. He said, "Boy, everybody is going to feel like they are to a second property." I'm looking at the plans and I realize that there is a two foot thick shear wall. The original Golden Nugget is block construction. It is a combination of concrete and structural block. So there is a shear wall, literally when you come down through the front doors and down into the lobby and then there is the desk. I spoke to Gus Rapone and said if that shear wall can come out, you would come in and you would be looking right at the pool, and not only that, but now you have a right for your elevators for the existing building and you go straight and to the left, that would solve that whole thing that Steve is concerned about. So they figured it out and did it. Construction wise it is pretty complicated. Steve wrote me a very nice note that was very complimentary of that single move to do that.

D: So that was the Spa Tower and the Carson Tower.

Yes. Then there were numerous little things in between. Then came the Mirage.

D: Before we get to Mirage I want to backtrack a little bit. I know at one point he was thinking of building something in the Marina District in Atlantic City. Do you remember how far that got along in the design stages?

Do you know what year that was?

D: It would have been around 1984 or 1985? I think he sold out in 1986 or 1987.

I am trying to remember if that was the project I was supposed to go back for.

D: I know what he did was add the garage at Golden Nugget and then they were going to build the marina.

Yes. Of course the marina is the best piece of land. I am going to say that that was the reason I was supposed to go back to Atlantic City and then he focused on Las Vegas. Again, I don't know what the reasons were. There was a time later, after I started my business and had the Friedmutter Group going, that he had just met with Governor Whitman and he called me and said, "We are going to go back to Atlantic City and I want you to come work on it."

D: So you are in Las Vegas and then I'm guessing they started the Mirage.

They started having meetings on the Mirage. By this time Joel Bergman is on board.

D: Who else is working in the office at this point?

Joel, Paul Steelman. DeRuyter Butler might have been too young, I am not sure, but he was eventually there. They had the architecture, they had the interiors, and I was not part of either one. I was outside that. I remember that they brought in

various designers and various consultants interfacing with everybody. I remember them talking about the dome and all that. I said, "What Steve would really love to see here is no structure, like if you have somebody blow a glass bubble that big. He doesn't want to express the structure of the dome. What he really wants is Hawaii here in Las Vegas." He knows he has to have it indoors. The ideal thing is, if you never saw what made the climate control system work that would be the ideal. I never spoke to Steve about it; that's my guess.

Then for all the trees Lifescapes were brought in. I was the one that introduced Lifescapes' Don Brinkerhoff to Steve. He loved what Chris Hemmeter was doing in Hawaii and he said, "Here is the name of their landscape guy. Call him up and tell him we are doing this project at the Mirage and we want to hire him." I called him up. He was very nice and they said they were very busy. I said, "Oh, OK. You understand that this is a very big project." He said, "I know. We are busy but let me recommend a friend of ours, Don Brinkerhoff. He is in Newport Beach." So I call Don and say, "Hi Don. This is Brad Friedmutter. I have a client here, Steve Wynn, and he is doing a project called the Mirage and they are looking for someone who can do all this wonderful tropical landscaping." That is how we started.

D: What difference does the landscaping make in a project?

The whole idea of fantasy and escapism, which is the core at least to some people of why people come to Las Vegas, is contrary to the pure architect. A pure architect says you are in the desert, you should do desert architecture. You should express the environment and you should express the materials. But we are in the

casino entertainment business of architecture so you want to create something that is the antithesis of that. That is the challenge. That is the fun. If you look at those properties the exterior landscaping and the interior landscaping. If you go to places like Hawaii and other soft climate places, one of the things I noticed, having grown up in New York, is the lack of perimeter walls, the breeze coming through and the rustle of the palm trees and sun tan oil. The magic of that. When you look at how that landscaping was created to get as close to indoor outdoor environment so that for most people who aren't fortunate enough to go to Hawaii or be able to go to the Caribbean, you can come to Las Vegas and see that. It is different from LA. That is a combination of both the softscape and the hardscape. Brinkerhoff totally understood Wynn and vice-versa, so it worked out really well.

D: What were some of the other things going on behind the scenes in building the Mirage that we might not know about?

I didn't stay there long enough to get into the actual construction of it. I was approached by Bally's to come work for them because they had all these ambitious plans. I realized at that time, after seven years, in 1987, I was, for me, probably maxing out my contribution there. Even though we had this great big project. I had already experienced in previous years getting laid off so, I cherished the job. I was approached by Bally's because they were going to buy what is now the Paris site and they wanted to do a big project there and they wanted me to head it up. So I did. Unfortunately after I made the move, they didn't. Zero to hundred, hundred to zero.

D: Can you tell me a little bit about who you talked to there and how it was running when you came over?

That was the days of Richard Gillman and Dorothy Attanasio. I interviewed and I found out later that the executives had bets that I would come or I wouldn't come to the property. I did and I was vice president of design and construction and they actually put me on the executive floor. Then I found out soon after that they were not in great financial shape. I did not know that. They did not go ahead with building this great big thing and instead they spent way less money redoing rooms, redoing the casino. Actually the casino that you see today is pretty much what I oversaw there. The first major job after leaving Steve Wynn at Mirage was to redo the public restrooms at Bally's. I said, "Oh boy."

