Oral History Interview

with

DAVID BOYD

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By

Michael R. Adamson

Note: The interview begins with Mr. Boyd using a notepad to describe the design and construction of the Holiday Inn, Toledo, Ohio, which Charles Pankow, Inc., completed in 1970.

Boyd: With Charlie Pankow in a bar, with literally a bar napkin, and the [Holiday Inn] hotel is nineteen stories, so they went like this, [demonstrates], so many stories and they put the elevations on, because these were, like, nine-and-a-half-foot floors or, floor-to-floor, probably, nine-and-a-half, ten feet. The ground floor is higher. And then with the garage, they went [demonstrates], and these were, like, eight-and-a-half or nine-foot, floor-to-floor. So the elevations weren't matching, and they were trying to find a floor that was close enough to put a bridge across. So they just did all these lines here and then they listed an elevation. Then they said, "Oh, these two are only a foot apart. We'll put the bridge across here."

Adamson: Charlie's doing the drawing?

Boyd: Yeah, Charlie and the architect, and Russ [Osterman] might have been there. I don't know. So they found this particular floor, so he gives it to the architects, "Okay,

this is how I want you to draw it up." But these lines he put here were thirteen lines, and the deal was for ten stories.

Adamson: On the parking garage?

Boyd: Yeah. They made a deal. They'd build ten stories of garage. Now, this was way before I got there. And then the architect go ahead and developed the plans on thirteen stories, so I get a set of plans and it's thirteen stories. So I built thirteen stories because, see, the building department [approved the plans] and everything. And the funny thing is Russ is buying all the subs. Well, no, he wasn't buying all the subs. He was buying electrical, mechanical, plumbing, and elevators, and I bought everything else on the job. But anyhow, he used an electrical engineer that they used a lot in L.A., and when the project was completely over, this guy bills Pankow for three extra floors of design. And Russ says, "What the hell you talking about? This is a ten-story garage."

He said, "No, sir. It's thirteen."

Russ says, "No way," and then he calls me.

I said, "Russ, it's thirteen. It's always been thirteen."

He says, "Where did that come from?" Well, he'd let the precast contract—lots of precast components on the garage. He'd let it for thirteen stories.

I said, "Well, look at the deal that you wrote for the precast. It says thirteen stories."

He wouldn't believe me. He flew out there and stood in the street and counted them. [laughs]

Adamson: He had to see it to believe it.

Boyd: Yeah. That was funny. It wasn't funny at the time. But they got paid for those floors. The owner definitely needed them. I mean, this garage was totally full all the time, and he used valet parking people down the street and everything. So they were definitely needed. And there was a quirk to the law that said if it's beneficial use and they need it, they're using it then. They got paid for it.

Adamson: Well, why don't we just start at the beginning and we'll come back to that, I'm sure, in the story. So I just start with your background at Purdue and how you ended up at Pankow.

Boyd: Okay. Well, I ended up at Purdue because I really wanted to be an engineer. I was living in a small town in Indiana, and so I did a little research and, they said, this is really close. It's like 70 miles away. So that's where I ended up going. I didn't know Pankow had been there at the time. I mean, I didn't even know who he was. But come close to graduation time, they [the Arcadia, California-based building division of Peter Kiewit Sons', headed by Charlie Pankow] sent a notice that they wanted to interview some students, and somebody, one of the professors, recommended me. So I said, "I'd really like to talk to you."

And they said, "Well, sure. We can't send anybody out. Would you fly to L.A.?"

I said, "Wow. Fly to L.A.? So, yeah, okay."

So I flew out there, and Charlie picked me up. Yeah, I was in the hotel, I can't remember where, somewhere in Pasadena. He picked me up and we had breakfast, and then he took me around the projects. I remember this one specifically, First American, downtown.[1] He took me around one or two, three, maybe, projects, and I was sold. He was a magnificent salesman. Yeah, he was really good. I've only seen one guy as good in my lifetime, but he was very good.

So I was all excited, and graduated, took one week off, my dad helped me buy a car, put everything in the car, and I drove out to L.A. So I was supposed to be at work on a Monday and I got there early, so I was there on Saturday, so I stayed in some motel or something. Monday morning, I call the office and say, "Where am I supposed to be? In the office?"

And they said, "Well, we don't know." Charlie wasn't there. He didn't come in till ten o'clock or something. So, "Just come to the office."

So I came to the office and waited around, and he came in and he said, "I want you to go out to Butter-Nut[2]—this deal [points to article of the project that appeared in the March-April 1961 issue of *Kie-ways*, the company magazine of Peter Kiewit Sons']—"and see a guy named Ralph Tice."

I said, "Hell, I've got . . . I need directions." Going on the freeways, I'm going through that interchange. Oh, man.

So I got there. You know, I guess I must have been—it must have been earlier. It had to have been maybe been ten-thirty or eleven o'clock. And Ralph Tice got right in

[1] Mr. Boyd actually means the American Cement Building, completed by Peter Kiewit Sons' near MacArthur Park in 1961. The First American Building was completed in San Jose, California, by Charles Pankow, Inc., in 1967.

[2] The construction site for a coffee roasting plant for Butter-Nut Foods Company in Commerce, California.

my face, boom, “What are you doing? You were supposed to be here at eight o’clock,” or seven o’clock. He said, “Goddamn it.” He wouldn’t let me explain. He said, “You’ve got one strike right now, that one strike.” [laughter] He was tough, but he was fair. He ended up being really tough but fair. He would expect a lot of you. He drove people hard.

So I started there and then I went to—it’s where Knott’s Berry Farm is. I forget the name of the town. He built another building similar to this.

Adamson: Buena Park?

Boyd: Buena Park.

Adamson: And where did you end up starting? Did you buy a house?

Boyd: No, I didn’t buy a house till I was up in Washington State. So we were bouncing around Southern Cal, let’s see, that job and that job. So I was down there about a year, a little over a year. Then Charlie said, “Head up to Northern California. You’re going to work on the San Mateo Bridge.”

I said, “Okay. What shall I do with my apartment?”

He said, “I think this will be temporary. Just keep your apartment down there.” So I did. I was actually living with another guy from Purdue who I happened to find was down there. He was working for Bechtel, so we shared an apartment. We did all those beach bars and everything. [laughs]

So I moved up here and I rented a house with, like, four carpenters on the job. They had some foreman there, said, "We've got an extra bedroom," so I stayed there.

And that became a real boring job, but it was pretty amazing because Charlie had bid the job on the basis of slipforming piles horizontally. It was a doughnut shape. They had a void in the middle, and so they're friction piles, so they figured they had twice the friction, whatever, in the bay mud out there, driving these piles. We set up this casting yard with about 900 feet long—no. The prestress beds would have been about 900 feet. This thing must have been about way over a quarter-mile long. It went out into the [San Francisco] Bay. The gantry cranes went out over the water. Three gantry cranes we'd take—and 900-foot-long pile beds, and we stretched the [stressing] cables six feet. I'd go out there with my tape and say, "I hope nothing breaks out here," all the cables, nine-sixteenth-inch cables.

So you'd have one, two, three, four beds, and you'd stress these cables and then you'd put in bulkheads, create different-length piles, whatever they were calling for. The lengths changed as you went out in the water [which deepened as you did so]. And then we had to [add] a steam heat—steam heat the concrete all night long. We developed, like, 4,000 pounds [per square inch] overnight, compressive strength with a zero-slump concrete. I mean, it was [a] totally unworkable [mix], just zero-slump, and it took a long time [to perfect the slipform system]. The slipform model that we were trying to use wasn't working well, [but we] finally got it working. But his whole [price] was based on that. That [bridge] is four and a half miles from Hayward to the high-rise section. That four and a half miles, can you guess what the contract price was for four and a half miles of that bridge?

Adamson: In 1961.

Boyd: Thirteen million.

Adamson: Thirteen million.

Boyd: Thirteen million dollars, and that included all the costs of building that yard and leasing that land and everything. Thirteen million dollars. Hell of a deal. But it was all that innovative idea about slipforming these piles horizontally. Of course, there was millions of feet of those things.

I said, "Charlie, I'm really getting bored here. This is like going to Ford and building cars," once it got going, but there was a lot of work to get it activated in the right way and everything.

So then he saved me from going in the Army. He said, "Okay, you're going to Colorado Springs, build an Air Force building."

Adamson: With [Ralph] Tice?

Boyd: Yeah. Tice wanted me back. Now, the thing about Ralph Tice, a very hard guy to work for, but he always went to bat for you. I mean I got bonuses. I knew he was fighting for me all the way.

So he took me there. I went there, and when I was there I got married. I was dating this girl from L.A., long distance, but, I mean, we were basically just writing letters—we didn't see each other much. We got engaged while I was there, and then when that project was pretty much finishing up, I went on a honeymoon. But I took her car from L.A. to—we both had a car—took her car to Colorado Springs and took my car back to the Midwest to meet her parents and my parents, little honeymoon, about two-week honeymoon, came back to Colorado Springs, and Ralph says, "You've been transferred to San Diego."

I said, "Oh, no. Now, I've got to drive both these cars home." Now we have to drive two cars to San Diego in tandem.

Got there. That was a great place, San Diego, loved that place. That was the Hillcrest Medical project. That was Alan Murk, worked for Alan Murk.

Adamson: The other picture I have of you. It's in the book.[3]

Boyd: That was a good project, except for the architect, who was such a jerk. The guy was a total jerk. He never would give you any information, you know, any selection of products and so forth. It was a good project.

Of all the guys I worked for, Alan Murk was a perfect gentleman. He was a really, really good person. In fact, when I got this [book], I read it. I found him in Walnut Creek. I talked to him on the phone. He's, like, ninety now and he has COPD real bad.

