

Oral History Interview

with

BRAD INMAN

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Medford, Ore.

By Michael R. Adamson

Adamson: I'm going to ask you to start—before you came to Pankow, what your background is. I know that you went to Stanford, so how you got to Stanford and what your interest in construction was.

Inman: Well, my dad was a civil engineer working for the federal government, so I had a childhood of growing up around heavy construction projects for the government and that was always of interest to me as well as being outdoors. So I decided that when I graduated from high school I wanted to study engineering. I didn't know specifically what discipline.

Stanford was recommended to me by the high school principal. I'd never heard of the school before, or didn't know anything about it. Otherwise, I applied to several schools in the West and Georgia Tech because they had a fine reputation for engineering, and was accepted to Stanford and decided to come. It was kind of a long jump from graduating in a high school class of seventeen in Puerto Rico to come to Stanford, a particularly sophisticated organization, and California was a pretty sophisticated state and everything. I had kind of always lived out either in the boondocks or in an environment that was pretty protected or whatnot, so it was an interesting challenge, but it was a great

experience going to Stanford. I ended up in civil engineering and graduated with that degree.

Adamson: Doug Craker noted that you were an accomplished rower.

Inman: Well, when I came to Stanford, I always had a love for football and I played one year of high school football when I lived in Alaska. In the Caribbean, of course, you don't play football; you play volleyball in the fall, instead. So when I came to Stanford, I decided I was going to play football for Stanford, but the coaches explained to me that life was a little different than that, that they had elite athletes and scholarship athletes and all this sort of thing, and that I wasn't going to have a career in football at Stanford.

So then a couple of my dorm-mates and I got talking about crew. They had some kind of a little get-together in orientation, the Stanford Crew Association, for freshmen, and we all got interested, and so we rowed. And so for two years, I rowed for Stanford. A lot of fun, a lot of hard work, but good discipline and very rewarding.

Adamson: You and Dean Stephan came to Pankow from Stanford within a year of each other, or pretty close?

Inman: No. I don't remember the exact dates, but Dean actually transferred to Stanford and my fraternity tried to recruit him. I remember that very clearly. He chose ultimately to go with another fraternity. I think we were actually in the same graduating year, 1962, or he might have been a year ahead of me, I don't remember. He had transferred, so I

don't remember exactly. Anyway, I went to work with Guy Atkinson, a heavy contractor in South San Francisco, and Dean went in the Navy. I think he was Navy ROTC, as I recall. But anyway, he went into the Navy. Then I was with Atkinson for a couple of years, three years, four, maybe, five, maybe, and then Dean showed up at Atkinson. We actually then worked together on the project in Austin, Texas. He was my project engineer. That was the first time we worked together. He had been with the company a couple of years prior to that working on a job, the Kaweah Delta Hospital in the Central Valley, Visalia. So we actually got together and started working together on this project in Texas. Both of us were sent to Texas to build that project.

Adamson: So did you both come to Pankow at the same time?

Inman: Yes. The fellow who was the senior estimator guy at Atkinson Company's Building Division subsequently left and went to work with Charlie Pankow. He had worked with Charlie previously. And when Dean and I and the other guys were in Texas building this project—Bill Carpenter was his name—Bill Carpenter called and asked if he could introduce Charlie and Russ [Osterman] to us. So they did. They came down and we showed them the project and had dinner and were interested in making a career move and this sort of thing, and nothing came of that for either Dean or I.

Over the course of, I guess, a year or so, more conversations, and Atkinson finally decided to close its Building Division. Dean and I were there in Austin, Texas, working on developing the pre-construction phase of a shopping center for a local developer for Guy Atkinson Company, and when the company decided to close, they offered me a job

in California with the Heavy Division and they offered Dean a job in Southern California with the Highway Division, so we both took that opportunity and came back to California. Then over the next six months, both of us ended up leaving Atkinson and going with Charlie Pankow.

Adamson: So that mentioning of Charlie and Russ, that was your first meeting with either one of them?

Inman: Yes.

Adamson: What were your first impressions of Charlie and Russ when you first met them?

Inman: Oh, good question. We knew from Bill Carpenter some of the things that they'd accomplished, so that was very impressive. Here was the number one and number two guys in this company that were doing well, that took the time to come through Austin, Texas, to talk to Dean and I. That was pretty ego-flattering. I think I was suitably impressed. I don't know that I have any strong recollection of, "Oh, gee, I want to go work for those guys," or, "Gee, I don't want to." We were busy building a building and really focused on that, and so I didn't give it a lot of thought, I guess. But certainly it was a good impression.

Adamson: So you can't speak for Dean, but when you came to Pankow, were there other options you were considering?

Inman: Well, at that point, I had a personal tragedy in my family. A young son died. What Atkinson was trying to do was to make me a heavy construction—a dam builder. They had promised me that I would be the structural superintendent on a hundred-million dollar—I'm going to say a hundred million dollars; I'm not sure about the dollar value—Mica Dam project in British Columbia that the company expected to get. I was going to be the powerhouse, the structural superintendent for that. Just an amazing opportunity. I was dumbfounded that they would offer that to me.¹

But because of the personal tragedy, my family decided that we needed to quit booming around the world and that we needed to settle down. At that same time, Charlie had engaged a recruiter who had contacted me while we were going through this tragedy. I was working in California on the Diablo Canyon nuclear project. We were deciding that we needed to stabilize and settle. Charlie's company offered me the opportunity to settle to San Francisco, which is where my adult home had been and was, even though we'd been back and forth, and it just sort of all came together and it seemed to be the right thing to do. It was a good time to leave the one company because it was in transition, and it was a good time to stabilize the family. I'd become convinced it was a very, very good company to work for, and I'd become very impressed with everything I

¹ Mica Dam, one of the largest earthfill dams on earth, was the third of three Canadian dams constructed under the terms of the 1964 Columbia River Treaty agreed to by the Ottawa and Washington. Its underground powerhouse was the largest in the world when it was built. It became operational in March 1973.

saw about company, including Charlie and Russ and Bob Carlson, and so we made that decision to go to work with Pankow.

Adamson: So it was a coincidence that you and Dean showed up more or less at the same time at Pankow?

Inman: Yes. We had both had that previous preliminary introduction. This recruiter had pursued both Dean and I, as well as other people, perhaps, too. I think Dean actually went to work for the company before I did, but we're close. It was coincidental. It wasn't a plot on our part or anything.

Adamson: Well, Dean, of course, ended up in Southern California. Can you at this point in time talk about where Pankow stood as a company after a decade of its existence and where Charlie and Russ sort of impressed upon you where it was going when you came on?

Inman: Well, it was clear to me that they were entrepreneurial and that they were very dynamic and they had a good vision, and as near as I could tell, they had some good people backing them up, making things happen that they created. The idea that I had was that the company had a bright future and we had an opportunity to grow and to work hard and succeed if we did the right things and disciplined ourselves. So it just seemed to be that it was an organization that was personal as well as focused on what it wanted to do

and where it wanted to go, and to take managed risks to get there. So it looked like a very bright future to myself as well as other people around.

One of the things that I'll probably say several times is that the people within the company made the company. Charlie and Bob and Russ and George [Hutton], coming from the Kiewit organization, brought with them some very, very competent craftspeople, the most competent of all being Ralph Tice. I have told people all over the world that I have met one man in my life who single-handedly could build a building, all by himself, given enough time, and that's Ralph Tice. He could do everything and he knew everything, and what he didn't know he'd figure out. Just an incredibly competent guy, rascally, had a rough edge on him, but he was very seldom wrong. He was very, very competent, and the company was built on people like that. That's what made it such a joy to be a part of the company, was to be a part of that cadre of really slam-dunk, competent, focused, no-nonsense people. And that's why I'd do it all over again, for that reason alone, just the joy and a pleasure of working with those kinds of people, it was just a blessing. It was great.

Adamson: By this time, there was George [Hutton] in Hawaii pretty well established. I've talked to several people about the Pankow organization setting up different offices. A lot of the early work the company did was in the Bay Area. When you got to San Francisco, was the idea that there would be a San Francisco office, like a Hawaii office, or was there a San Francisco office just because there had been a lot of jobs in the area? I guess my question is, was it articulated to you what your brief was when you joined, what you were supposed to do in San Francisco?