D: This project they were going to do where Paris is now, how far along were they in talking about that?

It didn't go far at all. I stayed there for a few years and I was thinking, "What should I do?" I was in my late 30s, early 40s. They go into full chapter, whatever chapter they were in. I remember the stock was 1 7/8. That was when Arthur Goldberg took over. I got to meet him. They wanted me to do a few things, redo their spa and make it more up to date. I had the pleasure of meeting him and other very powerful businessmen. Now Richard Gillman and Dorothy are no longer there. I worked there for a couple of years. Then in 1990 or 1991, when they go into full bankruptcy, the bondholder said, "You can't have a VP of design and construction, there is no construction." I had a very amicable departure. I was friends with everybody there. It is what it is.

I again was trying to figure out what to do. I said, "Well, maybe I will start to do some consulting. Where do I do consulting? The best place to start is right with Bally's." They had maintenance and repair work. The bathroom project was the first project I had as Friedmutter Group and it was actually for Friedmutter and Associates at the time. They were able to hire me to do maintenance and repair work because it was not capital improvements. I did a few of these things and I approached a friend of mine because I didn't have any office space. I said, "Hey, can I just use a conference room here and there?" Charles Silverman said, "Sure." He and I developed a different friendship at that point, because I knew him from before. He was helping me as far as space.

The front of Bally's was being talked about, the one that was recently taken down a year or two ago, with the spiral. They had spoken to several designers, well-known designers around the world, and they had all these proposals and it was way more money than they had to spend. Their budget was \$13 million for the whole front and it was supposed to be temporary. It was just until they could figure it out. What they realized is that it was 600 feet from the sidewalk to the front door. They asked me if I wanted to take a stab at this. I said, "Sure." What I did is what I always do, I pulled the team together, started with Communications Arts (signage designer) out of Boulder, Colorado, and a good friend of mine for lighting, John Levy, and then numerous other support, structural, hydraulic engineers, and collectively came up with the whole concept of the spiral. It was the first project I worked on with Perini, they were the

contractors. It was done and everyone was very, very happy. At least I was making a living at that point.

Gambling had now expanded into the emerging markets and in Tunica, Mississippi, Bally's was going to do a riverboat/barge. Charles Silverman was going to do the interiors and they said, "We have to have an architect," and he said, "Why not Brad?" They said, "Sure." It was done under Friedmutter Group. That project went really well. I remember Tunica, at the time, they didn't have a building department. That's how poor that rural area was. They took a professional engineer out of retirement. I remember his name was D.C. Nickels. He has since passed away. We got along great and I would go down to Tunica, Mississippi. What they came up with in lieu of inspectors, since they had no inspectors, was the architect had to sign an affidavit that the building was being built in accordance with the documents, which is now the code. It was a scary thing to do.

D: If anything happened it would go all back to you?

Yes. I did it, and nothing happened. What was interesting is that they ended up moving that barge to another site years later and I said, "This is interesting. How do you have a building that has an address and then the address actually changes?" All these new frontiers. We ended up doing several other things down in that area, in the Shreveport area, with Jack Binion. The business was flourishing because there were new opportunities for work in these new emerging markets.

D: How was working there different from working in Las Vegas?

The owners are the same, the client is the same; they are based here, but the project is there. They were all anxious because gaming was looked at as an answer to unemployment and to create tax revenue. Most of the places at that time were very practical. I got to meet some great contractors down South and I would say, other than when you got into other jurisdictions, down South was as easy, as far as pro-business, as it is in Las Vegas.

D: What was Atlantic City like in that regard?

Atlantic City, they were very concerned about rules and regulations. That is all fine, that came from being protective of the general public, whether it is founded or unfounded, and that is a matter of policy and opinion. There were more rules, but as long as you know those rules going in then you follow the rules. To me it was no different than dealing with Steve Wynn. If you know the rules, you follow the rules. You get the right consultants. You end up having more attorneys because of the filings, etc., dealing with different agencies in different parts of the state. Also, there were some great contractors back there. At the end of the day, we eventually opened an office in Atlantic City, because we had great opportunities to do work.

D: Did you do much more work in Atlantic City itself?

Yes.

D: What else did you work on there?

After having done with Conversano, years before, the Golden Nugget, and with Bally's at the time, The Wild Wild West, which was very interesting because they got approval to add a big casino space without additional parking and rooms. That

was basically a big box casino. It kind of goes back to what I talked about with Macy's and Mervyn's. It was a big box and it was connected to the rest of the property. My good friend Charles Silverman and the rest of the folks at Yates-Silverman, did the interiors; we did the architecture of the building. Then we also did work at the Showboat. Then we did more work at the Claridge Hotel and the Sahara.

Then Donald Trump has his guy call me up on a Friday or Saturday, "Can you meet Mr. Trump on Monday?" I said, "Sure." I went to his office on Monday. He is filming. I had two or three of my associates from Atlantic City with me. He says, "Sit down." He does this whole thing. I know he is from Flushing and I am from Flushing and he is four years older than I am and I had never met him before. I know he has a reputation. People are saying, "Make sure you get paid." That's true of anybody. To jump to the end, we got paid everything, we had a fair fee, never had a problem. Why? Because we did our job.

D: Is this the Chairman Tower?