[3] Michael R. Adamson, *A Better Way to Build: A History of the Pankow Companies* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2013), 66.

We were both smoking then. I said, "Alan, we got to quit." But actually, I quit when we were working on the—I'm diverging here.

Adamson: That's okay.

Boyd: Okay. So I went to that [Hillcrest] project, and then while that project was going on, everybody left [Kiewit]. Pankow pulled out. Alan Murk left.

Adamson: Right. This is the summer of [1963].

Boyd: Everybody's gone then, Loetterle, Henderson, Alan [Murk], all of them were leaving. But the good news is I became project manager, like, overnight to finish that project. Hell, I was making less than a carpenter. [laughs] But, yeah, they got my salary up after that. So I thought, yeah, this is pretty neat, being a project manager at twenty-five years old. No, in like, 1963. Twenty-three or twenty-four years old. Twenty-four.

Charlie kept working me and working me to go with him. Not at first, but once everybody left, whenever he was in the San Diego area, he'd schedule to have dinner with me and he just worked me and worked me to come. I said, "Charlie, I'm really happy. I'm running the project. I mean this is my ambition and I'm doing it, youngest age."

He said, "Na, you've got to come. You've got to come." He finally wore me down, and so I came. That was Sixty-Four. Went into San Francisco, and we had two slipform buildings at Turk and Eddy Streets.

Adamson: I was going to ask you about that, but I'll come back to my questions.

Boyd: That was amazing. That was so intense because we're slipforming every day. There's two buildings and a courtyard between them and then two buildings split in half, so slip one, slip two, slip three. So there was always a slipform ahead, and the same thing going on over here. So every day we had a slipform going and we're pouring a deck somewhere on the other side. So it was [demonstrates], like that, the preparation of all this, and I was responsible for everything out there. It was a really intense deal, but we got it up.

Adamson: It's my understanding that you replaced Lloyd Loetterle on that.

Boyd: Lloyd was there.

Adamson: He was still there when you showed up?

Boyd: Yeah, he was there for a little while and then he left.

Adamson: Do you know why he left?

Boyd: Harold Henderson was there too. Harold Henderson became the project manager. They always called me a project engineer. No matter what you were doing, you were a

project engineer until you became project manager, then the other way with the guys coming from the field are journeymen, foremen, general foremen, basically. They could come to the top, too. Like I said, that's the way all these guys came to the top, through the trades.

So now the project finished. Then they moved me to San Jose and I was able to stay in San Jose for, like, three or four years, which was really nice, to have a home, and I was working on different projects around San Jose.

Adamson: You mentioned First American.

Boyd: Yeah, the first job was 1625 The Alameda, and Alan Murk was the project manager, so I was back with Alan again. I love that man. He's so fair; he's so good.

And that's when I said, "Hey, Alan, we've got to quit smoking." One day I was ordering concrete. That's when I smoked three packs of Pall Malls, those long cigarettes with no filters in them. [laughs] I was killing myself. I was so addicted to those cigarettes. One day I was ordering concrete and I had a cigarette going and I picked up the phone and I was talking to the guy about concrete order, and I pulled another cigarette out and did this [demonstrates]. I had two cigarettes at the same time. I said, "Alan, I'm quitting. You want to quit with me?"

"I'll try it." He did for about a day.

I went home and my wife was out of town on vacation. Every night I went home from work and went right to bed. I was so miserable. And after two weeks, I was cured, cold turkey. I was done. I felt so happy to do that. Too bad Alan didn't quit.

So Alameda, then we went to First American together. And what happened after First American? I think I was given my first project. The first big project I had as project manager with Pankow was an IBM Building in Menlo Park. So I went there and did that project as the project manager, and then went back to San Jose State College and Harold Henderson was the project manager, but he was having a lot of health problems. He was only there about, like, half-time because he was really sick.

So they called me assistant project manager, the "Waffle Building," did slipform again, slipform, slipform, slipform everywhere.[4] And then after that project, that's when I went to Renton, Washington, and that's when I bought my first home. I moved from San Jose to Washington.

Adamson: That was a Winmar project?

Boyd: No, that was not a Winmar. It might have been associates of Winmar. I don't remember the owner's name, but Winmar was not the owner's name. It might have been an associate. Well, I think the Winmar project was in Bellevue, the tall bank building that Alan Murk was building. I was assigned to a six-story building right near Boeing's plant.[5] They were testing. First 747 came flying over the building. [laughs]

We were doing that precast system that Charlie used through all those projects. He even buried a precast yard in the parking lot lower, so he could pave over [without removing it], not take it out later. Precast everything there, the beams, then used these

[4] The dormitory building constructed at San Jose City College (now San Jose State University), Joe West Hall, was nicknamed the "Waffle Tower" for its distinctive concrete window frames that Charles Pankow, Inc., as contractor, precast in a casting yard at the job site.
[5] The Evergreen Building, a 98,000-square-foot office building completed in 1969.

panels on the floors, slabs. They were shaped like—you'd have beams that, like, typically sixteen feet in center and then these floor panels had little tabs on them. They look like this. [demonstrates] They sit on the beams. Span across this way, and they were, like, three inches thick, prestressed strands going through this way, light reinforcing that way.

So you just Tinker Toy them, set them on these beams, and then you pour two inches of topping over the whole thing, composite. That was very effective in a large project, but it was not effective when you're dealing with something like a 100,000-foot building, the cost of building that prestressed bed and everything. And I was always worried, as everybody else was, about the bonding of the topping. If that ever failed, the whole structural system is [predicated] on that being [a solid] good bond. But we changed that later on in our [Webcor] buildings.

Anyhow, let's see. Where was I? I was in Renton, Washington, bought my first house, and this whole project I finished in about ten months. It was six stories. And Charlie said, "You're going to Toledo, Ohio."

I said, "What? Charlie, I just bought a house." Been there ten months. And I'm starting to think, "Wait a minute." At that time, I had two kids; one was a baby. So I went to Toledo, Ohio, and put my daughter in first grade.

Adamson: In Toledo?

Boyd: And I had the baby. The main reason I left Charlie—well, I mean other than a great opportunity I had, was I couldn't take my kids in and out of schools every ten

months in the middle of the school year, you know, all over the country, because he was working all over the country. My partner, Ross [Edwards], when I was doing all this stuff, he was going to East Coast, Massachusetts, New York State, everywhere. So I was not happy about Toledo, especially the work. I thought, "Well, at least I can go to some Big Ten games." Nope. We worked every Saturday.[6]

Adamson: Every Saturday, too.

Boyd: Yeah. It was a grind. I was so worn out and beat. I had hardly any help there. One guy I got—I was screaming to get and I got him—was the slipform foreman that had done most of the slipform work. I had to hire guys, try to make foremen out of them. It's awful. Didn't even have an engineer. I hired one. The kid just graduated, but he didn't have any experience.

And then there was the union issues. I mean, you go back there, the unions are tough and they're fighting you, crawling all over your job. One guy actually kind of threatened me. [laughs] The labor union representative.

So we got through it somehow, but during that time was when—and the book is not exactly right. Bill Wilson didn't approach Edwards; Ross Edwards approached Bill Wilson. Ross was working on all those Borel buildings, and Harold Henderson was the project manager back then. So Ross is the engineering and Harold is the project manager, and Ross got to know the two—Bill Wilson, funny thing about it, his partner's

[6] Dave Boyd explains, "We were building two floors every six working days, including Saturdays."

not even mentioned here.[7] Bill Wilson, his partner is Miller Ream. Miller Ream I don't think is even mentioned in the book.

Adamson: I think he's mentioned once when I list the Borel Development people, but I didn't talk about him in relation with the project because—

Boyd: When we started our company, I was thirty-one, Ross was thirty-one. They were thirty-two and thirty-three, I think. Their background was that Miller Ream is a descendent—no, his wife's a descendant of Antoine Borel, who was a banker in San Francisco in the 1800s, and he owned, like, 40 percent of San Mateo, and this is his summer home. And what was left of that estate was, like, nineteen acres.

So Miller Ream was out of Princeton and he wanted to be in the development business, so they let him do it, just gave him, you know, [the go-ahead] to develop [the Borel property], and then he partnered with Bill Wilson. I don't know where he found him. So Bill Wilson was the most dynamic of the two, for sure, but Miller Ream is where it all started and he had the land [and the money]. A pretty good guy; he's still alive. You know Bill Wilson died.

Adamson: Yes, I interviewed him by telephone.

Boyd: Oh, you did?

[7] Dave Boyd explains, "Harold Henderson was the project manager at first, then Ross Edwards continued as project manager on the buildings constructed on the Borel property after that."

Adamson: That's where I got most of the—I mean, I came in with some assumptions. I just had assumed that you and Ross [Edwards] had worked on those projects.

Boyd: So I met Ross in 1957 in engineering classes.

Adamson: At Purdue.

Boyd: Yeah. So we were there three years and known each other. When I came out, he was dating his wife, Gloria. I don't know if he told you this story.

Adamson: He stayed two more years to get a master's.

Boyd: A master's. Well, he didn't want to leave Gloria unattended. You know, at Purdue there's four guys for every woman—it's an Engineering-Ag school. He said, "I can't leave Gloria. She'll meet somebody else." So he stayed.

But then the next summer after he had been there a year, he called me and said, "Do you think that Kiewit," it was Kiewit at the time, "would hire me for the summer?"

I said, "Well, let me talk to Charlie."

I called Charlie. He said, "Sure. Absolutely."

So Ross came out and worked one summer and went back, then had one more semester to go, so he was going to be out in February. So he hired on with Kiewit because he liked the work, liked to be in California, so then we were running parallel in the same company.

Adamson: But you never worked on the same project?

Boyd: Not together, no, never did.