Inman: When I first joined the company, Charlie and I had several discussions, and one of the final discussions was all of upcoming jobs that the company had in various parts of the country and whatnot. I told Charlie that I wasn't interested in running field work anymore. I felt I was beyond that. I wanted to manage work from an office. And he said, "That's fine. That's what we want you to do. But it may be that the company will need you to do a job somewhere."

I said, "Okay, that's fine, prove myself, help the company, whatever. Happy to do that. I don't want to be a superintendent all my life, or a site project manager. I want to do other things."

"That's fine."

We agreed on it, and then Charlie gave me an idea of where the upcoming projects were going to be, and rattled off the various geographic locations and the kinds of projects and whatnot, including a project in Kentucky. And I, in my infinite naiveté, said, "Well, I wouldn't mind handling any of those opportunities, except for Kentucky. I have no interest in going to Kentucky."

He said, "Okay."

So I joined the company and I'm assigned to San Francisco, working with Bill Carpenter in the office in San Francisco, and going down and spending time helping Alan Murk on some specific things on the San Jose Pacific Telephone projects. Then we got the Kentucky project, and Charlie says, "Brad, Ralph Tice is in Kentucky, but we need him to come back and become operations manager, and we need you to go to Kentucky and finish up the bank building and do the annex building that's coming up."

“Okay.” [laughs]

And I’ve always thought that he always had that in back of his mind. Silly me for saying, “Anywhere but Kentucky.” And sure enough, that was going to be exactly where he wanted to send me and wanted to prove a point or whatever, I don’t know. Anyway, that was where we started and how we started.

Adamson: A lot of these jobs that were across the country were Winmar projects. In your time in the San Francisco office, did you deal with the Winmar people?

Inman: Oh yes. Yes, if not constantly, frequently. Interestingly, some of the projects for Winmar were handled out of L.A. (or Altadena) and some of the projects were handled by our office in San Francisco. All the Kentucky work, we handled. The work on Long Island was handled by L.A. I can’t remember what other projects for Winmar. But yes, both offices, San Francisco and L.A., were tongue-in-cheek and umbilical-cord connected to Winmar.

Adamson: So you knew Franck Orrico?

Inman: Yeah.

Adamson: Can you tell me a little bit about him?

Inman: In what respect?

Adamson: Well, people have mentioned his name, but going back, I realize that nobody has really talked about him. I think the other Winmar person that gets mentioned is—I forget the—

Inman: Bob Brewer?

Adamson: Dick Brewer?

Inman: Dick Brewer. Then George—can't remember his last name, George, who came to work with Pankow for a short period of time later. He was kind of their manager.

Dick Brewer was their development guy. Frank Orrico was the president of the organization. Frank, I have no idea about his competence or leadership with respect to his company, but he seemed to be very dynamic and he seemed to be very authoritative. He was sometimes a little bit aloof to the contractor side. I think he probably did that deliberately to protect his stockholders or the image of his board or stockholders, that he wasn't getting too cozy with a contractor, because we did a lot of work for Winmar, and we did virtually all on negotiated contracts. So, you know, that's always subject to some question as to, Are you getting the right price? and all that kind of thing. They got the right price. They were tough negotiators, Dick Brewer specifically. But Frank was kind of the stereotypical image of a corporate exec.

Adamson: Fair enough. Between Winmar and the telephone company, there was a lot of repeat business in the seventies and it carried into the eighties. I notice in some of the material I've reviewed that that was an issue of where other business was going to come from (in the managers' meetings). In the seventies and eighties, were there other customers that were developed that became more than one-off owners or developers with whom the company worked?

Inman: Yes, probably more in Southern California than in San Francisco, but Marathon U.S. Realties was one of those. Kaiser. Kaiser was a client that Charlie and Russ had developed early on and did one or two projects with, and then it kind of died. When I got there, we resurrected that relationship with Kaiser and started a number of small—mostly parking structures—but very successful projects and a very good relationship. That was a fun client and a fun kind of a thing to be able to negotiate and build projects for them. So that was one client, but not a lot of them. I can't think of any other major clients.

Adamson: So before we get into any of the detail, if you just take the broad sweep of your time as a manager in the San Francisco office, from your point of view, what were the expectations on you in terms of volume, financial performance, that sort of thing, in San Francisco?

Inman: Well, we didn't have any numerical goals. We didn't have any deliverables, as modern management techniques would dictate. I think the message was, find new clients, get contracts, build buildings, grow the office, grow the region, and don't forget

to build the buildings right the first time. But that was really what it was about. Several of the projects, particularly in the earlier years, were Pankow developments, and so were intimately tied to Russ and running the numbers in responding to [what] these developers wanted.

One of the aspects of being a construction company working for yourself as a developer is that you are 24/7 with that developer. Everything else takes second place. When Russ or Charlie wanted something to happen with respect to one of their developments, our developments, the company's developments, as a contractor, that was your first client. That was your most important mission is to satisfy and take care of them. That creates a little stress on trying to do other work. So that was good news and bad news.

Adamson: If you look at the time, if I calculated correctly, roughly fourteen, fifteen years in San Francisco before you went to Hawaii?

Inman: Yes.

Adamson: If you look at the company as a whole, what were the main issues or problems or obstacles or opportunities that the company as a whole was facing at that time? So you as a manager, contributing your ideas as to their solutions, what were the company-wide issues that were talked about in upper-management meetings, if we look at it that way?

Inman: Well, from a practical standpoint, the personnel was always an issue, finding, acquiring, retaining good people. One of the problems that we had as the years went by more and more was finding people willing to relocate. In the beginning days, when I first joined the company, the fellows that were there that came from Kiewit were used to banging all over the country. They lived in a mobile home wherever in the country the job happened to be type of thing, and that was okay, that was their life. But more and more we found that our employees were less willing to move and relocate. So that was always a problem, finding people in the right locations, and satisfying their personal needs as far as their relocating and whatnot, and trying to concentrate our work in more consistent areas rather than just booming off to Billings, Montana or Sioux Falls, Iowa. So that was one of the big issues.

Another issue that we were always working on was how to sell to our own industry and to clients our design/build concept and do so in a way that would be advantageous to us, because in many cases it was a very tough sell. So over the years we got involved in the early stages of the Design/Build Institute, of which Rik [Kunnath] became very active. Charlie, of course, had gotten very involved in the American Concrete Institute and encouraged several of the rest of us to also get involved, which the company continues to do today. In the same kind of thing, because by association with the engineers in ACI and the other professionals there, Charlie was able to build a trust and confidence level and a mutual respect so that engineers found it more comfortable to work with us in a design/build frame of organization and even contractually work for us in many cases. It was through that kind of outreach that all of us were continually challenged to try to build the niche that we had tried to create.

Principally working on negotiated design/build work is to build that into an acceptable industry norm so we didn't have to fight that hurdle every time we met a new client. One of the business models, if you want to call it that, that the company had was, "Don't compete with the other bastards. Find your client, qualify your client, and convince him that you're the right person for the job and negotiate the price. Work out the numbers so that his project is successful for him but it's successful to you as well." Rather than compete on a fee-only kind of basis, which is one of the real problems of the construction industry, is competing for that very minor portion of the cost of the project, when that's not what it's all about. So that was the biggest challenge we always had, constantly, was building our reputation and convincing enough people that the way we were doing business was a good way to do business for many projects, not all, but for many projects.

Adamson: One of the issues that has come up in some of these [offsite managers'] minutes that I've looked at was Charlie's concern about legal liability, especially in the inflation in the seventies. Costs were going up and apparently there were several projects where the subs had not performed. I think Pacheco Village was one. There were issues of trying to get written in the contract agreements for arbitration or mediation. How successful was the company in limiting its legal exposure in this area?

Inman: Well, because it was mostly Charlie's money, he was understandably concerned about not letting any lawyer get it, and we all understood that and subscribed to it. Yeah, he led the parade on always looking for ways to limit our liability because he knew very

well—I don't think from experience, but just from observation—that it only takes one bad project to turn a company totally upside-down. We see that in the industry all the time. So we're always looking for ways to minimize that, particularly to avoid getting involved in capricious actions by people. And because the company had gotten involved in building residential, that was a hotbed for capricious actions against builders, developers, and everybody else. So the idea of getting arbitration and then subsequently mediation, when it evolved as a dispute-settling mechanism, was very important and we all subscribed to that and worked very hard to get that in our contracts.