Yes, which was finished in 2008.

D: Tell me a little bit about Donald Trump and what he is like, because he is obviously a very controversial figure right now.

Let's face it, he always was. If you go back to the history of Donald Trump and Steve Wynn in Atlantic City, they always were trying to best each other. As a result they got great promotional, free press. You look at Donald Trump today running his campaign and what are they always talking about, the free press he gets. He was always good at that. To me it is a continuation of knowing how to

get free press. And how do you do that? Saying some things that are outlandish. To me, personally, he was wonderful. I didn't spend a lot of time with him, a couple of meetings. I got to see him at the opening and the topping off party. He was extremely cordial and complimentary. He said, "You built the thing, and it was on time and it was on budget. Everything came out beautiful. My only regret was that I built it in the first place, because the recession had started." He was extremely complimentary, so I only have good things to say about him.

D: How is working for Trump different from, say doing something for the Claridge? What are the challenges of that?

That was an existing, older building. When you are dealing with old structures and you are trying to do something that is competitive with newer properties in this business. People, clients, customers generally like new stuff. Sometimes customers are expecting newness. When you look at some of these properties in Atlantic City, both trying to retain historical value but also in a haste to get them re-converted and opened, they didn't want to take the time because there was so much money to be made if you re-converted something quickly. It was kind of a combination of all of those things. You are working with non-conforming conditions to current building codes so even with contractors trying to put a budget together but it is hard because you don't know what they are going to uncover, in terms of electrical, plumbing and life safety. Generally speaking the ceilings are very low, doors are low. There isn't the grandeur of space.

D: Let's talk about some of the other projects you are doing around the country and how it is different from Las Vegas and then we will cycle back to

Las Vegas and the more recent stuff. Tell me about working with Indian tribes.

We have done tribal casinos for many years and frankly working with some of the tribes through the recession, although they were not large projects, really helped us through some pretty financially dismal times. We worked with the various tribes in Arizona and New Mexico. Thank goodness we had the work. Our team here was very, very adept with meeting with them, talking to the elders, and actually being invited in to some of their, what would normally be, private ceremonies. It was also very good precedent. Suzanne Couture on our staff was particularly effective in that way. We have had great success, both dealing directly with tribes and also in dealing with some tribes that have traditional operators: Harrah's and Station Casinos. Some of them were small and some of them were pretty sizable.

D: Can you tell me a little bit about the Station projects. I think that is a bigger one, isn't it?

Yes. Graton, which is currently undergoing an expansion due to its success, and then the one in Gun Lake, back East in Michigan. There you basically have two entities. We are very comfortable with Stations and Stations is very comfortable with us. Albie Colotto has worked with them, and he has been with me for over twenty years and he is comfortable working with them. When we are doing those projects we are getting the operational input both from Stations management and we also have to present to the tribe. It is a concerted effort. Those, generally speaking, are very smooth and very easy. When you are dealing directly with the

tribe, you have to establish trust. It is key. All the tribes we have worked with we have developed great relationships with, and they come back. And we are currently doing some now.

D: Can you walk me through a typical project right from the start? You can pick out a specific project or you can talk generically. Do you approach the entity, whether it is tribal or commercial, or do they approach you? How does it usually start?

They approach us. When you are in business for a long time and are basically pleasing most people, the best scenario is when they have a project and they call you up and say we want you to do it. Let's negotiate a fee and let's start. Doesn't happen all the time. The other one is they call you up and say they have a project and they are talking, because of tribal rules, which are like a corporation, they have to get three proposals and interview the firms to see where the chemistry is and all that. That is fine. We get our fair share of the market. Frankly, that is true whether it is tribal or non-tribal, any public corporation is the same thing. That is why the best ones are the privately held casinos where the boss can just come and say, "I want you to do it." We are used to all of that. Usually it requires, in many cases, especially larger projects, a concept that you do at risk, you are not getting paid. They may pay a nominal sum, a few thousand dollars which doesn't cover anything.

D: If I told you I have a piece of land and I want to build a 2,000 room casino on the Wet 'n Wild site, how much would that cost you to come up with a proposal?

It depends who the client is. If it is a regular client of ours, I would say, "Are you going to go ahead with the project?" If they say, "Well, we need enough information so we can get a GMP so we can get financing." I will do it either at a very nominal or no cost because, for us, we need the job. There are some firms that just work on the concepts. Again, this is only for a good, repeat client that I know is credible. I say, "I would like to just share the risk with you that it is going to go forward." So I would do it for a nominal sum, because that is like planting stuff in the fall and hopefully it sprouts in the spring.

D: What are the internal costs for that if you were to bill somebody for all that?

It depends. There is cost and there is what it is worth.

D: I know, but would it be \$10,000, \$100,000, a million dollars?

It is not a million dollars and it is more than \$10,000 and depending on how big it is and how complex it is, it could be in the six figures. If you look at it in a different way. If you look at it and say it is a \$500 million project or a billion dollar project, you look at architectural fees and you say, if the project were to move forward, this is about what our fee would be. Then you say, the concept phase, which is what this is, and even according to AIA documents, is about 5 percent of that number. So if the total number was a million dollars and you took 5 percent of that, that would be an approximate cost. The value is very different. If you have just created something and someone spent twenty hours on it you can't say, "Gee that is 20 x \$150, that is \$3,000. Wow, it is really worth the idea." Some architects aren't willing to play that game. They say the work belongs to us.