Adamson: But his story was he called you about the Borel or proposal while you were in Toledo.

Boyd: Right. He'd be calling me, like, a three-hour time difference. My phone would ring, like, at midnight, "Oh, no, it's Ross again." [laughs]

He had approached Bill Wilson and said, "I have a friend. We can build anything you guys develop and we're good." He sold us hard. He said, "You guys get half the profit." They upped it; they got 60 percent of it. We ended up with a 60-40 split. They had 60; we had 40. Ross and I.

I said, "Ross, you know, I'm really sick being bounced around the country. I'd be in."

My wife was very supportive and she said, "You know what? If things don't work out, you go back to Charlie. He'll take you back."[8] Absolutely, he would.

So I said, "Okay, I'm in." I flew out and met the guys, and we had dinner. They had just bought this big fifty-acre parcel in San Mateo that they were going to develop. Went up there, we all tromped around on the grass, said, "Let's go. Let's do it." And really got turned on.

[8] Dave Boyd adds, "I can't emphasize enough how supportive she was."

Adamson: So Ross doesn't recall—perhaps he sent a letter to Charlie, but I'm just wondering if you talked to Charlie or sent him—

Boyd: I sent a letter of resignation, and we timed it so we both sent them at the same time. Then Charlie called me and he didn't try to—I thought, "Oh, crap, he's going to be selling me so hard," and he just said, "Was there anything negative." And I said, "Other than moving, no." And so he didn't try to push any further, but there was something negative. I'd never worked like I worked on that Toledo project, but my bonus was, like, the same as the last year. Anyhow, I'd made the decision, anyhow, before that.

Adamson: You came to Pankow before Ross did. He stayed on for the—

Boyd: Yes. He was also an instant project manager when Charlie pulled all the people. We both became instant project managers, loved it, and he loved it so much he couldn't go. He said, "You know, I don't exactly trust him, anyhow." [laughs] So he stayed on and finally got worn down by Charlie. I don't remember how many years later.

I had to take a step backward because I [had become a] project manager [at Kiewit] when the guys left. Then I became an engineer again because they [Pankow] didn't have enough projects.[9]

[9] Dave Boyd explains, "At the time, Charlie Pankow had more seasoned project managers than he had projects to put them on."

Adamson: So you're my last interview. Do you know the story of why Lloyd Loetterle left, the circumstances?

Boyd: I do not know that. I do not.

Q: No one else knows either. There was an annual meeting. George Hutton said there was—the first annual meeting, Lloyd wasn't there. Charlie just said, "Lloyd's left the company," and everyone just kind of said, "Okay." And no one ever followed up with a question or—

Boyd: Well, Charlie was kind of intimidating, especially, I mean, for somebody at my level. To go ask that question was a little bit—he might say something like, "What the hell do you want to know that for?" You don't know what he's going to say. I respect him a lot, but there was a little bit of a fear factor.

No, [I heard that] he [Loetterle] started building, like, these buildings, something, like, Goodyear buildings or something, tire changing, you know, selling-tires stores. That's the only thing. I never heard from him again. I only had a few months' experience with him on one project. I had never worked with him other than that one project.

Adamson: The other person, I think, Jack Grieger, was he on the Butternut Coffee—

Boyd: Yes, he was the general foreman.[10]

Adamson: I was going to ask you about him because I didn't get a lot of information.

Boyd: We did all the surveying stuff together. I would be the chief. The crew, there, was Ralph Tice, myself, Jack Grieger, and then foremen, you know, so three of us basically—and I was responsible [among other things] for the layout, accuracy of everything. So I'd be out there, and he would be my assistant, so we got pretty close. We did this layout stuff. We got to where we knew each other's moves. We were pretty good.

And then Jack said—he was trying to convince me to start a curb and gutter business with him. He said, "Dave, we can do any of this stuff, this layout, two of us."

I said, "Jack, no, I'm not going to do curb and gutters." He wanted to start a curb and gutter business in Los Angeles after two jobs together. I said, "No, Jack. No."

Adamson: Well, you and Ross [Edwards] were, as far as I know, the only people who came to Pankow, working with Charlie at Kiewit and then early on at Pankow, who had come straight from college. I don't know if anyone else had come—

Boyd: None of the guys I worked with ever had a college degree.

[10] Dave Boyd adds, "And a very good man."

Adamson: I asked Ross how the two of you were acculturated into the group, as it were, if you were hazed or treated differently. [11]

Boyd: Russ [Osterman] was a lot older than I was. He played on a Rose Bowl team for Michigan, and I think he was probably at least ten or twelve years older than I am.

Adamson: I mean Ross [Edwards].

Boyd: Oh, Ross?

Adamson: Rosser.

Boyd: Russ had a degree.

Adamson: Russ had a degree.

Boyd: Russ Osterman had a degree.

Adamson: Right, right.

Boyd: And then I think Charlie just decided we were going to get some young studs. I don't know. And he went back to his alma mater, obviously.

[11] Dave Boyd replies, "Somewhat. Not much. I think we proved ourselves from the beginning of our employment."

Adamson: After you left, almost everybody who came in as an engineer from that point on was a—

Boyd: Purdue.

Adamson: Or college.

Boyd: George Hutton had a degree. I think we came in the same year, I think. I think he had worked for somebody else for a while and went to Missouri, University of Missouri or something, and then I think he switched jobs. So then we started the same year, I think, at Pankow, or I mean with Kiewit.[12]

Adamson: I'm just going back to a couple of questions I had on projects you mentioned. The medical center building, that article I showed you, Hillcrest, the article said that it was an unusual structural design in concrete and it received an award for the creative use of concrete from the Portland Cement Association.[13] So I was wondering what was distinctive on that project.

Boyd: I think that's the first time we used the slipform. We slipformed the core, the elevator core, stair shafts, and so that was brand new. I think that's the first time that

[12] George Hutton and Russ Osterman both had degrees, but were experienced hires. Dave Boyd and Ross Edwards were the first two engineers hired by Charlie Pankow out of university.
[13] "Hillcrest North Medical Center in San Diego Utilizes Over 800 Channel-shaped Concrete Panels," *Southwest Builder & Contractor*, 25 October 1963.

happened. Well, the other part was just all the precast was, like, the whole façade was all job cast. That's another thing. Most people bought precast from suppliers, precast manufacturers. We were doing it [that is, the casting] on the job site, which meant you needed really good control on the concrete so they all looked the same color when you put them up. So there was a lot of control. You had to have good controls and curing [process] and so forth, so that was all job cast. That was probably pretty unusual then.

Adamson: When was Charlie first using the term "design-build," and how did you understand the term?

Boyd: You know, he didn't do it like Ross and I did it. We actually went into the design meetings and controlled the design. I don't remember that term used too much.

Adamson: I've seen it referred to as different names. In the sixties, I'm just wondering if you or people were sort of self-aware of what you were doing.

Boyd: Well, I think there was controls on the engineer and architects, some controls behind the scenes[before construction started] that I wasn't a part of. That would probably be Russ [Osterman] and Charlie themselves saying, "Okay, when you go design this, we're going to precast this and this and this and this." But it wasn't the kind of control that later [that is, after starting Webcor] we actually told the engineer what to do, even though he wasn't working for us, because when Ross [Edwards] and I started the thing, we would give an owner, and even the first project, we gave Bill and Miller—Bill

Wilson and Miller Ream—a hard number on the first project that we did [based on the preliminary drawings and outline specifications].

Six months after we started our company, that six-story building we built, we gave him a hard number and outline specification, and as long as we could control the architect, we'd guarantee the number. And then we had these meetings every two weeks, and there was an owner representative, either Ross or I, and a structural engineer and the architect. The structural engineer and architect actually worked for the owner. We didn't want to take that risk. But we controlled them. We said, "This is what we want to do. We want to do these kind of foundations," and we have a soil engineer, obviously, and we designed it all the way. And then if anything changed, like if their—most of the things, you'd have, like, an allowance for a lobby, and so every month if there's some unusual thing that happened, we'd revise the estimate. The owner always knew what the number was. All the way to the end, he knew the number, and that become a guaranteed max, and we did everything, time and material, with open books.

And that's just the way we worked and we continued doing that and we just got repeat after repeat after repeat because the owners trusted us. They could see all the numbers. We never overcharged them on anything. They would get, like, $100,000, $200,000 savings [pre project], so they're working with us. We'd say, "Okay, we have an opportunity here to save some money. We thought we could precast stairs for you instead of using the pan filled metal stairs, and we can save $20,000." They were going to get 80 percent of that savings, so if we saved $80,000, they're going to get 64,000 and we'd get 16. So they're working with us. There was no head-to-head; there was no issues. So there was no real big issues that way. It really worked well.

We had done work for Trammel Crow, which is Ned Spieker, and, you know, they just gave us handshake job after job after job.[14] And we'd create the savings; we'd guarantee the price. If we went over, that's our loss. If we guaranteed a price and went over that, they didn't have to pay the excess. But we never had a problem. We never went over. We always created some savings. That model, it was just like we're taking orders, literally taking orders. It's amazing.

Adamson: Based on your reputation or the initial jobs were—

Boyd: Yeah, the first job for each client, after that they gave us every job and we didn't have to bid it against anybody. I wouldn't call that true design-build because we didn't hire the engineer and the architect, but we'd say to the owner, "We're going to guarantee this price, but we want you to use either two or three architects." We nominated some architects they would interview and we nominated two structural engineers they would interview and pick.

Then we nominated a soil engineer, just one, because the one that we used was a good engineer. Most soil engineers are afraid—I mean, they've got a huge risk and a small fee. They get, like, a $20,000 fee on a big project, millions of dollars at risk, so they would be so conservative. I mean, if the soil bearing load was, like a 3,000-pound load per square foot, they'd give you a number of, like, 1,000. And you'd say, "Crap is worth 3,000 pounds."