George and Charlie and others developed language for condo contracts that also protected the company. One of the things that we always were concerned about was the California statute about a ten-year run on latent and patent defects. So at nine years and eleven and a half months, you'd get a letter from a lawyer saying there's a problem with that building you built ten years ago, you know, that kind of thing. So we were always trying to limit that. There was that aspect, but then, on the other side, I never knew Charlie, or under his leadership, any of the rest of us, ever backing away from a real problem. We always faced issues. If it was our fault, we took care of it. Slam-dunk, no question. That was part of, again, our business model, is that we took care of what we did. We took responsibility for our actions.

Adamson: Was arbitration something novel in the industry that you were doing?

Inman: It wasn't unique, but in the construction industry it was not widely accepted. We probably were one of the first major companies to really push it, at least to my knowledge.

Adamson: I'm getting ahead of myself here. If we back up just to where you started, again, at the San Francisco office, it was an entrepreneurial company, there wasn't lines of organizational reporting, but, if I can use the word "reporting," you reported directly to Charlie, or Russ?

Inman: Charlie. Russ, obviously. If Russ told me to go ten degrees west, I went ten degrees west, because I knew that he was in concert with Charlie. So if it came from Russ, it was the same as from Charlie. Bob Carlson was also our operations manager—I'll call him that, I'm not sure what his title was, but we always took advice/orders from him. When I went to Kentucky and was running that project, he was operations manager, so he was my boss.

When I came to San Francisco in the office and managing work and sponsoring work, one of the goofy things about our organization is, I would be responsible like—I'm thinking of a project in Portland. We built a project in Portland and Bob Carlson was the operations manager. I'd go to Portland in the management capacity on contract matters, design meetings, working with the owner, working with the superintendent and the field guys, as far as their schedule and all the rest of it, but Bob Carlson would come along as operations manager and he was that superintendent's direct boss. He'd tell you to go ten degrees west, and the supe would then go ten degrees west, and I did not dare to say,

“No, go ten degrees east.” I mean, we didn’t do that. The sponsors had sort of authority and supervision over the superintendents, but only as the project overall contractually mattered, specifically superintendents reported to the operations manager. Miraculously, there were, in my experience and observation, hardly ever any problems with that. On paper it doesn’t work, but because of the people involved, it worked.

Adamson: I ask this of most everyone who was in a management position. What was Charlie’s style as a manager and how did the firm reflect that personality and style?

Inman: Of all the adjectives or descriptives that I would apply to Charlie Pankow, “manager” would not be one of them, because in the common vernacular and definition of manager, he was not that. He was an entrepreneur. He managed by discussing issues with you, with me, and he was very diplomatic and always listening to whatever anybody had to say. He was very good about that, even though you frequently would sense that he already had his mind made up and he was just being patient. But he’d always listen to suggestions. But he’d always then, either by suggestion or direction, set the line of march out very clear. So in that case, he managed very well, but he managed on a one-on-one basis. Yeah, he just managed on a one-on-one basis.

Adamson: I’m going to use the word “manage” again because I don’t have another word to substitute, but how did the company manage its growth in the seventies and eighties, if it was managed at all?

Inman: Well, yeah. In terms of management, people—again, it's people. The fact that Dean Stephan joined the company was very good for the company because Dean had a management mentality and an organizational mentality, and [his] being in Los Angeles was very good for the company. There are others that were able to, with the help of other people that came along, able to keep the growth. I was blessed with people like I mentioned, Dean Browning and Rik Kunnath and Dick Walterhouse and several other folks, and superintendents like Alan Murk. I mean, who could go wrong? [laughs] I had an easy job. In hindsight, it was because of the people.

So as we grew some of these younger people into more responsible roles, we were able to take on more work and more complicated work, but we still had the technical skills behind us. That was something that we had to keep reminding ourselves, that it was people like Mike Liddiard and Alan Murk and Red Metcalf that really made the things happen. You needed to breed those kinds of people. You couldn't clone them, so you had to breed them somehow. And you had to keep bringing them on because, you know, Ralph Tice is going to retire someday or die, or whatever, I mean, we all do, and those are skills that you don't learn overnight. Those field management skills are skills that are earned over a long time and lot of experience. Very important. But we were able to do that, by and large. Overall, the company has lost a lot of its technical field skill, like slipforming, which once we were famous across the country in the industry for our ability to efficiently slipform high-rise tower frames, and that skill has kind of slipped away from us partly because of economics and partly because of the fact that the company's grown and we haven't filled the gaps as well as we might have.

Adamson: I know Dean [Stephan], and Rik Kunnath more recently, has talked about formalizing systems within the company, estimating, accounting, bringing in computers. One of the issues that came up in some of these meeting minutes I've looked at is communications between office and the field and trying to make that, on paper, as it were, a little more formalized. How successful was that in your time in the office in getting that more formalized?

Inman: Pretty good. I think for my entire history with the company we had—of course, the system's evolved, like everything else. Our San Francisco office, just by happenstance, happened to be the first one to try out using a fax machine. For somebody like yourself, that's going to sound very strange. But we didn't have fax machines in the very early days. But we started a fax machine and, wow, that was pretty good. But, of course, like anything else, it takes a network. You have to have somebody else on the other end that has a fax machine, too, to make it work. We got that set up with our techs and engineers and it worked famously.

So the systems evolve and change over time, but the idea of accountability, financial accountability of the projects and documentation of the construction of the projects was already a discipline in place when I began with the company, and maintained. And we religiously maintained that. We religiously tried to. You know, not everything works 100 percent. But the cost records, the coding, the cost histories, the subcontract reporting and payment procedures and everything else, the discipline of all of that, from a project's perspective, was always strong, good, and well executed throughout the company.

Adamson: Did you go to campuses and recruit people yourself?

Inman: Yes.

Adamson: Would you go to Stanford or did you go to Purdue and all the others?

Inman: I never went to Purdue. Stanford, San Luis Obispo, one of the schools up here in Oregon. Yes, several.

Adamson: And what would you say, from your personal standpoint, your role in mentoring these new graduates when they came into the company? What was your approach, or what was the company's approach to bringing them along?

Inman: There was a conscious effort to immerse them and there was a conscious effort to try to give them different kinds of experiences. Some sensitivity to pairing with people, like I would always try to get a young engineer to get assigned to a project with Alan Murk, or Mike Liddiard. I don't want to leave Mike out. But Alan Murk just stands out as the ultimate mentor. He was so patient with people, not just young engineers; he was patient with carpenters, too. He was very understanding, very patient, very deliberate in his actions and everything else. He was just a wonderful person to work for and to work with because he had a lot to transplant to younger people, including myself. I learned an

awful lot from Alan, working with him, both down in San Jose and when we worked together on the Pacific Telephone projects. Just an incredible guy.

So, mentoring and bringing these younger fellows along and encouraging them was one of the things that I enjoyed doing and I liked to do. I felt it was important, and it was rewarding to see the results of some of that and try to encourage people. But again, it was by tackling issues and projects and assignments and working through the challenges involved with them and getting the job done. That was the training ground. Unfortunately, we didn't do a lot of classes. We could have and should have. The company, I think, has done a lot more of that in recent years. I guess we felt we were too busy. The best classroom was out there, "out there" being either in the field with Alan Murk or in the office working with Dean Browning or myself or somebody else.

Adamson: I come back to this question a lot because it's still unclear [to me]. How do people get assigned to projects and between the offices? How did you decide, say, to send someone to Hawaii on a job or send someone along—I mean, how did that work between the three offices and the managers in those offices?

Inman: I'll preface my comments by saying I don't really know. [laughs] First of all, Hawaii was fairly insulated. It would be a pretty significant movement when we would need to send people to Hawaii from Southern or Northern California or vice versa. It did happen, but we tried not to for all the right reasons.

Between Northern and Southern California, if we had a surge of projects, we would say, "We've got this project coming up and we're going to need an engineer or

we're going to need a field superintendent or we're going to need whatever, and we don't have them up here, and we can't grow one instantaneously, and the project's coming up. Southern California, have you got anybody you can spare?" That's the way it would start, and then we'd talk back and forth about things. But that worked out pretty well. And of course, then we'd have some cases where individuals would express a preference for either being Southern or Northern California and we'd try to accommodate that.

Adamson: Did recruiting of university graduates keep up with projects, or did you ever feel that you were coming up short on personnel?