One of the things in the casino business that you have to understand is that you do work for them and they are going to be able to use the work. You have to be able to get past that.

D: Mean they could decide to go ahead with the concept and not hire you?

Yes.

D: Has that happened in the industry?

Sometimes. Not a great deal. Remember, I go back to who that client is. If I have a great relationship with the client that is not going to happen. If I don't know the client that well it can happen. It hasn't happened. Then there are some that intentionally start something with the intention of that.

D: I know looking at the Stern collection it seems like he had the idea originally that became the Showboat. It originally was down at the Dunes in Atlantic City. Is that common for somebody to develop an idea and then shop around until he finds a home?

It is not that common.

D: So once we have a proposal. They decide we are going with you. We are hiring the Friedmutter Group. What happens then?

I call most of our clients professional clients because most of them, the principals, meaning the owners, usually have either a construction or an architect person on staff, like I use to be, and they also have all their top disciplines like food and beverage, hotel, casino, security, spa, entertainment, all those things. You sit in a meeting and everybody talks about the size and the nature. Of course the size is determined by the program and the program is determined by the owner. The

owner says I have 20 acres, 2,000 rooms, 120,000 sq. ft. casino, 12 restaurants, a spa, etc. We know, based upon that client, whether that is going to be \$300 per sq. ft., \$500 per sq. ft., \$800 per sq. ft. We are able to put together in very short order an approximate magnitude budget and then we all discuss that. Sometimes it takes a lot longer than what I am describing right now.

Then they might say, "We would like to do something with this type of a feeling, style, not so much a theme as a style, clean, refined, or we want it more island like, Mediterranean. We do two things because we do architecture and interiors we are doing both. We create a series of images based upon known images. So you can say, "Yes, I like that. No, I don't like that." It helps you narrow things down. Once you narrow it down, at the same time, the most important thing, is to plan. The master plan, the relationships, and every operator has different things that are important and we kind of know what they are. The plan, based upon the site, and all the outside things that are going on, we develop a plan. If you don't get the plan right, it doesn't matter what it looks like. Because you can't fix that if you get it wrong.

D: So how can people get the plan wrong? What are some of the mistakes they could make?

They don't understand the basic fundamentals of sense of arrival. You have two things happening. It is open 24/7 so it is not like an office building and it is not like a regular hotel and it is not like a regular restaurant and it is not like a regular nightclub. It is a 24/7, busier Thursday through Sunday, meeting conventions Monday through Thursday. You have all these things converging on this building

depending upon where it is located. You have the public which have to get in and they come multiple ways - car, taxi, bus, train, and limo. You have employees that are arriving and they have to enter and exit the building. They have to be able to park, be dropped off, or shuttled in. Then you have goods and services. You have big trucks and windows get scheduled where they go. You have to be able to locate these things from where they are access from the outside, now they are coming into the inside. From the inside they have to flow to various things. That goes back to the Cooper Union with the nine square grid and you take the milk and let it run down, where does it go? Where does the public go? Where do the employees go? Where do the deliveries go? How are things protected? How are they secured? How are they engaged? How are they separated? How do you do that in an exciting, visual way, at the same time, in a real, security minded way and also a regulatory way. You have to balance all of those things.

D: So what are some of those places in Las Vegas that really got that right?

I like to say that our work at Station Casinos is great, and I think those properties could work on the Strip—especially Red Rock Resort and Green Valley Resort. I think the Cosmopolitan in a different way, because the Cosmopolitan is a very urban solution, 6.5 million square feet on eight acres, so things had to go vertical. My wife and I go to events all the time at other properties, more traditional properties, and it is often such a far walk. When you go to the Cosmopolitan, it is not unlike the Time-Warner building, you go in a circle. I think the flow in and out, we were there just last night for dinner, is really wonderful.

D: Any places get it wrong?

Yes. There are some that have lost the ease of access, either where it is not recognizable or the parking is in an inconvenient place, or the people are faced with stairways. People like convenience and safety. Some places, for example, if their garages are not spacious and brightly lit and in the open, they might feel unsafe, whether it is real or not. Or the walk is too far from where they park. Some people will not park in the garage; they park surface, and the distance they walk makes a difference.

D: We have done the plan and we have our budget, what comes next?

We always have the discussion with the people running the actual project that this time around we are going to do things differently; we are not going to have change orders, we are not going to have changes. They say OK, that's fine. The reality is, and it is working a little different today than before the recession, today the outside money people are taking a much closer look at how that money is spent and where it is spent. Once this process starts, on a medium size project, it is 30-36 months; on a larger project is 36-48-60 months. Think how many things change in the world, competition, financing, people's disposable income, the entertainment world, the sports world, and other jurisdictions opening up, all in those five years. The true entrepreneur says, during the course of that time, I have to respond to this I can't just ignore it, I have to respond. Some of them do, some better than others. The outside world looking at that says they can't make up their mind, they change. They call them irresponsible but to me they are being very responsible and they are not building something that they made a decision on three years ago that is now outdated.

D: How much of the project, when you break ground, is literally set in stone?