[14] From 1970 to 1987, Warren E. ("Ned") Spieker, Jr., was managing partner in charge of commercial real estate for the Northern California/Pacific Northwest Division of Trammell Crow Company. In 1987, he and ten other Crow partners established Spieker Partners, a private real estate investment and development firm. Spieker became chairman and CEO of the company went it went public in 1993. In 1998, the Haas School of Business at the University of California awarded him its Business Leader of the Year Award.

"Well, yeah." Why? They've got to be conservative. They're taking these big risks.[15]

We always found that we could save the owner tons of money in the foundations. There's a good example. Like we were doing a job in Sacramento, and, funny thing about it, there were two projects side-by-side. The one next to us was a Trammel Crow project. They wouldn't award it to us because we were working next door and they were worried that we'd share information about tenants, possible tenants leasing the buildings.

Anyhow, both soil engineers said the same thing. Even the one we used who was really good, he said, "This is an old riverbed. You're going to have to cut out ten foot of overburden, ten feet over the entire site, and then recompact it in at 95 percent." Oh, man, figure the numbers on that. "And then you can use spread foundations on top of that, create a big soil mat," you know, a dense soil mat.

I said, "This is really expensive." So I said, "We'd like to investigate drilled piers."

He said, "No, the problem is it's granular soil. There's a high water table. That hole will cave in. You could do that if you want to put a casing in." (It's a steel casing, and drill inside it and then you pour the concrete and you pull the casing out as you pour the concrete. Very expensive.) I said, "That's not good." So he said, "They're going to cave. I'll guarantee those holes won't stay open."

So I rented a drill rig, went up there on Saturday or something, and we drilled, like, five or six test holes and we stood there and watched and we timed each hole. And then it's still open after fifteen minutes, and, like, at twenty minutes you'd see some stuff start falling, and pretty soon [demonstrates], all the holes are the same. So we had fifteen

[15] Dave Boyd clarifies, "A conservative soil engineer would take a competent soil that would take a bearing load of 3,000 pounds per square foot and allow us to use only 1,000, maybe 2,000, pounds per square foot, so to speak, because of the big risk factor they were dealing with."

minutes to get these [holes] drilled, reinforcing steel [in], and poured. So we designed the whole project that way and we saved over half a million dollars.

Adamson: Wow.

Boyd: Now, the guy next door, Trammel Crow, says, "What are you guys doing?"

We said, "Well, we discovered we could use piers. It's working."

There was other examples of that kind of stuff, foundations. The owner cares nothing about that. He wants a beautiful skin, a beautiful lobby. So some owners would say, "Hey, I'm not going to use your guy [soil engineer]. Your guy's at 20,000. I found a guy who'll do it for 15."

I said, "You want to use that guy? If you use him to save 5,000, you'll spend 300,000 more in the foundations."

"What?"

"That's the way it works. You've got to have a good engineer that's not afraid." Yeah, foundations were always key for us to save money.

Adamson: It's not even a segue, but just to get back to the beginning of Webcor, and we'll come back to more stories about projects, but after you resigned, what was your relationship, if any, with Charlie Pankow?

Boyd: Didn't have any contact with him for years, and then one year he was being honored as the Man of the Year for [City of] Hope, the [City of] Hope Man of the Year.

It was in San Francisco. So I went to help honor him and everything. I respect him a lot. I walked in. There was a little, like, cocktail thing going on and Charlie's standing over with three guys, and so I went over and introduced myself. I said, "I'm David Boyd."

They said, "How do you know Charlie?"

I said, "He was my mentor." And Charlie actually got a little teared up, so I think he liked me a lot. That was impressive to me that he teared up a little bit. Yeah, I think he's a great guy.

The only thing that bothers me, it bothers me a lot that everybody [who] left [Pankow] had a lawsuit.

Q: Russ.

Boyd: Russ Osterman, I don't know. I know that George Hutton was out there winging it, you know, and becoming owners in the same projects and everything. And he was a little bit off base, but Charlie should have tried to solve that. He should have tried to mend that, because George, he was doing a hell of a lot of work. He was finding work.

Adamson: That was one of the topics Russ Osterman was still pretty lucid about, was suing Charlie and Charlie trying to cheat him out of whatever he thought he owed. I don't know the whole story at the end, but they were partners, unraveling their interests in the building, bank in Oregon and a couple other buildings.

Boyd: As ownership positions.

Adamson: Yeah. So I got some of that story. You talked about Russ and the Toledo Holiday Inn. What else can you tell me about Russ?

Boyd: I kept calling Russ [from the Toledo project], "We need a plumber."

"Need a plumber?"

I said, "I'm on the third floor, and we don't have any plumbing in the ground yet. What is the deal?"

"I'm working on it, working on it, working on it."

Five floors later, I said, "Okay, Russ, we're on the eighth floor now, no plumbing anywhere." We've put all the sleeves in because we've got a sleeving diagram from somebody, said, "This is what you'll have to have," so we're sleeving the floors. We had all the provisions. So I kept calling and hounding him and hounding him.

He finally hired somebody on a T&M [time and materials] basis until he could find somebody that would fix the contract, and by now it was cold. It was, like, November. Snow was starting to fall. [laughs] This T&M, this union guy's back there. They built this big room all insulated with heat and everything, and they had breaks. God, it was awful. They'd be out working for one hour and they'd go warm themselves up again and go back for an hour. It was brutal watching it; couldn't stand watching it. Then he finally made a deal, but the building was totally topped up before he had any plumbing in it.

Adamson: Wow.

Boyd: Nineteen stories standing there.

Adamson: Sounds like something out of Eastern Europe.

Boyd: Jeez, it looked like Beirut, a bombed-out building.

Adamson: So when Ross Edwards started, he was working with Russ [Osterman] on estimating. By the time you're talking about, a few years later on Holiday Inn, what was Ross's position, role in the company?

Boyd: When I was on Holiday Inn, Ross was working on the Borel Buildings for Bill Wilson and Miller Ream, and Harold Henderson was the project manager there, so Ross got to know those guys pretty well. And then on one of those projects, I can't remember which one, Harold had to go do something else. So I think the small building, then, Ross ran that, became more closer involved with that. So that relationship was what started the whole process, his relationship with those two guys.

Now, I think something happened, and I don't want to say it's a fact, for sure, but I know that Bill Wilson and Miller Ream had some friends down in Los Angeles. Did you ever hear of the Lafayette Building down there, Lafayette Street or something?

Adamson: Is this a Pankow project?[16]

[16] The project was Lafayette Park Place, a 123,000-square-foot office building.

Boyd: There was a project going on down there, and I don't know who was running it, but two guys, the two owners were friends of Miller and Bill and they were trying to do it open book, but they say—contend—that Charlie took some of the electricians and had them working in his house in Altadena and had the project pay for it, so the owners of that project were paying for Charlie's work at his house. He was building some kind of a—I can't say it's a fact. I don't know that, if it's a fact, but that's what Bill and Miller said, and they said, "We can't trust this guy." And that didn't hurt us, for Ross and I to start a company with them, because they didn't know if they could trust him.

Adamson: George Hutton had a similar story.

Boyd: Did he?

Adamson: In the run-up to when I interviewed him, he put down, like, a sixty-page memoir, and the interview sort of covered parts or all of that.

Boyd: So he had written it all down so he didn't make a mistake in his language? [laughs]

Adamson: But he said that at some point in the early seventies, Charlie sent Bob Carlson out to Hawaii, and George was wondering why, why that happened. It went back to a story similar to what you just said about Charlie using someone on his own house, and

thinking, from George's point of view, he interpreted Bob Carlson showing up to watch to make sure that George wasn't doing the same with his own house or something like that.

Boyd: Oh, I see.

Adamson: So then Bob, after a couple years, went back to Altadena, but that was sort of the beginning of—

Boyd: Gotcha.

Adamson: Yeah, a little while.

Boyd: Bob was a traveling superintendent with all the jobs. I mean, he'd be at my job like once a month. Alan Murk was telling me, they were building the First & C Building in San Diego and Alan Murk was on that job, too, I think, and he said Carlson would come once a month and he said, "We had made one mistake. He said, "There was a window that we framed in a concrete wall that was an inch narrower than it was supposed to be." Not a big mistake, but he said, "Bob Carlson had this little tape measure." It was like one of those little take-off tapes like your wife would have to measure, cloth tape. And he'd come to the job, and while they were walking around, he'd go up to this opening and he would measure. He said, "What was this supposed to be?" Just, you

know, just turning the knife. Every time he came, he went and measured that window and he'd say, and so upset, pissed off. Carlson.

Adamson: For you, was there any difference working for Charlie within Kiewit versus working at Pankow?

Boyd: Well, I didn't have much interaction at Kiewit. I mean, he was seldom on the job sites, and if he was, I would see him, but he'd be behind closed doors with the project manager, like Tice or Henderson or Murk. But afterwards, yes, I interacted more because, well, I became project manager. That's more interaction, although Charlie—he would tell me he was going to come—I don't think he came to that Toledo job more than twice in, like, twenty months. So one time he was coming, he said, "I want to see you. I'm going to be there Wednesday."

I said, "Okay. What time are you going to be here?"

"I'll be there around two, one or two o'clock." Didn't show, didn't show, didn't show.

So I called his secretary and I said, "Where's Charlie?"

"Well, he's there. I know he's there." And so she said, "But he's got a plane to leave in—," a certain time.

"Crap, that's only an hour and a half."

So I drove to the airport, looked for him, found him in the men's room. I said, "Charlie, you never came to the job. What do you want to talk about?"