Inman: Being a hands-on manager and having to deliver the goods, I probably always felt that I was shorthanded and needing more people, and I'm sure everybody else felt the same way, except Charlie, who was looking at the bottom line, not wanting to invest any more than we had to.

Adamson: So was there ever a crunch where you had to recruit people from the outside to get the job? Did you ever lose a job because you didn't have the people?

Inman: We probably did. I can't recite an instance. I can't recite an instance of when that would have happened. Yes, we would occasionally recruit, just like Charlie ended up recruiting Dean and I. We were both proven low-, mid-level kinds of guys on the ladder of construction management. He brought us in, and I'm sure there were some folks in the company felt a little awkward about that at first. Maybe in the end, too, I

don't know. I'm trying to remember somebody that specifically that we recruited. But, yeah, we'd occasionally go outside and try to find the right people. Or word of mouth, we'd get to know somebody that was working for one of the other companies or something and make a change.

Adamson: You mention that Charlie and Russ were always getting—that you had lots of work and you were profitable. In the broad sense, though, did you get a sense of how big or how many jobs Charlie wanted the company to be able to take on? Was there a strategic sense of where the company should be in five, ten years?

Inman: No, not to my knowledge and not in any discussion I can recall with Charlie or George or Russ. We just wanted to grow and do what we could. I remember the message, not the exact words, but the message from Charlie as, we don't want to be the biggest; we want to be the best. It was common, but he was convinced of that and he convinced us of that. He didn't want to be a Turner Construction that had a billion-dollar backlog that made in profit less than we did. I mean, who needs it? So size was never the issue. To grow and to have fun and to make money was the goal. But no limitation and no expectation. We didn't have any "We want to be a 500-million-dollar company by 1990" or anything like that.

Adamson: I think I know the answer, or my own guess, to this question, but are there any economies of scale in construction where you needed to be? Was there a minimum size that you had to be, to be able to compete, or on the low end did that not matter, either?

Inman: We didn't have a set limit because it always would depend on the client and the nature of the relationship. But there were instances when we could do a small project very effectively. If it was like in between big projects or something like that, we could put people to work and keep them busy. And if it was good client, we didn't have a lot of hassles. But by and large—it's changed now—but by and large, the feeling amongst all of us was that anything less than a million dollars, and, of course, a million dollars today is two million yesterday and that sort of thing, but anything less than a million dollars was too small for us to fool with. As a matter of fact, there were a few people in the company that criticized me for pursuing the parking structure work with Kaiser because it was too small. I can't remember the dollar values, but parking structures are not big and complicated and whatnot, but I can tell you, percentage wise, we made very good money. With minimum risk and a very good relationship with the clients, it was good work, and Charlie totally endorsed it. But he would have rather we did \$20-million projects, instead of three [million], and been, percentage-wise, just as successful, but it worked.

But, yes, there was an economy of scale, because a lot of our work involved a lot of upfront pre-construction through the design/build process, or even if it wasn't a design/build project, we were still involved in the very early pre-construction stages of our projects in most cases, and that involved spending time, a lot of time. We'd have hundreds and hundreds of man-hours invested in a project, maybe thousands before a project would actually break ground, so, yeah, the economies of scale certainly played into that and so we would try for the larger projects just for that reason.

Adamson: I brought along an offprint of your 1987 article on design/build.² You talk about different projects and basically the way design/build is executed. My question is, in the fifteen years or so you were with the company running up to this, did design/build evolve as it was practiced within the company as it was refined over that period of time, or was it pretty much something that was in place and was executed over and over?

Inman: Oh no, I think it was definitely evolved. The concept was in place when I arrived at the company. The formalities of the contracts and the limitations of liabilities and all of those kinds of issues evolved and continued to evolve, and I know have continued to evolve since I've left the company. They're much more sophisticated now than they were then. So, yeah, a continually evolving process.

Adamson: You mention doing negotiated work under design/build. Were there other kinds of jobs in terms of types of projects that you took on while you were in San Francisco that weren't negotiated, or did you adhere to that pretty closely?

Inman: Pretty closely. We did a design/build competition. We convinced the city of Boise, Idaho, to do a design/build competition for a large parking structure, and we competed on that and were successful. And that was an open competition, but we had an edge because we knew what the whole process was about, and the other edge that we had was that the design was based on a lot of precasts and precast girders, and the only local precasting company gave us a price just prior to bid time that was higher than we thought it was worth. So Ralph Tice and I and Ken Hardee, who would become a superintendent

² Brad Inman, "The Appeal of Design Build," *Urban Land* 46 (November 1987): 21–5.

up there, put together an estimate based on building and utilizing our own portable beam stressing bed, and we used that number going in and we were the low bidder on the project, and we built it with our own technology, making our own precasts, and made money, made good money on the job. So we got the job because of our managed risk with the technology and did an open competition. But we didn't do that very often. I think we did one in Portland, too, for the city of Portland, but not very many.

Adamson: I'm trying to stay chronological here, but back up just a second to the Citizens Fidelity Bank building. Dean Stephan mentioned that that project sort of put Pankow on the map as a builder of taller office buildings, that they hadn't really done that beforehand. Did you get that sense that that was a project that really distinguished the company?

Inman: Yes, yes, definitely. It gave us a lot of prestige. Again it was Ralph Tice. Ken Hardee worked with him as a young engineer on that project, and Ken Hardee became, in my opinion, an absolutely outstanding superintendent. Anyway, yes, that building did. I can't remember how tall it was, but it was a prominent building in Louisville and it probably was the tallest building the company had built. I'm trying to think, something out in Hawaii, one of the condos, may have been taller sooner. Anyway, yes, it was a dramatic building, very successful, and certainly helped our national reputation as a high-rise builder.

Adamson: So then Russ or Charlie could use—I don't know if you can comment on how they negotiated work or marketed the business, but how would they use something like that project to sell more work?

Inman: Well, we'd certainly, all of us, would have pictures of—not only the pretty pictures, the finished project—but in-construction pictures showing the techniques and everything we use. We'd use those in whatever way we felt was appropriate in trying to sell our service to new clients or other clients, so we'd certainly do that. I never took anybody to Louisville to show them that building specifically, but I would take people to buildings, and “This is what we did. This is how we build it,” da-da-da-da-da, and that sort of thing. So you always use your good work as a reference for new work, like any good business does.

Adamson: I forget the project, but Dean had mentioned that he had to come up with a brochure for the project because Pankow hadn't done a brochure before. Early on, one of the first things that he had to do was to do a brochure. The general question is, as you got more work and got bigger, I guess the marketing techniques changed?

Inman: The original marketing was Charlie and Russ, 100 percent. One of the rest of the guys might bump into somebody that expressed an interest in building a building and they'd start a conversation or something, but that would have been happenstance. It was Charlie and Russ, and, of course, George out in Hawaii, who was doing his own thing.

Then slowly, others of us. Dean [Stephan] and I, particularly in our two offices, got more and more involved in that. Tom Verti as well.

Adamson: In your time at Pankow, how did the construction industry change and then how did the company take advantage or see opportunities in how the market was changing to thrive, if you want to put it that way?

Inman: Well, one of the positive things I think that has happened in the construction industry for Pankow's benefit was the concern of risk in the industry. Over my career, and continuing today and getting worse, is the industry's panic from risk and trying to write documents that point the finger at everybody else but themselves, and this true of the architects; it's true of owners; it's true of subcontractors; it's true of contractors; it's true of everybody. And one of the things that Charlie always believed in and caused all of the rest of us to believe in, was managing risk, being willing to take risk, and because we were willing to bet on ourselves with clients when others would run from risk, worked to our advantage.

A good example was the Marathon U.S. Realities' people. They built a project in Portland with another contractor and we got to know them there, and then we built the project in San Francisco for them, and part of our sales pitch to them was, "Well, Contractor A said a concrete building is more expensive than a steel building, and so he wants to build a steel building."

My answer to them was, "If they build a concrete building the wrong way, it can be more expensive than a steel building. But whatever steel building they can come up

with, we can come up with. But I'll bet you that we can come up with a concrete building that will beat any steel building in terms of budget and in terms of schedule, and it's because we're willing to take a risk on structural techniques with concrete in the building that other contractors are not willing or able to do. And since we're willing to bet on ourselves on that, we can offer that solution to you."