Is there any kind of wiggle room?

There is very little wiggle room in terms of the plan. Interior configuration there is some wiggle room and there certainly is a lot of wiggle room in terms of what brand restaurant will be there. Even the building departments, in any jurisdictions, require fairly advanced plans. Years and years ago, because of the good reputations of the contractors and the operators in Las Vegas, if they said they were going to do something, the building department knew they were going to do it. There were very few exceptions where good quality people didn't live up to those expectations. There was a level of confidence and trust.

A lot of time projects are delivered on a “fast-track,” where you are developing as an architectural team with your disciplines, packages, and if you want to accelerate the schedule, you release those packages, you get the budgeting, and you start. Often you start prior to the completion of the design, especially if it is a steel structure and if they are trying to go fast, steel takes a long time to get, so they might pre-order by tonnage and get it reserved. So there is a price, say \$30 million, and as the plan develops you find this is like this and this is like that, and that cost goes up. You have to be with an owner that knows that going in. The one who makes the decision to go that route is the owner, it is not the architect, it is not the contractor, it is the owner. The owner, making that decision, has to know, and we have to make it clear, and the contractor needs to make it clear, that those potential things can happen. Otherwise, people get very vent-crazy.

D: Tell me a bit about what can go wrong in the process. What are the friction points between the architect and the contractor and the owner?

It all depends. If you get the right team, there are few. If you get the right team, players that know what to anticipate and what it really means, very few. If you pick, that is the owner or sometimes the financial people have a tremendous influence, if you pick a firm for whatever reason but the wrong reason.

One area is if you are doing something on a fast track, first of all there is a whole thing of a complete set of drawings, and you hear the expression all the time, 100% complete drawings. What does that mean? We know in reality that once the drawings are complete, there are bid documents, permit documents, and construction documents. There is a step after that called shop drawings. If there is a step after construction documents, which are supposed to be 100% complete, apparently they weren't 100% complete because there are more documents after them. There is another thing called as-built. So there are two steps after. It is an industry term. You overlay that into what traditionally is, compared to most architecture, a condensed schedule. And you get that mixed with the entrepreneurial nature of the business, so you have modifications, I am not even going to say changes, modifications. Those modifications set back your ability to keep moving in a forward way. You have to go back and find out how did it affect this and how did it affect that. The further along you are in the process the more complicated it is. Sometimes you will get, invariability, what a contractor, if it is the wrong contractor, an incomplete set of information.

If you put the project to hard bid, the contractor will bid just what they see. You are now creating an opportunity for them to say the drawings are not complete. But they did know it because a car, when you get it, comes with brakes. Don't tell me the brakes are extra, it comes with brakes. That thing can happen where some can take advantage of that situation. That is why you have to pick the right team that matches the way you want to do the work. If you want to take your time and you want to spend five years doing a three year project, fine. It is your choice and you will have fewer changes, less this, less that, but you are going to open two years later. There is a sweet spot. Before the recession there was no sweet spot. There just was go as quickly as you can, it doesn't matter, we will make the money back.

Now I think the people have to be a little more cognizant of risk, trying new things. We use to hear from people coming into Las Vegas, nobody here in Vegas knows what they are doing and we have this great idea and now Vegas will see something that they have never seen before.

D: What are some examples of that?

It was either a concept they had that would be interstellar. In other words, the environment they were proposing was not a hospitable environment. If you look at the landscaping thing with the hardscape, landscape, tropical, Hawaiian, nice, easy on your senses to a harsh environment, arctic, lunar, Mars. Then you get some people that come in and say from an operational point of view they don't know anything. We have seen and heard a lot. Then you get the guys that try and challenge you. I want something that is more compelling than there is right now

on the Strip, but I don't have as much money to spend, but if you are a good designer you can create something that is more compelling. Thank you, you are right, but we'll pass.

D: You have your 100 percent complete drawings.

Complete the drawings, put it out for bid, pre-bid meetings, questions. That is the traditional, long-hand way of doing things. If we are doing things short-hand, which is fast-track, and some of our projects I call them flash-track, again with the right team, it moves along. We are in, literally, daily communication with the owner, the contractor, and other consultants. We are totally dedicated and consumed. Often times this means working the same kind of hours and deadlines. It is not usual, the owners, they are not thinking Monday through Friday, 9 to 5. They don't work like that. Sometimes they get their best inspiration on a Friday night as they are walking through their existing property, and they get a new idea. So they call you on a Friday night and they expect to see something Sunday morning, not Monday, Sunday morning. We have to rally. On Saturday I get requests for things due Monday. It is not set up that everyone is here all the time. We have to see who can come in and help us do that. Most of them don't look at it like that, but for us, these are normal office hours.

D: Have they already done the ground breaking by the time you have those finished drawings? When do they usually do that?

Some. Even recently we are doing a project up in the Northwest with the Cowlitz and Mohegan tribes. We were fortunate to be on the winning team for the Del Lago Casino in New York State. As a matter of fact, Del Lago, they took the

chance, and everyone is different, of starting the construction before they were officially given the license. They were told they got the license but they didn't actually have the license. That is pretty gutsy.

D: Once they are actually in construction what does your role become then?