"Ah, never mind. Forget it. I'll see you next time. We'll talk on the phone." He just—he never showed up. [laughs]

Adamson: So talk a little bit more about starting Webcor. I asked Ross Edwards this question. Did you have a vision for the company, I mean when you're starting out, or is it just you had a job and you were just going to do another job, or did you see ten years down the road where you were wanting to be?

Boyd: No, never, ever thought it was going to happen—go where it went. Initially, my vision was we were just going to do their work, these two people. Can you imagine if you're thirty-two years old—they were thirty-two—building 100,000-square foot buildings with no tenants, all spec? I mean, that's ballsy. That takes balls. And I thought, "These guys are go-getters, and we're going to do their work because they're partners." And, beyond that—and I think the first outside project we got was not very much longer, like a year and a half.

One of their friends, a developer in San Diego, he was wanting to build a building in Mission Valley, and so Bill said, "You should interview my guys." Went down there and talked to him and did that building. From that point, we were down there eight years building buildings all over the place in San Diego for outside clients because that building in the heart of Mission Valley, people noticed it, and then we'd get calls, "I've got a site, want to talk to you." We had a crew down there for eight or ten years.

So we went from 100 percent doing their work only to, after probably ten years, their work was maybe only 30 percent of what we were doing. It just blossomed, and we

did everything the same way, open book, time and material, guaranteed max, show them everything.

Some of the guys would say, "What are these flowers for on this?" They'd be looking through all the costs and notice an item here, flowers.

"Oh, yeah, that was a project manager's wife's birthday." We always did that. "Oh, that's okay." [laughs] They saw everything.

Adamson: So even when the project wasn't for Bill Wilson and Miller Ream, they're still part of your company, so they have an interest in these other projects.

Boyd: Yes, but they didn't interfere in any way at all. They knew nothing about construction. They were on board, and we'd tell them what we're doing. See, the way we set this up was they said, "Here's the ownership." We didn't have any choice. They said, "We're going to take 30 percent each, and Ross and Dave get 20 percent each of the company. Then we will reserve 10 percent of our 60 percent for future guys that you'd like to have own the company, your project managers, just like Pankow did."

So over the years, they gave up 10 percent, and then we came truly equal, 20 percent each. And then Miller Ream did something for Ross and I that was just pretty amazing. He said, "I'll sell you guys enough of my interest to make you even with Bill, so now you'll have control."

Adamson: When was this, year-wise?

Boyd: I'll be guessing a little bit. I'd guess around 1985, somewhere in there. He sold down. Ross and I became equal with Bill and then we really had control because we had more than 50 percent between the two of us.

Our relationships were always really good. There was never any big issues. Never arguments. Maybe arguments would be what to invest in, excess money and stuff like that. Miller Ream is very congenial, didn't like confrontation. Bill enjoyed it. Bill and Ross enjoyed confrontation. Miller was a very laid-back, peacemaker-type guy.

But what worked well with Ross and I, see, we'd complement each other pretty well. He's very aggressive, like, in estimating, and I'm conservative, so I'd be tempering his numbers [up] and he'd be tempering [mine down]. We'd go through all the estimates together. In fact, we did them all together for many years until we got too big and we couldn't do it anymore because we were going to design meetings every week. I'd be handling maybe four jobs, he'd be handling maybe four, two in design, two in construction, and those design meetings ate a lot of time. So we got to the point where we had to do them [that is, the estimates] independently and then have the other guy check them every time we did an estimate. I'd do mine, give it to him, then he'd check it. He'd try to convince me to go lower on some of the labor costs, and I'd do the same on his, try to get him to come up on some labor costs. We never lost money on a job until we did a public job.

Adamson: When was the first time you did that?

Boyd: Well, things got really slow and then our volume in 1990 was, like, 150 or 140 million. In 1991, it was 28 million, just like falling off the cliff.

Adamson: That's contract volume?

Boyd: Yeah. And so then we did not lay off many people. The thing is, you know these people, you know their wives, their kids. It was a close family.

Adamson: How big is Webcor at that point, 1990, people-wise?

Boyd: Probably 150 salaried people, maybe more, and then, of course, all the union people, but we don't count them.

Adamson: All located up here?

Boyd: We'd done two projects in Arizona and Utah, Salt Lake City, Reno, Nevada. That's basically it. We'd only go out of state if a developer that we knew wanted us to go. Yeah, that's how we got out of state. So we didn't go out looking for work out of state, but we went when a good developer wanted us to go. It's kind of difficult to do that.

So we didn't lay many people off in a slow time. We lost millions of dollars each year, a couple million a year, but we had saved almost all the money. We didn't spend this money. We were very frugal, just had a good bank account, just had a bank account.

Adamson: So what was this public project that you—

Boyd: It was a BART Station, the BART garage at Hayward.

Adamson: I park there every day now.

Boyd: That's a donation from Ross and I. They should have put a brass plaque up: "Donated by Ross Edwards and Dave Boyd." [laughs] We'd never done a public job. We'd always had these family owners, but we heard the stories about that. And a couple of younger guys in the company said, "Listen. We've got to do this. We've got to learn how to do this because there might not be any private work for a while."

So we went into that, and I don't know how many, one- or two-million loss, something like that, plus a million or two. It hurt them because there was no other work, and you take some work and you lose. [laughs] If we didn't do that job, we would have lost two million that year. By doing that job, we lost three or four million that year. [laughs]

Adamson: So in the run-up to 1990, I was just looking at contract volumes as reported in *ENR*. It looked like your first two decades, Webcor remained about the same size, or roughly.

Boyd: What happened was we were getting bigger, but it wasn't that we were doing more projects; it was the projects were getting bigger. When we first started, we were doing, like, a six-story building would only be, like, $3 million, and then ten years later that same project would be almost twice as much and maybe more. So we both thought we could handle maybe up to six projects each, maximum.

Adamson: Per year or at the same time?

Boyd: Each, so, say, twelve projects. That would be a big load for us because we're doing all the design work and then controlling the costs and watching the projects. We had to create another echelon of people below us, which we really didn't want to do that bad, but we finally had to. By numbers of jobs, the numbers got too big, but we still stayed pretty involved. We still did all the design part.

Adamson: So I talk in the book about what Pankow's response was to the 1990 recession. They got into tenant improvements and public projects and hospital work and things Charlie never—

Boyd: Would never do.

Adamson: —had never done, and it's Rik's [Kunnath] thesis that if Charlie was in better health, he probably would not have done the things that he actually did do. So other than this first public project, what other responses did Webcor have to—

Boyd: Well we went really hard on tenant work, like you say, tenant improvement work. We created a little division on the side. We were going really hard after that work and that's about all there was really for private. There wasn't much. It was pretty skimpy. We went in hard for that. There was that kind of work available. People wouldn't move; they'd just remodel and stuff around. We had to just slug it out for two years, and then the market came back.

Adamson: And both Bill and Miller are still part of the company into the 1990s?

Boyd: Okay, when the slow period hit—I could almost guess Bill would do this, but we should have known. When we got to '91 and our volume dropped off, I think Bill got a little rattled and he said, "I'd like to sell my interest back." At that time, he owned 23 percent. And he said, "I would like to sell my interest back and remain at 5 percent. I want to retain 5 percent interest and sell 18.5 percent," or whatever it was.

And Ross said, "Oh, god, he doesn't have any faith in this ever ending, this downturn." Said, "Okay."

So we bought that interest back, except we had the ownerships at that time. We had some limited partner ownerships and some general ownerships, but we actually owned parts of buildings. We always invested as limited partners when the owners [asked me to]. "Would you also invest?" So we did that.

One project in particular was a big senior housing project in San Mateo, which right now we're still managing, Ross and I. It's a cash cow. It's doing great. It's great. And

so Bill says, “Okay, but since we can’t really value the properties, I’ll just take 18.5 percent of the distributions and earnings off those projects, like when you sell them,” when the senior things kick in with cash.

We said, “Okay.” So he went down to 5 percent ownership and on the side he had that 18.5 percent. That was a good deal for him because he’s cleaning up on all that stuff. [laughs] Some of the stuff turned out to be really good.

So then he was only 5 percent owner, and then Miller Ream said, “I’ll do the same. I’ll sell down to 5.” So then Ross and I went to, like, 80 percent, and the rest was some of our guys.

Did he tell you when we started [the new] Webcor what we did, how we did it?

Adamson: The percentage? No.

Boyd: We didn’t have a way to retire, and we had nobody in the company we thought could take it over, and we were at the time, probably, in our fifties, fifty to fifty-five. And so we hired this company with a terrible name. It’s called Fails Management out of Denver. Fails Management. They came up with a couple ideas. One of the ideas they had was, what you do is you identify somebody on the outside, maybe an owner of a small company or something, and you hire him and you start a new company with a similar name, like Webcor Builders, Inc., Webcor Construction. And then what you do is you become partners and start sharing the profits in a certain manner, and when they become strong enough to be on their own, you guys retire.

So we had about ten years. We had about ten years before we thought we'd probably want to retire. So we found this guy, Andy Ball. He's a guy who could match Charlie on sales and debate. He was a great debater. He was really smooth. [laughs] He could match Charlie.

So we brought him in—he had a little company—and a couple of his key guys and we started Webcor Construction. We said, "Okay, we're going to sell stock in the company and we'll sell it for 10 cents a share, we're going to create 100,000 shares." Ross and I just took a little piece, like 4 percent each, because we owned all the old company. People that could never afford to buy our stock over here, we gave them good opportunity, but we doled it out in accordance with their responsibilities. So a project manager got to buy maybe 5,000 shares, 500 bucks. "Give us 500 bucks, 5,000 shares."