Now it may not always work, but in that particular case it did. And in a lot of cases, it will. So the fact that the industry's running from risk worked to our advantage because we could counter that. Now, at the same time, of course, we're worried about limiting liability and doing other things to protect the company. But in the management of getting business and building projects, we're willing to take reasonable intelligent risks in order to achieve the result, and that's a key success of the company.

Adamson: This just may be a follow-on from that, but right about the time you joined Pankow, Arthur Samson, the head of the GSA, General Services Administration, in Washington called construction the worst managed industry in America.³ Was that always something on the back of your minds as a selling point for Pankow, that you were operating in this horribly managed environment?

Inman: We knew it was. From my early days, you know, I saw that the construction industry was fraught with all sorts of obstacles: weather, uncertainties as far as funding of projects and just the management of projects, depending on subcontractors and suppliers, personnel uncertainties, accidents. I mean, why would anybody want to be in this silly

³ "Change: The Building Team Is Getting Together for a Change," *Building Design & Construction* 14 (December 1973): 34.

business? But it's because we all took great pride in seeing our buildings completed and accomplished.

One of the things in the industry—you'll find a lot of people and I catch myself doing it too, frequently—is, "I built that." "I built that." Well, two or three hundred other people helped. [laughs] But we take personal pride in our projects, at least in the kinds of projects we did. If you're doing nothing but building Taco Bells around the country, I don't know, that's a different kind of a result emotion, I think. But the kinds of buildings we built always resulted in being proud of the accomplishment.

Adamson: I know this wasn't the result of strategic vision or anything, but the fact that you had a Hawaii office, it's my understanding that the business cycles in Hawaii and the mainland were just off enough so that when one was down, the other one lagged enough so that, overall, the business sort of smoothed out over time. Was that something that, in your fifteen years, happened?

Inman: Yes, and by and large, it did. It helped, frankly, for us to have a Hawaii office and California office, because there were several times when either one way or the other—as a matter of fact, when we built the Marathon Plaza project in San Francisco, we didn't have a senior superintendent available in Northern California to handle the project. Mike Liddiard was in Northern California, but he was working on other projects, so we got a fellow from Hawaii, which we had to ask to go back to Hawaii, and then ended up having Mike Liddiard replace him. That was a source of a problem between George and I because it was a very good friend of George's and a very highly respected

superintendent, but we just mismanaged him somehow and it's mostly my fault that we brought him over. He was kind of reluctant to come, as a lot of people are, and whatnot. It was a tough job. Somehow we just didn't encourage him and empower him in the right way, and so it didn't work out.

[interruption]

Adamson: You had a column in the Pankow company newsletter. You talked about jobsite marketing.⁴ As far as the San Francisco projects were concerned, Oakland and the Bay Area, can you elaborate on how, if you could measure it, how such marketing helped the business?

Inman: I can't remember having—

Adamson: You talked about keeping the jobsite clean and keeping the sign up and making sure that you were talking to the people around in the area.

Inman: Because our whole culture was pride in our work, taking on managed risk, executing it correctly the first time, all of that culture was part of being proud in the project during construction as well as the completed project. We always felt that people are always walking by your projects, and you never know when it's going to be a bank president or somebody else that Russ or Charlie or you or somebody else may end up sitting across the table trying to convince to build a building for them. And so you never

⁴ Brad Inman, Jobsite Marketing," *CPI News* 3 (Winter 1985).

knew when somebody was going to come by, so you want to keep the jobs organized, clean, and orderly, not only for safety, but for public-relations purposes, as well as for potential marketing. And our superintendents at the jobsite and the rest of our personnel at the jobsite were also good salespeople, probably the best salespeople, not necessarily marketers, but salespeople. I think we were all pretty good at selling, because we were all passionate about what we did, and that included our field superintendents.

Adamson: You've already mentioned the Design-Build Institute of America and promoting design/build. If you go back to the early seventies, trade journals such as *ENR* are already discussing design/build. Yet it took thirty years to go from comprising 10 to 15 percent of non-residential construction to 30 to 40 percent or more today. What is your take on why it took so long for design/build to be accepted?

Inman: Oh, very simple. Distrust, distrust on the part of the design community. They didn't want to have their authority taken away from them. And, you know, there are understandable aspects of that. They were concerned that the contractor commercial pressure of such relationships would dilute the integrity of their design and would tend to dilute the quality, dilute the safety, dilute the—you know, whatever, cut corners, was a natural concern on the part of the design community, and it was very difficult to overcome that fear and distrust. On the other side, there was distrust on the part of owners. "How do I know I'm getting the best price? The only way I'll know if I get the best price is if I complete the plans and put it out on the street and get bids."

Well, our response to that always was, “You will know on that day what the best price is for that set of plans, but you will not know if you’re getting the best price for the building that you want built.” And then we’d get into all the other details of it.

But, yes, distrust on the part of owners, how to convince the owner that you’re giving him the best value for his project, for his needs, and convincing the design community that you’re not trying to cut corners and mess with them, that you’re just trying to partner with them. And very difficult, and, of course, governmental agencies, by law, couldn’t do design/build in most cases, and that’s changed dramatically over the last ten, fifteen, years. A lot of agencies can do design and do do design/build with some projects, including highways and all sorts of things that we never even contemplated twenty years ago. But it’s the trust factor.

Adamson: From your position in San Francisco, did you facilitate bringing together the design/build team early on or did you not have much to do with bringing the structural engineer or the architect in the Pankow—

Inman: Oh, always. Always. Always. Every project. That was the key thing. You know, once there was a project identified is, assembling the team to accommodate it and then supporting that team, leading that team. That was our role pre-construction, as well as estimating, scheduling, and all the rest of it.

Adamson: So you personally were involved in that?

Inman: Oh, yes.

Adamson: I wasn't sure on your job description, whether you were managing projects in process or what stage you were—

Inman: Yes. Well, again, everything. And as we did grow, Rik would handle certain projects as project sponsor. Dean Browning would handle certain projects as project sponsor. I'd be involved in all of them in working with the scheduling and the estimating and everything else. Yes, that's what the offices were doing.

Adamson: There was a June 1984 article in *Building Design Construction* that actually quoted Dean on design/build, and Dean noted that the Pankow Company, one of the reasons or advantages of design/build was that it allowed the firm to come in early enough in the design stage to have input on the construction techniques themselves that Pankow, especially in the area of concrete, had developed to make sure the project would succeed.⁵ Can you comment on your perspective of the marriage between design/build and the concrete innovations or techniques that—

Inman: Well, as I alluded to with the Marathon project as an example, the whole idea for us for design/build was to be able to negotiate the project and to be able to direct the evolution of the design, therefore, the execution of the project, to meet the owner's needs. In the most altruistic sense we were dedicated to doing that. It was also self-serving, and

⁵ Christopher Olson, "Design/Builders Rapidly Expand Their Market," *Building Design & Construction* 25 (June 1984): 72-5.

there's nothing wrong with that. It enabled us to get onboard early. It enabled us to get an equal partnership role with the owner and the design team and all sit around the table and try to develop a solution for the project. In the process, as we've mentioned a couple of times, we brought to the table, and the company continues to bring to the table, a willingness to do some extraordinary things, if it makes sense, and not be afraid of trying new things.

One of the things that the company had developed, left over from Kiewit days, and then the company expanded it exponentially, is tricks with concrete. Structural steel is structural steel, and in our biased view, there are only certain things that you can do with structural steel. That really isn't true, but it tends to be true. With concrete you can do a lot of different things. You can slipform. You can precast. You can jumpform. You can do it this way. You can do it that way. Moment frames, shear—all sorts of different things. So when we bring to the table the technology and the willingness to execute the technology, we just bring more options to the table. So, concrete for us was a means to the end. I don't personally, and I don't know that anybody in the company, including Charlie, has any particular *love* of concrete, but we *love* what it enables us to do, and that helps us capture a project because we have the skills to utilize concrete in a variety of ways that other people don't.

Adamson: If I tease out what you said, you probably have answered this question. This is kind of a chicken-and-egg question. Do you think design/build drives this technical innovation in the area of concrete, or do you think slipforming and some of these

techniques that Pankow made a name for itself could have been developed independent of the design/build approach?