Our role is to answer questions and kind of stay out of the way. We don't want to be told we are globbing up the process. It is mostly to answer questions. Often times, in the standard AIA [American Institute of Architects] agreement, you are supposed to have someone on the job periodically to check to make sure it is in general conformance with the drawings. Generally speaking, on a complex project, such as the MGM Springfield that we are doing, we are architecture and interiors, you have somebody out there full time because there are, as you can imagine, a myriad of questions.

What that person does is to process, he gets stuff all day and what is important is, because no one person can know every aspect of every part of the job, their job is to get back to the office and speak to the appropriate person in the office, get an answer and then redistribute that to the appropriate people in the field. You really have to keep a tight rein on stuff otherwise mis-information can go out. Sometimes, regardless of what the drawings say and the people in the field are saying, there could be a new meeting going on right now that says we want to modify this. That person in the field and the contractor have no idea this is coming. Now they get fresh information from the architect that says we are going to do it this way and this way and two days later it comes through, the owner

decided that they want to do this. You just have to make sure you document it and do it properly.

D: Does the owner often inject themselves?

They don't inject themselves, they are there. It is their money, they own it, and we are providing a professional service. We are there to facilitate their desires and to protect them by making sure it is built to code and built to insurance standards.

Beyond that our goal is to provide a service to them. For some it is a very personal thing. It is aesthetic things - I like it or I don't like it. Sometimes they will walk their friends through it at certain stages. Their friend might say why are you doing that? Sometimes they are affected by that and sometimes they are not affected by that. It could come in all directions from all different things. The key is knowing that will happen and it is how we handle it.

D: What makes a project successful for you as the architect?

For us number one is that at the end of the day everybody is happy. Sometimes I can squeak out a little margin beyond our cost, sometimes I don't. The main thing is that they are happy and rave about it. Very rarely are things published, very rarely are things talked about. If our clients are happy, they call you up or at least get you on that bid list. When a project is done several things happen, the money stops, we don't have any annuities in it, there is no back end deal where we own four slot machines or anything else, the project stops.

D: I want to ask about a couple of specific projects and you can add more if you want. Can you tell me about Harrah's in Atlantic City, because I know you have done a lot of work there?

In one form or another, going back to the Chalfonte, I have done consistent work with Harrah's/Caesars/Horseshoe almost non-stop since 1978. It is really remarkable. We did the Showboat, the newer tower, the Mardi Gras and that was with Phil Satre. Then, when Harrah's Atlantic City in the Marina started, we teamed up with Marnell and we did the two newer towers, the original older tower was there. Paul Steelman did inside the pool area under the dome and we actually did the dome. It is very interesting, a lot of people don't know, that all of us have teamed up. Even though we all compete, we are all friendly competitors. We did the architecture on the two towers, the dome, the parking structure and the whole drive-up facade landscape thing which is there. We recently did their meeting rooms, which is a huge success I understand in terms of booking rooms. Now we are currently doing more things within their budgets that they are able to do in Atlantic City. So there are actually some other things coming up.

D: How about Station Casinos here in Las Vegas?

We started at Texas Station, which was our first one, and found a great client. As they grew, we were on their coat tails, growing with them. I told that to both Frank and Lorenzo.

D: What makes a great client? Is it that the check cashes or is there something deeper?

That they keep asking you to do work. It is also good that the check cashes. In our business it is based upon cash flow. The key is to stabilize the staff and work flow you have and try to even it out so that you have multiple projects and your cash flows. If this is your monthly net and here is your base point, your project fees are

like that. If you only have one and the next one starts here, you have a huge gap and that is when you end up with lay-offs. If you get things more like this, overlapping. You have no control over that. It is not like you run out of apples and you say let's go to the market and get more apples. It depends on the economy, it depends on their willingness to use you. It is a lot of things.

We have been very, very fortunate. Station Casinos is very good, there were times they weren't doing much, so thank goodness we had other things. They are great because it has been a lot of years, familiarity, we are excited to be a part of it, we are proud of the work we do there. If you talk to a lot of people outside of Las Vegas and some of them may or may not have heard of Stations. You mention UFC, it is a different story.

D: How about Red Rock [Hotel and Casino]? Can you tell me a little bit about that?

Red Rock was a great, great project because that was when Stations was growing in terms of sophistication and they wanted something more contemporary. Because of where it is and because they are a "locals" property—even though it has 800 rooms, which is more rooms than a lot of hotels in New York—they wanted it to be fitting with the colors in the environment. The master plan and concept were developed. It originally was 400 rooms and then 400 additional rooms were added even before the resort was opened. That was the first introduction of what people would consider contemporary, which is a very broad term, but with warmth. Sometimes in certain designs, especially in hospitality—in a museum you expect it and in some civic buildings you expect it—you kind of

want warmth and texture and comfortable space. That one was a very good example of the success of merging and introducing those two things.

D: What are some of the specific elements that make that look different from, let's say, Green Valley Ranch?

Green Valley was a very “Argentina ranch” look and very heavily themed. We worked with other designers on that with them. The heavy timber, the real murals on the ceilings, the heavy theming, which they keep up great. Red Rock is definitely more youthful, more refined, lighter, and brighter. I go back to those two properties and those plans are the best.