Then we said, "Okay, what we'll do is, we have all the capital and everything, so we're going to take 70 percent of the profits. You guys get 30," right from that first day, "and when we make a million dollars free and clear, we'll bump you up to 40 and we'll take 60, and we'll keep doing that every million. And when we get down to 30 percent and you have 70 percent, that's where we're going to stay until you're strong enough to be on your own."

So that's what happened, and then when they became strong enough we let them have the name and we went and retired, sold our 4 percent in the new company. And that incentive—was amazing what that created. Those guys were just breaking their picks because a guy who never owned any of the other company, or very little, had a significant piece of the new company, and the 10 cents went to $225.

Adamson: Wow.

Boyd: And Obayashi bought in. Those guys have 225 bucks for every share that they bought at 10 cents. Hell of a deal for them.

Adamson: Is it Andy accounting for the ramp-up in—

Boyd: Andy grew that company leaps and bounds, and he was like a loose cannon sometimes because he wanted to do everything. We'd have to rein him back, "Andy, no, no, no, no, no." [laughs] But he was very aggressive.

Adamson: So then you had to hire people to keep up the model of the—

Boyd: He hired a lot of people. He hired a lot of people. We were still in control. We were still in control of things, but we let him have a lot of his head—we let him have his—

Adamson: So is there a new culture at Webcor then there?

Boyd: Culture changed. Yeah, it's sad now. For a while there, I mean, we'd go to some of the meetings. They'd have, like, project manager meetings, like a year after, two years after we started this. Ross says, "Who's that guy? Who's is that guy?"

My daughter was in there at the time, running the marketing—she began as vice president of marketing, and she knew everybody. And then pretty soon she didn't know the people, either, things growing so fast. But the culture, it has to change when you get that big. You know.

Adamson: So when you retired, the old company dissolved and then—

Boyd: No, the old company's still active because we own this senior deal. We're managing that.

Adamson: The new company took your name?

Boyd: Took our name, Webcor Construction. We're still Webcor Builders, Inc. We had to keep that name because we're incorporated in that name and we had ownership in lots of projects in that name, and it was too complicated. Andy Ball wanted the Webcor Builders, Inc., but we wouldn't give it to him. We said, "You can have Webcor Construction, but we've got to keep that name, although we will change it to a management company, Webcor Builders Management Company," managing these projects that we owned.

Adamson: To what extent were you and Ross wedded to concrete like Charlie was?

Boyd: I mean, we grew up in that with Charlie, and it was just a more economical way to build. We weren't married to it. For instance, like office buildings sometimes made more sense in steel. If the owner wanted certain spans and modules, it would be more appropriate to do in steel. Any hotel or any residential things always, by far, less expensive in concrete because everything is the same, you repeat. You can do the flying form thing. And the ceiling you look at is the bottom of the guy's concrete floor upstairs. With steel you have to put drop ceilings in, all that crap. Back then it would even add, like, six bucks a foot just for the drop ceiling and all that. So concrete's always absolutely the best medium for hotel or residential.

We were building buildings in the City. We built a sixty-story building there and we were doing a four-day cycle, one floor every four days in flying forms. I was taking some friends up, took some friends up around fifty-sixth floor or something, and they were watching the project. I said, "Come on downstairs." I'll show you what's going on downstairs. So went down through the floors and drywalls coming up, see all the process coming up. The lower five floors were completely done, *completely* done. The apartments were done, finished, and locked. We walk in there, carpet, ooh, ready to move in. We were pouring concrete up [above].

Adamson: At the top. What was your favorite Pankow project?

Boyd: Hmm. That's a good question. Not Kiewit, but Pankow.

Adamson: It could be either one.

Boyd: Some of the stuff I enjoyed the most was working with Alan Murk, and one of the reasons was that I was also based in San Jose for several years, and I created friends and wasn't knee-jerked out of there. It just happened that way because they got projects around there. I would say Alan Murk. First and Taylor was a great project, San Jose, First and Taylor Street. The building's still there. It looks about the same.

Adamson: Is that the name that it's—

Boyd: That then was some title company, I think. First American Title? No. [Pages through book] The project I listed on Pankow's thing was First and Taylor Street, San Jose.

Adamson: You mentioned the Evergreen Building.

Boyd: Yeah, that's the one I did in Renton.

Adamson: First American Building, 100,000-square-foot—

Boyd: Is that in L.A.?

Adamson: San Jose, 1967.

Boyd: That's it.

Adamson: IBM Building, Menlo Park, same year. Joe West Hall, no air conditioning. There was some incident at San Jose State recently, and in the story they mentioned, "This is a dorm with no air conditioning."

Boyd: I don't think they had air conditioning. Open your window for—

Adamson: Open your window. [laughs]

Boyd: Well, you know, I don't think the temperature of the concrete mass would vary more than 3 degrees all year, so there wasn't much variance inside, I don't think.

Adamson: Lafayette Park Place. I did have that in there [in Appendix A of *A Better Way to Build*].

Boyd: Okay, that's the one that Bill Wilson and Miller Ream suspected Charlie was using the electricians on his house in Altadena, greenhouse or something.

Adamson: When I talked to Bill on the phone, he mentioned Sixth and Harvard Building. Same time?

Boyd: Yeah, that was the same owners down there.

Adamson: Same owners?

Boyd: Yeah, in L.A. They were friends, developers somehow. I mean Charlie got the job because of Bill and Miller. Bill and Miller knew the owners and nominated Charlie, and Charlie got the job. And then they think that he was using their labor.

Adamson: But Bill and Miller knew Charlie from Borel first?

Boyd: Yes. What's the dates on those buildings? Is there a date there?

Adamson: Sixth and Harvard, completed '69. Lafayette Park, 1970.

Boyd: Yeah, just about the time we started Webcor, right before, and they were working up at Borel in Nineteen Sixty—

Adamson: Six?

Boyd: Sixty-three, something like that. Borel #1 building.

Adamson: Borel # 1 completed in '66.

Boyd: Completed, okay. Yeah, my timing's off there.

Adamson: Dean Witter Building, San Jose, ‘66, 20,000-square-feet office.

Boyd: Twenty thousand square feet, that’s pretty small.

Adamson: Unless I have a typo.

Boyd: Maybe it was 200,000 feet.

Adamson: First American was 130,000 square feet.

Boyd: Yeah.

Adamson: When I started compiling the inventory, a lot of those projects in that ’65 to ’70 era, no one had talked about them in the interviews. I hadn’t realized that all these buildings had been put up. And that’s when people started saying, “Yeah, there was one person on this project. There was one person on that.”

Boyd: Well, Webcor, we said our first project was—we called it 101 Miller Ream’s house. Miller Ream was building a house in Hillsborough, and we did the estimates. We said, “Miller, this is $160,000. It’s unbelievable. You’re going to build a $160,000 house? Are you out of your mind?” [laughs]

So he built this house, and a couple years later he said, "Dave, somebody knocked on my door and offered me three million for my house. What do you think now? I think 160 was a good investment." [laughs]

But we started 101 only for major projects. I think we built almost three hundred buildings by then.

Adamson: And which one stands out in your Webcor days as significant?

Boyd: Well, I had a lot of fun building one in Sacramento, a thirty-story building. That was a good one, for Wells Fargo. That was fun. We built one that Ross was in charge of in the City. What was fun about that one is the owner said—it was the W Hotel, San Francisco. The owner said, "You guys, you contractors are all alike. You never finish on time and you never finish on budget, so I'm going to hold your feet to the fire. I'm going to charge you. I want liquidated damage at 25,000 a day."

"Okay. How about a reward?"

"No problem. You can have [a] 25,000-a-day reward."

So we put some cameras on across the street and was taking time [elapse] photos and we created flying forms. You probably heard that term, flying form. So we had two sets of flying forms, and they go like this. We gave everybody [on the job site] a shirt that said, "All we ask is one floor a week." Everybody on the job is wearing these shirts, t-shirts. [laughs]

And we were actually pouring the [floor] slab starting at, say, five in the morning, finishing, like, maybe noon. Five in the morning, started pouring the slab. I'm going

across the whole building. So we get initial [concrete] set where you can walk on the concrete. We put column forms on top of the new slab the same day and poured those columns that afternoon. It was like production city. We got that thing going.

We got it done on a four-day cycle. We had the core way up ahead, three floors ahead so it didn't interfere, and we had a tower crane with two shifts. The day shift would be doing construction on the new construction. The night shift would be hanging precast panels on the floors below.

We were like, $500,000 ahead on the budget because we had gone so fast. The owner started pleading with us, "Slow down!"

"Nah, we're not slowing down. We ain't slowin' down."

"Please slow down. I can't get my furniture in in time. I can't even get my employees hired. I don't have uniforms," da, da, da, da, da, da, da.

We said, "Okay, look, what we'll do, you're going to owe us $500,000 at the end of this project."

Adamson: Regardless.

Boyd: "We're going to cut that in half, and you vow that you'll negotiate the next job."

"You got a deal."

We shook hands, 250,000. That was fun, because when an owner comes at you like that, you know, and they're right, most contractors don't live up to the budget schedules, but we did.

We had another job in San Francisco. This was a very satisfying job. I remember the address, 150 Spear Street, eighteen stories, and the entire project had been leased to Bank of America, and so they had a date, a date certain. They said, "Okay, we must start our tenant work by this date. If you're not ready for us to start tenant work by then, we have the right to not occupy the building." It was a big building [220,000 square feet].

So the City was slow in their permittings. You know, they do a stage permitting. They give you a site use permit, foundation permit, structure permit, yada yada yada, final, like five. So we said, "We've got to drive piles, but we don't have the foundation permit."

"Well," they said, "you can drive them at your own risk, and if we find anything wrong in the structural analysis, you'll have to deal with it. You'll have to pull them out or whatever."