Inman: Yes, but design/build benefits the technology process and vice versa. For instance, you can't just slipform any concrete building. It has to be designed to enable it to slipform. You can visualize clean, consistent shapes, vertically. You don't want columns reducing in size, as an example. You don't want setbacks any more often. The purest slipform, of course, is a grain silo, and we tried to make grain silos out of residences, out of high-rise residences. But, of course, architects always want to cantilever them and tilt them over and set them back and do all sorts of other things. And so if you're going to slipform, you have to have a clean structure to make it efficient. And when you do start having to deal with some of these other issues and you can't control them through the design process, then you lose that technology. That gets removed from the table of options. So you throw your hands up and say, "Okay, we can't slipform this building. We have to do something else," because it's got to be set back or it has to be whatever, and slipform's going to be too inefficient. So, yes, having a control over the design process certainly benefits the company and its technology menu, and the technologies that are on that menu benefit the design/build process.

Adamson : Do you have a favorite Pankow building?

Inman: That's a good question. You know, no. No, I really don't, and I've thought about that before and I'm just reflecting again to make sure. Of all the buildings I've

built, my favorite building is—I have two favorite buildings, and it's the first and second buildings I ever built, started as a superintendent. I built a couple hundred of others. Those are my favorite for a variety of reasons. No, I don't have a favorite Pankow building. There are a lot of fine buildings, but no.

Adamson: I think it's a slightly different question, but it might be the same answer. Did you have a favorite project, Pankow project you worked on?

Inman: Probably the Pacific Telephone project in San Francisco because it was the first one that I ran from offsite as a project manager offsite, project sponsor, or whatever we would call us, in retrospect, in those days, and the pleasure of working with Alan Murk. And it was a big project and we were able to apply a lot of the Pankow techniques. Our production was incredible. I mean, we achieved some very, very efficient results that I suspect probably still hold records within the Pankow system. It had nothing to do with me. It had to do with the building was designed to be efficient and Alan Murk did a wonderful job with the rest of the crew, did a wonderful job with building it, and produced some excellent, excellent results. It was just fun, and we had no major problems.

Adamson: Very good. In the short paragraph blurb you sent me that summarizes your career chronologically, in 1988 you were sent to Hawaii—I think I have this right—as vice president in charge of construction. Why was that?

Inman: Well, good question. The company, particularly in Hawaii, was in a real peak period. It was a high point in construction. The current workload under way there was almost overwhelming, and the upcoming workload that George had anticipated or was anticipating was going to be phenomenal, and they needed somebody there to manage the construction. George was certainly going to be still going to manage the office, run the office, and handle all of the major development relationships, sell the projects and all the rest of it. But we needed somebody to manage. And I don't remember whether there was somebody. There wasn't anybody immediately prior to me, but there was somebody earlier that had been there in that role. Bill—

Adamson: Bill Heine?

Inman: Bill Heine, yeah. And he was doing a wonderful job. Great guy. I need to make a comment to you about people leaving the company. But in any event, George and Charlie decided that they needed somebody there, and for whatever the reasons, they chose me.

[interruption]

Inman: So the company sent me to Hawaii, and Russ is the one who made it clear to me that that was really what Charlie and the company wanted me to do, and that it was really a good opportunity and it was obviously going to be a great opportunity for Rik

[Kunnath] to take over, who had matured and was doing a wonderful job with me in San Francisco and deserved the chance to run the office.

So I went to Hawaii to manage the construction. That was my job, was to manage the construction projects. Of course, one or a couple of them were Pankow developments, so we had the same symbiosis that we always have on company development projects and whatnot. George was involved, of course, in all the developments out there, and Charlie was as well. On a day-to-day basis, George was my boss, my client, and made things interesting at times.

Adamson: Now, just to clarify, vice president in charge of construction would be different than operations manager, like what Alan Murk or Bob Carlson had been doing, or was that essentially what you were doing?

Inman: Pretty much the same. A little bit different, but pretty much the same. In San Francisco and in Los Angeles, we still had the project sponsorship, guys like Rik and myself and Dean that were managing contracts, and people managing projects from the office. We still had an operations manager who managed the superintendents and was responsible for getting the equipment, the tower cranes back and forth from job to job, all that kind of real-world stuff, the nuts and bolts of building projects.

In Hawaii, both roles sort of fell together, just the way we had been doing it there and the way it was. We had people in the office that were really doing project sponsorship functions, and so supervising them was part of that, and also dealing directly

with the superintendents. The superintendents reported to me, although like in the case of Red, he and George had a twenty-year relationship, or whatever it was.

Adamson: They went back to Kiewit.

Inman: They went back to nursery school together or something like that, but they were tight as ticks, so although nominally Red reported to me, he had George's ear every time he wanted it.

Adamson: Can you just comment generally, not even particular to Pankow, but including, I guess, your Pankow perspective, but how did Hawaii and the mainland differ as a construction environment, if at all?

Inman: Well, I don't know that it particularly did. I would say in some respects they were probably a little more hang-loose, a little more free-wheeling than we were in San Francisco or L.A. But yet when I think about people like Bill Heine, who came out of the U.S. Navy, very organized, very detailed, very much in control and whatnot, they did all the same things we did, and maybe, even in a lot of respects, better. So I'd say overall, no, it was pretty much the same.

Adamson: I don't know if this would have fell to you if you were in charge of construction, but did issues of land use or subcontractors or labor or any of these things

come up in Hawaii that wouldn't have come up on the mainland? Or once a project was going, it was just pretty much the same?

Inman: Yes, same kind of things. I mean, you always had the labor-union issues and OSHA safety issues, and land use I would only get involved with peripherally. I'd talk with George about this project, and we'll need to go through these processes in getting a zoning change or something like that, but I wouldn't directly be doing that.

Adamson: You wanted to comment on people leaving the company.

Inman: Yes. One of the things that was very interesting about Charlie Pankow and the Pankow culture, Charlie, in my observation and my belief—others may disagree—would resent any individual who went to work with another company, and would take it personally. But if that individual went off and tried to do something entrepreneurial, or start his own company, or doing something like Bill Heine did, going to Austin, Texas, and starting a company [American Constructors] with escapees from Pankow, Charlie seemed to always encourage that after the fact. Not encourage them to leave, but once they'd left, he was always complimentary and ideologically supportive of people breaking off and doing their own—and I think that it's a reflection of—he and the guys had left Kiewit to do the same thing. There have been a number of people, good people, who have left Pankow and started a whole new life of their own and they've done well. Although it hadn't been encouraged, it was looked upon favorably. I thought that was

very interesting and quite a compliment to Charlie. I think one exception to that was just before my time in San Francisco, one of the company's clients—

Adamson: Is this the Webcor people?

Inman: Yes.

Adamson: Borel?

Inman: Borel. Borel Development or whatever. I can't remember the developer's name. Anyway, he took two of the company's best people and set them up in business, and Charlie never quite got over that. I don't blame him, because not only did he lose two key people, but he lost a client.⁶

Adamson: Right. Double whammy.

Inman: Yeah.

Adamson: Just to continue on with your résumé, then a year and a half later or so, you left the company. Why was that?

⁶ Webcor was founded in 1971 by William Wilson III with Ross Edwards and David Boyd. Boyd and Edwards left Pankow to join Wilson, who approached them while they worked on projects associated with the development of the Borel Estate in San Mateo, California. Today Webcor Builders is a general contractor based in San Mateo, with offices in San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Hayward, California. It focuses on office and commercial construction. Its Silicon Valley clients have included Adobe, Electronic Arts, Oracle, Palm, Siebel, Sun, and Symantec. (From the Webcor Builders Web site, accessed 9 October 2008. See also the oral histories of Dean Browning [pp. 4–5], Alan Murk [p. 59], and Lee Sandahl [pp. 40–1] in this series.)

Inman: I was asked to resign by George because he expressed the feeling that the company needed to go in a new direction. We had just hired another key, experienced, high-level construction manager from another company in Hawaii, very good man, and George expressed the need to give him some room to mature and develop and establish himself, and felt that it would be in the best interest of the company and, in his words, for me as well, that we part company. It was obvious that he had Charlie's full support in that, although Charlie never discussed it with me. This was all between George and I; there was never anything from Charlie. One of the things about Charlie and his management style that always was of some concern to me, is that on delicate, difficult personnel issues like that, he retreated from formal combat. Usually Russ was the bearer of news, and to me that was a disappointment.

Adamson: Of course, George, I think, if I have my chronology right, was gone about three years later.

Inman: Yes.