There are certain things happening in Green Valley Ranch, that site drops 40-50 feet from front to back. At the back, the garage backs up to Route 215, so you actually enter the casino from the top level; it is a reverse garage, so it makes up that grade difference. People don't realize that trying to keep everything at that one level. You have self-parking up front and the covered valet parking down below, where you come in and up the escalator, and you are in the casino. The whole thing of parking and adjacency, multiple garages and multiple points of entry, all those things are very successful. Red Rock is the same thing. Some architects and some clients that you talk to along the way, especially when you work out of state, they are fearful of a parking garage. We see opportunity.

D: Both Green Valley and Red Rock have shopping near them. Does that play a part in your design?

Yes. The District was being developed at the time when Greenspun owned half of Green Valley Resort. You can see where the theater entrance lines up and takes

advantage of the grades. We were able to separate theater/family entrance, going out to the retail, and going up on the escalator to the casino. We vertically separated those things, which is nice, and separated the hotel entrance from that. We made it so you have a hotel sense of arrival, a casino sense of arrival, and a non-gaming sense of arrival. In that case, we were using grade changes.

D: It is very different from Sam's Town or Boulder Station or Sunset Station, where you are dumped into the casino no matter what you want to do. How about the Cosmopolitan?

Cosmopolitan, we were originally working with Bruce Eichner and Perini and a very tough site. Bruce brought in Arquitectonica because he had worked with them in the past in Miami and other places. We know those guys very well and we did the overall massing and blocking and interrelationship, and they came up with the concept and the look of the towers and the fractioned glass along the low rise, which worked out great, because we had no idea what City Center was doing. It looks like, to the casual observer, that those go together. We then were the executive architect of record, translating those concepts into reality.

Then when Mr. Eichner left and Deutsche Bank came in with the Related Group, a lot of the interiors were already under construction, and the decision was made to make significant changes. We did the bulk of the remodel, it was almost like a new job, and we weren't doing any interiors up until that time. David Rockwell was brought in because he was very familiar with the Related Group, so he did the Chandelier Bar and some of the other stuff. But we did the entire casino and the meeting rooms and many of the other spaces and all the pool decks.

D: What are some of the changes? How would it have been different?

It was originally felt that retail was making as much if not more money than the casino, so the whole front end where the Chandelier Bar is now, was retail. That architectural space, that tier, was pretty much all mall. And the front lobby, check-in, was actually going to be Marriott-esque in a pattern where you go up. And that casino actually came all the way to those doors. The casino was not on the Strip, it was moved to the back and then the lobby was there and that all moved to the front.

D: Who decided to change that around? Was that you?

It was a combination of the Related Group, Bill Richardson, us—it was a whole team effort.

D: What was the process like? Now you have this somewhat blank canvas to work with? How do you decide this goes here, this goes there?

It wasn't so much a blank canvas, because—going back to your earlier question of *do things happen after you start construction*—this was something major happening after construction started. Some of the design was framed in from the previous design. It was pretty exciting.

D: What do you think once a property opens and you see things continue to evolve after you have moved on? What do you think of that?

It is great. We are creating something that we hope is successful for the stockholders if it is a public company or the owner if it is a private company. We hope it brings enjoyment to the people coming there as guests. We hope it is a great place for employees that are working there and that it is a nice place to

work. Then if they want to add something or change something and if they want to come back to us and ask us to do it, we are always happy. Sometimes management changes and they go and talk to people who they are familiar working with. It varies. For example, there are some properties that open and it is not just a remodel, they might add a whole hotel. So those are nice.

D: What are some other ways that technology has changed casino design? I know that the casino floor tends to be smaller now, fewer slot machines.

What are some other things that have changed?

I would say, more restaurants, more selection of restaurants and that they change out. When you are designing you have to make sure that flexibility is there to facilitate what may happen. You want to make it as flexible for that to happen or not happen. A lot of time we see, initially to save on initial cost, third party restaurants, sometimes they work out and sometimes they don't and they get taken over by the property itself.

It is interesting that you mentioned about the size of the casino. Some of the electronic games are still on that 28-to-30-inch cycle. Most of the casinos are already built and are getting fewer games. You start to see some bigger games coming in because they can take up more space. It used to be *let's make it as tight as possible, fit in as many as possible*. Now it is different thing; it is an experiential thing, especially when you talk about Millennials and what they want.

I was looking through the casino yesterday at Cosmo when we were walking through. There were a lot of these games that come up like this, but they

are still this wide. Now you look and you see, in certain things, an airplane or a simulator. In those game rooms they have those same car simulators. Maybe I'm wrong; maybe there are some machines that I just haven't seen yet, that you get fully enveloped and what that game might be. I think there is that potential there—and we have been talking more and more at these conferences to the gaming manufacturers and designers—but there is certainly, with fewer games, more space that doesn't have to be *this* wide. It could be *that* wide and you can literally be in that environment. Maybe we will do our own machine and bring it to somebody.

D: I have some general questions. If you look back at all the projects you have done what is your favorite one personally?