So we drove the piles, still didn't have the foundation permit. We said, "We're going to put the superstructure up."

"Well, you're taking a big risk now." So we did the superstructure, and right before we topped it out, we got the foundation permit and it was okay. Then we didn't have the superstructure permit until we're, like, half the tenant work—I mean all the cores and stuff was halfway done coming up the building. And just made it. Everyone was okay, thank god.

And then when we got to the Bank of America [date], they didn't even have their plans done. They were trying to ask for more time. I said, "No, we're finished with the building. Screw it."

They had to start paying rent. [laughs] There was a date when they started the tenant work. We made that date, and then the next date was when they started paying rent. So they had the date to start tenant work. It was something like eight or nine, ten months after that they had to start paying rent for certain. Then they were pleading to push everything back because we were done then and they hadn't got it together. So they didn't have their drawings and permits. [laughs] That was ballsy.

Adamson: Right.

Boyd: Pretty ballsy.

Adamson: It worked.

Boyd: There was a [building] next door. We'd built the building right next door to this one and we knew all the pile and driving data, so we didn't drive any indicator [test] piles.[17] You usually drive indicator piles to find out what kind of length you need to get 100,000—most of these piles are 100,000, 100 tons each [capacity]. We had the building right next door and we knew the piles were a certain length, so we just ordered some piles, started driving them, and they went down [too easily]. They went down like crazy, easy. We said, "Uh-oh. We've got a problem." The blow counts never came up.

Adamson: That's San Francisco?

[17] Dave Boyd explains, "Using indicator test piles to determine the length needed to support column loads are expensive and time consuming."

Boyd: Yeah.

Adamson: All that garbage from the 1800s?

Boyd: No, there wasn't crap in this project, but oh, man. The engineer came out and said, "I know what's happening." He said, "You ever take out a garden hose and go like this and force it into the ground?" He said, "You're driving these piles, and the [ground] water displacement is running up the sides of the pile and making it slick, and it just goes right down." He said, "Go back on a pile that you did yesterday." Couldn't budge it. It was okay. We had to load test some piles. They were all okay, though.

The guy next door, another guy a block away, he's building a—typically what you do is when you have a pile driving and you have, like, one-story basement below, you drive the piles from grade, from the street grade, and you follow the piles down with a hammer into the ground, just keep following them to get to the elevation and stop. So if the piles are down ten feet, you can't see the ends of them.

He's driving these piles over there and then he starts shoring the sides [of the excavation].

So he wanted to do—oh, I remember how. This is very interesting. I'm drawing it for you. Okay, here's the cross-section. Here's the basement. So he was up here and driving these piles down. These piles are all down here like this, clusters of piles where columns go and so forth.

And so the contractor, they got this [pile work] done. They got all the shoring in and excavated, and the contractor said—no, it wasn't excavated. The contractor said, "What I want to do is, so I can start working on the foundations early, I don't want to excavate like this [top-to-bottom]. I want to excavate like this [side-to-side]. Excavate this like this and let me get going on this column line, just keep moving across the site."

So that's what they did, and when they got all the way here and they got all done, they found out that these piles were, like, 12 inches off [location], and then the next set of piles, now, these were, like, 18 inches off. The next set was 12 inches off. The next set was 6 inches off. "What the hell happened? How did that happen?" Well, what happened was all the piles ended up, like—let's see. Let me think. Going this way. This is moving, so this is Bay mud and it was moving. As you would excavate here, it would move, just keep moving and take the piles and put them into a position like this.

Adamson: Wow.

Boyd: Just from that earth movement pushing up [that is, the fluid bay mud flowing across the site].

Adamson: He should have excavated the whole thing.

Boyd: Yeah, it was unbelievable cost, big lawsuits. What they had to do is they had to drill down the side, drill open shafts, and let the piles flex back. Then they had to load-

test half of them. It was incredible. That's something you wouldn't think about, no one would think about now.

Adamson: He was building that while you were building yours?

Boyd: He was building that right after ours, but everybody knew what was happening over there.

Adamson: What sort of relationship with Purdue University—

Boyd: It's strong. I give money every year. They've honored me twice. Of course, you know, you have to give money, the outstanding graduate thing. I had two. I had "Outstanding Alumni Award" for civil engineer and then I had "Distinguished Engineering" award.

Adamson: Did Webcor hire from Purdue like Pankow did?

Boyd: We tried to. We only got one person that stuck, and he was a guy that went to University of California and then got a master's at Purdue, so he knew the Bay Area and he knew the cost. We got several to come here, but they couldn't take the costs, you know, the costs of living and so forth, and then some of them got homesick. They had one gal who was a really good [engineer], and she got so homesick she went back to

Indiana. It's hard. We got a lot from Cal Poly—that's a good school—some from Stanford.

Adamson: Now Ross replied in the negative when I asked if his involvement with the DBIA or otherwise promoting design-build outside of just doing it at the company. Charlie and a lot of Pankow people were involved with the Design-Build Institute or American Concrete Institute. Ross didn't seem to do too much of that on the outside. I was wondering if you did much of that.

Boyd: We were so busy building. We were, like, really busy and we were trying to keep it lean, keep our company lean. His father always had a saying, "Now, you guys, you boys be prudent."

It's like we're being so damn prudent that every dollar we made almost was in the bank. No, I never got involved there. I believe in it.

Ross and I—at Purdue they built a six-story, free-standing tower to test buildings. You build a full-scale building inside the existing building and then apply forces to it, earthquake forces and everything. They had a big strong wall, and we donated that. That was, like, 300,000, I think.

Then I donated a lab to them. I mean, Charlie Pankow's name is big there. I've been giving money every year, pretty good money every year. So, yeah, they love me there. The head of the school comes out and [takes me out to dinner]. They change heads of school so often, I don't like that. By the time you get to know a guy really well, and then they change.

I had a friend that was a big Notre Dame fan. We go back every year to the Purdue-Notre Dame game. First one, we went to Notre Dame. His family had tickets on the 40-yard line at Notre Dame Stadium. I mean, that's got to be gold.

So next year he said, "Where are we going to sit, Dave?"

I said, "Dave, I don't know the stadium, but don't worry about it. You'll be happy."

So meantime, one of my friends from my class, he was a Huber, Hunt & Nichols guy and they were building stadiums.[18] That's all they did is build stadiums. So Purdue expanded their stadium, and he built, like, a six-story addition on one side. They had all these suites, just like the 49er suites, with liquor and food and everything, TVs.

Adamson: Wow.

Boyd: And so I said, "Hey." I called Mike, said, "Mike, I need to be in your suite for this game."

He said, "Okay, no problem. Come on."

I said, "I got a couple of Notre Dame people coming."

And so my buddy says, "Where are we sitting?"

I said, "I don't know, Dave. Here's the tickets. I don't know where they are." But I did know. So I said, "Let's just go."

He wanted a beer and a hot dog. He says, "You can't buy beer in there." And so he goes, "I've got to get a beer outside and a hot dog." And we go and we get in these

[18] Dave Boyd's friend was Mike Kerr, president of the Hunt Construction Group.

elevators. “What’s going on?” [demonstrates] He goes in the suite, “Holy shit.” There’s everything you want. [laughs] So I got him pretty good.

Adamson: I think you suggested that your retiring from Webcor was pretty seamless. So that transition from ’94 to your retirement, that went off without a hitch?

Boyd: Yeah. We still stayed involved in projects, but not as many. We turned over a lot of them to the new people and some of the old people. So for some of those years we were only going in about half-time, just watching the transition, making sure people were doing things right, and watching their balance sheet and P&L statements. We still had control because we were in the partnership then, but we wanted to make sure they succeeded.

Adamson: And when you retired, you retired?

Boyd: I retired. I totally retired. It’s weird. I like golf, but you can’t play golf all the time. I like to have a little building project. Ross and I both have homes in Jackson, Wyoming, and I bought a lot and built a big log cabin, sent a guy, one of the guys from Webcor back. I like to have a little building project. I don’t have any right now, even little remodeling projects.

Adamson: How would you sum up Webcor’s contribution to the construction industry?

Boyd: I would say that we contributed quite a bit. I really do, techniques, innovation. Charlie was a great innovator, but we followed it up and we did some things, a lot the same. We didn't do the slipforms because we felt we could build them at the same cost. We did some slips. I shouldn't say that. In the early years, we did slipform all the cores.

The main thing we changed was this process here [points to drawing]. We could do spanall. Spanalls are things you slide out. They're like little trusses that slide in and out, telescope. Charlie just built the beams like that, and then these things would just sit on here like this. We built our beams with notches. We notched our beams so we could put a spanall on top. So we'd have a spanall sitting here—it looks like this, same way here—and put plywood on there and then pour the concrete right on that. And these things just be no vertical shoring at all, except, you know, we shore the middle of the beam completely, no shores.

We did a lot of innovation on the flying forms, and the flying forms that we built, since they're always in the same [position]—you know, Room 104 is Room 204, 304, that form's always in the same position. So we set these things within, like, an eighth of an inch in accuracy with the next floor, and then we built the columns with rollers and we put the sleeves for the columns so we could put rollers on them. So a column would have rollers on each side with a sleeve through the inside of the column, so when you put the next flying form on, you set it on there, and when you stripped it, you just rolled it out. You basically rolled it out into space and the crane pulled the one end out over the street and up to the floor above.

When you set this thing real accurately with all the layout, like all the plumbing sleeves were laid out permanently on the form, all the electrical boxes were laid out

permanently on there, you set that thing up, the trades didn't even need a tape measure. So you'd go up there and just put their sleeves and put all their conduiting with no tape measure needed because it's all right there.[19] So that's how we'd get a four-day cycle. We built a whole floor in four days. Those guys [subs], they loved it, the subs loved it. They made so much money. They made tons of money.