Adamson: But we'll set that aside. I guess the general question is, Hawaii was coming to the end of this boom period, and these weren't issues in your particular cases, but did this business cycle, just from a general personnel point of view, create turmoil, having this big boom and then Japanese investors pulling out, losing jobs, was there a churning of people generally, or what was going on in the Hawaii office at this time?

Inman: Well, it was crazy. It was crazy. We were doing work. We were doing more work than we could properly manage. We'd lost a couple of people, like our project engineer on the Honolulu Park Place halfway through the project. He went to work with a former employee right in the middle of a project—the worst thing a person can do. I mean, sometimes you have to do things in a certain time, but you always try to finish and leave clean, and that's the whole message in the industry. Everybody in the industry, most everybody, used to adhere to that and acknowledge it. You don't leave the job in the lurch. It's too dangerous. It's too crazy. It's too expensive.

So we were very, very busy. We were hiring people. I was interviewing constantly, bringing some people over from the mainland, interviewing, doing hiring. George anticipated a lot more work coming on. We were trying to do work now and build our organization so we could handle future work, and yet still try and take care of business and get the jobs that we had under way. It was a very busy time.

The shutdown of the industry was almost instantaneous. It was just incredible how fast the market turned around in Hawaii. It went from total boom to almost bust just virtually overnight. It was amazing. An example, the Honolulu Park Place: We got the real estate commitment from the state so that we could freeze the deposits that the buyers had made. There's a certain period of time in the development of a project when the buyer can pull out. But we got to the point where we had the legal right to hold deposits, and this happened just like two or three months before the crash. So that project was sold out and it stayed sold out. Some individuals got hurt because they were speculating and

didn't have the resources or whatever, but the building, the project was successful because we were locked in.

We had another project that we had just started that didn't have that comfort level. It sold out also, but when this crunch happened, the collapse of the economy, the buyers all went away. So there we were with a building just being finished up and we didn't have hardly any buyers. It was very difficult for the company to then sell in the bad economy. So, yes, it happened very, very quickly.

Adamson: Was the fact that George did so many condo buildings in Hawaii just the market, or was there something—I know there were a few condos in L.A., but it wasn't really something they did a lot of.

Inman: Right. I don't remember the details, but California law and Hawaii law were a little different. There wasn't that much of a market in those days for high-rise residential. There were hotels, but not high-rise residential. There always was in Hawaii because of limited land. So really our condo works got started there just because that was available work. Again, we had the concrete structural skills that just fit perfectly.

Adamson: So after you left Pankow, what did you do then?

Inman: I went to work for Taisei, which was a multinational company headquartered in Japan, and they had been one of our clients. They were one of our clients in Los Angeles [on Shoreline Square, Long Beach, completed in 1988]. I had, in my office in San

Francisco, hosted two of their engineers for a year or so, and in Hawaii we were talking to them about doing a project. As a matter of fact, the second day, the day after I arrived in Hawaii, I was asked to go up and look at a project on the Big Island of Hawaii with Taisei personnel, because we were hoping to do a project with them up on the observatory on the mountain. Anyway, so I knew the Taisei people. I had talked with them after I left the company. Because they were a client that I was working with, I went to them and explained that I wasn't with the company anymore, and that they needed to have their relationship with George from now on, type of thing, and they asked me to help them on a consulting basis for a while in doing some things on another project that they were working on. So I did that while I was fishing around trying to reinvent my life.

Then they asked me to come and work full-time, so I did, and stayed with them until my wife and I decided in '96 that we needed to get back to California and be near our parents and grandchildren and whatnot.

Adamson: How did it come about that you helped Pankow with these projects in Hawaii a couple years ago?

Inman: Well, part of my satisfaction with the career that I've had with the company and why I'd do it over again, even with all the bumps, if I had to, is because of the people that I work with. Part of that process was, I think, most of the people that I worked with believed in me and believed that I was trying to help them and believed that we were working together and accomplishing something as a team. That was my whole message, and I think it worked on a lot of the guys. I think a lot of the guys remember that.

Since I left the company, I have kept in fairly frequent touch with several of the people in the company, including Tom [Verti] and Dean Browning particularly, and Al Fink over in Hawaii. Not as much with Rik as I would have liked. I think Rik always felt a little bad about me going to Hawaii, him taking over, doing so well in San Francisco, all to his own credit, and me having the problems that I ended up with in Hawaii. Anyway, but Rik and I haven't kept as close as I would have liked. But anyway, the guys, I think, had respect for my skills and my attitudes.

I've kept in touch with Tom over the years, and we've met at ACI. We just got chatting at an ACI meeting, and he kiddingly said, "When you want to come back to work?"

I said, "When you want me back?"

He said, "Huh?"

I said, "Huh?" [laughs]

Then he explained to me they had this same problem like they had in 1988, they had too much work, not enough people, crazy business, can't get subcontractors, everything else. They've got young people that are good people, but they need a little gray hair. They need a little mentoring. They need a little reality check. They need a little help. And they've got these four projects that need to get finished by the end of the year or so. Holy mackerel.

So my wife and I talked it over, and she thought it was a great idea, get me out of her hair for a while. She could make a trip or two to Hawaii. Why not? [laughs] So I did. It was a lot of fun to get together again with a lot of the same guys and, of course, a bunch of new ones for a while. But again, those are tough times, and those were tough

times because when business is too good, it's bad. Your productivity goes down. Your quality goes down. You make mistakes. All sorts of issues.

[begin file 2]

Adamson: One of the things I wanted to ask you about was Russ Osterman, because I'm unable to interview him. Especially the people that worked closely with him, I like to ask them to talk a little bit about Russ and your working relationship with him and his role in the company and so forth at the time while you worked.

Inman: Well, to me, Russ assumed a variety of roles. He was Charlie's right-hand man. He made things happen. He and Charlie were linked arm-in-arm most of the time. But Russ was the one who was crunching the numbers on development deals, and he was the one to set things up and made things happen. He was certainly Charlie's confidante and his X.O. Like I said earlier, if Russ told you something, take that one to the bank, because it either had Charlie's direction behind it or it would be exactly in concert with what Charlie subsequently would confirm, or whatever. If Russ said it, it was gold and you could depend on it.

Russ was less intimidating than Charlie. To me—and I don't know about others—he [Charlie] was a little bit intimidating. I always was just a little bit uncomfortable, not because of Charlie, just because of who he was. But Russ was always more approachable. I remember one time I needed to fire an employee for cause. This employee happened to be a very good friend of Charlie's and I didn't know how to

handle it. So I sought Russ and asked his advice on how to confront and deal with it. He just said, "Get face to face with Charlie and tell him. That's what you've got to do. Don't do this, or that, go around the corner or anything else. Just confront Charlie and tell him what your reasons are and what your problem is and what you need to do about it."

So I thought, "Well, this is the day I get fired." [laughs]

Anyway, Russ happened to be with me when I talked to Charlie about it. Of course, Charlie had to think through it a little bit, but thought through it and came out and supported me. We made arrangements to take the action that was necessary to take, but to do it in a manner that was correct and diplomatic and minimized any issues. So it all worked out fine, and Charlie was very supportive about it. But anyway, Russ was the one that facilitated that happening correctly.

Russ was a guy that I think people could go to that were a little uncomfortable going directly to Charlie, maybe because they thought that Russ really knew what Charlie was thinking, or maybe like in my case, it would help how to tell Charlie something. Russ seemed to have a sympathetic ear and was good. Again, I don't know about his being a manager. The two of them were so into doing everything themselves, and Bob Carlson running the show, making things happen in the field and everything, that you never really knew specifically, but certainly they got the job done. I have a very high regard for Russ.

Adamson: You wanted me to ask you about management at Pankow?

Inman: Yes. One thing that I hadn't really mentioned before, one of the quirks of the Pankow management culture was: throw two guys into the ring with a sword in each hand and let them fight it out and see who comes out the winner. That was sort of the company's management style internally. For the life of me, I never could understand it. I didn't like it. I detested it. I resisted it. I avoided it. I am not a political person. I was not a political person. I refused to play those intra-company rivalry games others played.