Certainly Cosmo, just because it is on the Strip. We were in business for 20 years, and other than the front of Bally's and the front of Flamingo, we hadn't done a Greenfield project on the Strip. So it was exciting to have our first Greenfield project on the Strip—really, the bookend of large projects in Las Vegas, the sheer mass and size of it—not necessarily the gaming success of it, but architectural success of it. We're always, always, proud of what we do with Stations, particularly Red Rock. That had become a benchmark for those things. In Atlantic City a lot of people talk about the dome, the indoor pool, a lot of people still refer to that. We are very proud of the Taj tower, it is a unique design, and it is not a regular rectangle. Then a myriad of restaurants and spas.

D: If you could go back and re-do one, what would you change?

That is a good question, but I don't know if there is anything I can think of. I might have asked for a higher fee. I always tell our staff, because they are the ones doing our design on a day-to-day basis, all these great people that work here. I am always amazed frankly, and impressed, and I try to stay out of their way, so they can do what they do best. I don't think we have ever had a client say to us, *I don't like that*. I don't ever recall that. I don't think that has ever happened.

D: Outside of your own work, what are your favorite and least favorite buildings here in Las Vegas?

You have to say the Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health. I think the Molasky building [the award-winning Molasky Corporate Center] downtown is really neat—I have never been in it, but just passing by. I even look back to answer that question if it was New York or San Francisco and probably not have feelings one way or the other.

D: Really?

Yes. The old movie *Michael* with John Travolta, who was an angel. She says, "I've pictured angels, white halo", and he says, "I'm not that kind of an angel." In terms of being an architect, I like the contribution we make in the community and in other communities that we are in. I also see it as a business; and as a business we have a responsibility to our staff, and therefore we have a responsibility to all our families and our clients and to the community. Just part of that is the design. I look at it from a much broader framework.

D: How about urban planning in Las Vegas and in the county? How do you think that has worked?

I think it works fine. I am a person that believes in market demand. If you get too academic. I saw it going to school and I saw it in firms afterward. There is theory, and then there is the real market. Going from Cooper Union to my first job in the field, I thought there is a big difference between the real world and that. There is all the theory of things, and then there is the reality of *can something be economically sustainable*. I think it is Houston that lets the market control what happens there, because if it doesn't make sense you can't force a round peg into a square hole.

I think in Las Vegas you have the Strip, which I compare to Times Square having grown up in New York. The Strip is what people identify as Las Vegas. I think what makes Las Vegas different and unique is their best and highest use of real estate; you have occupied space 24/7. You are employing people 24/7. So instead of having people work nine [a.m.] to five [p.m.], you have that many people you spread out three times; now we have three shifts within the same square footage, so everything will be condensed. You have people working in a much smaller overall foot print. You look at the global picture of the Strip and some places like Red Rock and Boyd and those guys, and then you have residential, and then amazingly we have Nellis, right over there, which is pretty amazing to have such a major military installation. The brilliance of putting McCarran where it is. What other city that is a tourist city has that proximity *and* has Nellis right there to protect us?

D: Where do you see casino design going in the next ten or twenty years?

First of all, I hope that the casino is still popular as a recreational destination.

D: How about hospitality design in general?

My wife and I travel and we are older. We talk about Millennials, and we talk about price point, and we talk about all these things. For us, we like comfort and safety. Younger people are looking to explore and to have excitement. Where hospitality can offer those type of things, I think it loops around a little and comes back. Yesterday on the 9/11 remembrance, they were talking to young people who were not born or who didn't even remember it. They come from a different perspective and just hear about certain things.

Hospitality, from a technical standpoint, where people can carry around Direct TV and all their stuff on their device, and they can cast it onto the TV, entertainment and communication is key. I think the biggest frustration people have is that they get into a building and they say, "My cell phone doesn't work. The Wi-Fi doesn't work." The business of charging for Wi-Fi is going to be absurd.

The whole basis of hospitality is the business of leisure and entertainment. Sometimes a business hotel doesn't feel like a leisure hotel and sometimes it does. You look at casinos and we know it is basically a business hotel Monday through Thursday and then it is a leisure hotel Thursday through Sunday. How do they manage to do that? They have been quite successful, and I think that will continue.

I look at how many casinos there are in Las Vegas and they thrive. Then they say there is a saturation on the East Coast but there are so many more people there, where is there a saturation? There is something missing. I don't know what

it is. I don't know if it is the synergy that exists in Vegas, because you have a bunch of them together or the way places are designed, the way they are operated—but it is an interesting thing, saturation.

D: That is all the questions I have. Is there anything else you think is important that you want us to talk about today?

Well, like the guy used to say, "Las Vegas has been very, very good to me." And gaming has been very, very good to me. I was very fortunate with the timing of when I started, it was an unplanned success, and I think it is the most innovative industry that I am aware of in the built world, not getting into space and science. So innovative and adaptive.

Unfortunately, what did happen in Atlantic City compared to Vegas? Vegas gets hit the hard blow, boom, and you get reinvented again. Yet some of those same owners have properties in Atlantic City [and those properties did not recover]. I think that the infrastructure of Atlantic City is such that it is a hard thing. I remember when they talked about Native American gaming around Las Vegas and they said it was going to hurt Las Vegas. Yet they both survived. So much for saturation. Somehow in the Southwest, things survive; and somehow in the Northeast, they call it saturation and there are so many more people there and they are closer together. I don't know the real answer to that. It is an interesting subject.

D: Thanks a lot.