Charlie, specifically, and others in the company pitted people one against the other within the company. Why? It makes no sense. It was in my best interest as a company stockholder and as a career company person to have everybody in the company succeed to their maximum. Why not? It was in everybody's best interest to do so. Why try to cut somebody down? It was demonstrably counterproductive. Obviously you have people that need to leave or whatever, or choose to for whatever the reasons are. But I got pitted against Dean [Stephan]. Dean and I were very good friends. We did a project in Austin together. I thought the world of him. I think the world of him today, professionally. And we were pretty close when we started out at Pankow. But over a period of time, there became a rivalry. I never understood it. There was no reason for there to be a rivalry. It just made no sense, but Charlie did that. And Charlie did that with other people.

In my observation—others will tell you their stories—Charlie deliberately pitted Tom [Verti] against Rik Kunnath. The two of them tried to work together and balance that out, back and forth, for several years. Charlie would do that. He did that with several other pairs of people that I remember, and I could never understand why he did

that. And the company, I think, suffered from it. That was one thing that just didn't work well.

Adamson: The people pitted against one another competing for, what was the prize?

Inman: That's the question. What was the prize? I didn't want to be the number one person in the company. If it had evolved that way, okay. But I wasn't seeking it. I wasn't trying to be better than anybody else. I was trying to be the best I could be, and I was trying to have our people be the best they could be and do what we could accomplish.

To my knowledge, there was not a prize. If one person got a ten percent share of some project and I only got a five percent, I may whine a little bit, but not a big deal. But did I want to replace George or replace Charlie? No. I don't know that anybody else necessarily did, either. But it was a technique that Charlie used for whatever his reasons, and I guess he thought that he would make better people out of both sides by that. Sure didn't work for me. I resisted it.

Adamson: Was it something that evolved as the company got more people in it, or was this something that you noticed all the way from the get-go?

Inman: Probably evolved as we grew, and in my opinion, partly because Charlie had to, by necessity, relinquish some management responsibility and was uncomfortable doing so. So this maybe helped him cope with that. I'm surmising. I don't know.

Adamson: You may have left earlier and not be able to answer this, and I don't know what the timing was, but there was a point where Charlie did relinquish, or at least not become so involved in the operations of the company. It may have been in the nineties. I'm not sure. That's on the one hand. On the other hand, people have mentioned that Charlie never really retired and he was always, till the very end, sort of behind the scenes, the person with the last word, and that that made the transition a little tricky or trickier than it had to be, or should have been.

Inman: After Dean [Stephan] retired and left the company, however the timing went, and this was after my time with the company, but just in listening to the guys talk and observing and whatnot, I've picked up pieces of it. There seemed to be a period there where Charlie increasingly needed to relinquish more of the management of certainly the day-to-day activities in the company, and probably went through a lot of angst in doing so. Probably up to his deathbed, he probably had a fair amount of angst, if not a lot, about letting anybody really have the reins.

Adamson: I apologize in advance if these last few questions seem like I'm jumping around, but if you go back to the reorganization in the mid eighties, from your perspective, what did that do for the company? People have mentioned that Charlie's motivation was to change the ownership such that the company could outlive him as a motivation. As a practical matter, did it have an impact on the operation of the company?

Inman: Not really. We were still doing the same kinds of things. It served to solidify any concerns that any of us might have had that we really had a future and that Charlie wouldn't just someday suddenly say, "Well I've made my bazillion dollars. I'm going to shut the doors tomorrow," which, up until that point, he had a right to do, certainly. So all of us were obviously not concerned, but there was always that thought, is, "What is my future with the company if I continue to work hard and do well with the others around me? Am I going to have a place when Charlie decides to leave, or will there be a company?"

So I think that set some reassurance in some people's minds. I don't think that any of us were terribly concerned about it. But I think that it certainly confirmed, and we all believed, that Charlie wanted some longevity, although that was contradictory to his management style, which was the sole dictator. [laughs] Benevolent dictator, but still, sole dictator. But, yeah, we were convinced that he wanted the company to live on and to grow, which it has done and done very well. That in itself has surprised a number of people that thought that the company would dissolve on his death. But it certainly hasn't. In fact, it's done very well, thank you.

Adamson: At that point, at the reorganization, this was a couple of years before you were sent to Hawaii. At that point were you still envisioning remaining in the position you were in the San Francisco office all the way through to retirement?

Inman: Yeah. You know, it's silly, silly of me, but I was doing what I wanted to do. I was trying to do what Charlie wanted done, and we were happy. I had no desire to go to

Los Angeles. If I ever thought about running the company, I would want to run it from San Francisco. I wouldn't want to run it from Los Angeles. I didn't have any desire to live in Los Angeles. I didn't have any desire to live in Hawaii. So there was nowhere for me to go except just build it bigger and better, but I wasn't overly concerned one way or the other about it. I didn't have a long-term game plan.

Adamson: HR seems to be a more recent function developed at Pankow, but during these years, did you have annual reviews or just daily communication? How did you get like a performance review other than the fact that you still had your job and you were getting paid, and that sort of thing?

Inman: You got it on a daily basis because Charlie spent a lot of time in San Francisco. [laughs] But again, he was always diplomatic and careful about all that kind of thing. But, no, we had no formal reviews. That came later. We started reviewing the younger people during my time, quite religiously, but I can't remember ever getting a performance review, a formal one.

Adamson: The annual meetings seemed to be the occasion of bringing the company together, or at least the occasion where everyone could hear about what everyone else was doing. Were there other things that were done to sort of make everyone feel a part of all one company, wherever they worked?

Inman: Not enough, probably, but some. One of the roles of whoever happened to be the operations manager on the mainland was to spread the word, spread the word to different projects in telling this superintendent what the other superintendents were doing and talking about the problems they had, sharing experiences, and that type of thing. So we really focused on that, and did a lot of that. Of course, we as offsite managers would do the same thing with projects. When I'd go to Portland, I'd tell the guys there about stuff we were doing at the job in Redwood City or wherever, and that type of thing, back and forth, so we did quite a bit of that. We had a newsletter, I think, didn't we?

Adamson: Yes, starting about the twentieth anniversary of the company, '83, '84.

Inman: Yes, something like that. I remember the concept, but I can't visualize one. But anyway, we had that. My recollection is that that was good, is that helped a bit. This was, of course, in the days before e-mail. Now the superintendents are back and forth and e-mail each other and there's a lot more communication going on than there used to be.

That was always an issue, is keeping people connected. Of course, I can remember being in Kentucky. Probably I would call Los Angeles because that project was actually being handled out of L.A. So I would call Ralph—I can't remember his name—who was a sponsor there. I would talk to the folks there. I'd gossip a little bit with the secretary, and the secretaries, of course, always tell you what they wanted you to hear, but they'd be willing to tell you whatever it was they wanted you to hear. So we all had that kind of communication. We'd be talking daily to the main office from a remote

location, either to Doug Craker or to the project sponsor, or maybe to the operations guy or to accounting or something.

Adamson: So what is the best way of understanding the Pankow Company's contribution to the building industry? Either in terms of reputation or legacy, how do others view the company?

Inman: I would like to think that the element of the industry that knows us appreciates us for our entrepreneurial spirit, our direct focus on accomplishing project goals, for doing so in an innovative manner, both utilizing technical issues like concrete and other systems and whatnot, as well as in our management techniques. We've been complimented by various elements in the industry for our design/build delivery pioneering and by our risk-limitation contract language and such things, and for our willingness to fund research for new techniques that are open to the industry to utilize. For me, that's the legacy. It's a hard-driven, straight, focused, purposeful, trusted and trusting group of people, working hard, with some willingness to take some risk, manage that risk, and expect a reward if we succeed. That's the company.

Adamson: That's good. The last question I have is, what traits or what characteristics do you think made Charlie Pankow a successful businessperson, not necessarily just a builder, but a success in business?

Inman: Boy, I don't know. I wish I could really identify those and clone some of them from him, because not only was he able to build this very impressive company, but he was very smart, very, very smart. I've told you before about his uncanny ability to sense trouble and to steer the company away from trouble, but he was also extraordinarily smart with his money. He was willing to share some of it with those that produced for him, and that was very positive, but he was very smart with his money in the way he capitalized and kept the company capitalized and everything.

He never lost sight of the objectives of relationships with the bonding companies, with the American Concrete Institute, and banks, all those kinds of folks that are really important to a successful business. He never got so arrogant, like so many successful people in businesses do, and in our own construction business, never got arrogant to the point of defeating the purpose he set out to do. He was too smart for that.

Adamson: I think we'll leave it there. I thank you for your time.

[End of interview]