Adamson: And other people weren't doing that? They were following your lead?

Boyd: I don't know if they are or not. I mean, we kind of kept that kind of secret. They had to be amazed, though. We'd start a project behind a guy next door to us and we passed him, you know. [laughs] It was kind of fun.

Adamson: That would be impressive. Tell me something about your career that I haven't touched on that I should know about, just anything that comes to mind. We didn't speak specifically about the first two decades of Webcor, ramping up the company, that sort of thing.

Boyd: That was an exciting time, I'll tell you. It's unbelievable what we did with $20,000 capitalization, $20,000. I had to come up with 4,000 and I said, "I don't have 4,000."

Bill Wilson said, "I'll loan it to you."

And I said, "I'll get it as soon as I get my profit sharing from Pankow."

[19] Dave Boyd clarifies, "The subcontractors could do all of their work without measuring. All of the work was permanently laid out for them on our forms."

Twenty-thousand dollars. Can you imagine that, two-billion-dollar company? I think some years they [Webcor] did [close to] 2 billion, up to 2 billion [over the years]. The profit margin kept shrinking and shrinking. If you go out and bid against somebody on a high-rise, if you get a 3 percent fee, that's pretty good. All our stuff was, like, 7 percent back when, and we were doing all the concrete as part of the 7 percent, all our self-performed work.

When fees got so tight, we said, "Okay, we're going to bid the concrete work like any other [subcontractor]. We'll be a subcontractor to ourselves." And we established the [bid] criteria. Everybody would bid [by submitting sealed bids]. The owners opened the envelope. We'd [usually] get the job. We're the general contractor and we also did the concrete. Now we get a lot of our work, probably half our work is sub work because all these high-rises in the City, we're doing most of the concrete work.

Adamson: I noted there's a separate entity set up, concrete entity?

Boyd: Yeah.

Adamson: Was that while you were still there?

Boyd: Yes, and that was a good thing to do because different divisions created opportunities for guys to become vice president, president of those divisions. When we were just one entity doing all the work, self-performed inside, people would say, "How

will I ever get to that position?" So that was good, a good thing we did. I can't think of what you're looking for.

Adamson: I asked Ross this. I didn't know if I got the answer. When did Miller and Bill get out of the company completely?

Boyd: Well, Bill sold down to 5 percent in 1991 when he saw that we were into a slump. And Miller, I think mid-eighties is when he gave us equal ownership with Bill. At that time, interesting, Bill and Miller were not getting along and they split what they owned and they went separate ways.

Adamson: As developers?

Boyd: Yeah. So they owned lots of projects together and some separate, but most together, and they had a falling-out. We never got to the bottom—they never told us. But that was in the mid-eighties. And then Miller Ream said, "I'm going to do you guys a favor. I'm going to sell you my ownership so you're equal with Bill," because he had a hard-on for Bill. And, oh, jeez, I tell you, it took—Miller wouldn't come to the board meetings after that because he didn't even want to see Bill. Many, many years later, he came to one. They sort of patched up, but when Bill died, Miller wasn't even at the funeral.

Adamson: That was just in May of last year.

Boyd: It was in May, but the service wasn't till two months later or something like that. I was in Wyoming. I flew back for it. I said to Miller next time I saw Miller, "Why weren't you there?"

He said, "I wasn't invited."

I said, "Really?"

Adamson: So did Webcor still do work for the two of them after they sort of got out.

Boyd: Yeah, but Miller Ream was pretty inactive. Bill was the active one. Bill was a go-getter. He was the rainmaker, finding projects, did all the Oracle stuff. We were building buildings at Oracle, one building every year, 250,000 feet a year, every year, every year, every year. And Oracle was hiring four hundred electrical or computer engineers every year. I mean, it's a massive—you know the project, right?

Adamson: Yes.

Boyd: Pretty amazing. It was the old Marine [World] site, Africa USA. They had dolphin tanks down there that they didn't take out, said everything was clean, but they had the slabs of all these tanks they were trying to drive piles through. "What's going on down there?" [laughs]

Adamson: That's quite a complex.

Boyd: Yeah, it is.

Adamson: The Adobe downtown San Jose, too.

Boyd: We didn't build that.

Adamson: You didn't do that?

Boyd: No. That was Devcon.

Adamson: I thought I saw it Adobe somewhere.

Boyd: No.

Adamson: So, then, this is a Charles Pankow Foundation interview, so I'm going to end on two questions. One, overall, what impact did Charlie Pankow have on your career?

Boyd: One hundred percent impact. I mean, the things that I saw him do and the innovation he had, the people, the loyalty, we modeled everything we did after what Charlie did, except the way we did the contracts a little different. I don't know if Charlie did any T&M work. I think he did a little bit with Bill Wilson. But Charlie's motivation was big profit.

Adamson: Right, 15 percent.

Boyd: Yeah, we were happy with seven, but we had lots of jobs, continued work.

Adamson: Russ Osterman thought it was seldom, if ever, they actually got the 15 percent, but that was the number Charlie always—

Boyd: So it was profit and a little contingency maybe in there.

Adamson: One of the things that George [Hutton] said was every time he'd get on the phone with Charlie and he'd say he had a project, Charlie would shoot him down because he didn't have his 15 percent. He said, "I'm not going to have any work if I have to get 15 percent out here." [laughs]

Did you ever hire a Pankow person into Webcor?

Boyd: The guy that I hired in Toledo was a brand-new engineer, and then when we had work, he actually approached me. We hired him. And then there was another engineer that worked for Ross for a while that approached Ross, we hired. So two people. And then one guy that was laid off, we hired. He was a timekeeper, office timekeeper on the site, in the trailer on a site. We hired him. He was a pretty old guy at the time. And that was all.

Adamson: I think you mentioned this—this is my last question—what was your first impression of Charlie Pankow?

Boyd: Well, I mean, he—you never met him, did you?

Adamson: No. They started this project after he passed.

Boyd: He was so charismatic and he had this little laugh, you know, that was so engaging. It was like, wow, he's quite a guy, he's quite a guy. I was just very impressed with him.

Adamson: How should we best understand Charlie Pankow's contributions to the construction industry?

Boyd: Well, I think he contributed a lot and he stayed involved with those industries afterwards, like you talk about American Cement [Institute] and so forth. And at Purdue, I mean, gosh, he did a lot of good at Purdue. They loved him there. Unfortunately, they named the civil engineering school for another guy, William Lyles. I don't know if you know them.

Adamson: No.

Boyd: A big pipeline company out in California that also made big contributions, but I think Charlie did more for the civil engineering school. I mean, he made contributions everywhere. City of Hope, I know he was big in that.

The only thing that, in retrospect, upsets me a little bit is that all these people that left had lawsuits with him. I didn't think that would happen. I was totally loyal to him [when I worked for him].

Adamson: Well, it's my understanding that the development side, their ownership side, obviously got work for the construction company, but it was sort of the source of a lot of—

Boyd: The suits was splitting up the properties?

Adamson: Well, eventually it was the source of the acrimony, but it was the source of—between George [Hutton] and Russ Osterman and Charlie Pankow, they made a lot of money on their development. And so it was the unwinding of that aspect, not their—

Boyd: But George's involvement, they were all Hawaiian projects.

Adamson: Right, they're all Hawaii.

Boyd: And Russ also had other projects with Charlie that were not Hawaiian.

Adamson: So the three of them were never involved. It was either Russ and Charlie or George and Charlie, George and Charlie in Hawaii. My understanding, most of the projects, the AT&T—

Boyd: Oh, yeah, downtown in San Francisco.

Adamson: —and PT&T, those two buildings were the first of their—they got in on as merchant or developers.

Boyd: You know, funny, the AT&T building, we had just started Webcor and we heard about it somehow and we said, "Let's just submit a proposal out of the blue." And we did. Of course they did the job, but Russ, years later, said to me, "You guys threw a little monkey wrench in our project there." [laughs]

I said, "Oh, well, sorry, Russ, but we were trying to get a deal."

Adamson: And then they had a few buildings in Washington and Oregon. I think they tried to start an office up there, too. That didn't last too long, in Seattle.

Boyd: Did Ross tell you about how Russ Osterman used to buy jobs out? Ross was in Rochester, building a department store. So Russ said, "Get a bunch of miscellaneous iron bids and get drywall bids," or whatever. Ross would get all the bids and he [Russ] said, "Okay, the bottom five guys in each category. I'll be in town on a certain day. Get them all into the office. Get all the drywall guys here at eight o'clock."

And Ross said, “All together, sitting in the lobby together?”

He said, “That’s what I want.” And then he’d go in the back room and he’d bring them in one at a time, and they’d go out like a beat dog, and all these other guys all wondering. [laughs] So he thought that was very strategic to have them all looking at each other—they knew each other, you know, and the miscellaneous guys would be in there. Oh, god.

Adamson: That’s how he bought out the subs.

Boyd: Russ did really tight budgets. Whew. I saw some of the budgets he made for some of the work I was on as an engineer. Holy crap. This fine grade [item], this [is] one dollar? One dollar? I mean, guys were making three dollars an hour. How do you charge, by twenty minutes? Pretty funny.

Adamson: Did Pankow pay well?

Boyd: Well, I didn’t have any experience, but then when I left school, the average engineer made 6,000 a year, 500 bucks a month. That’s what he offered me, and I accepted it and that was kind of standard. But I didn’t even try for more.

When I left Kiewit to go to Pankow, he said, “I’ll pay you what you’re making. I’m not going to pay you any more than that.”

When I finally agreed, I said, “Okay.” I thought he’d offer me more to get me to go, but he didn’t.

Adamson: Alan Murk told the story that when Charlie started his company, Alan's father said he should stay with Kiewit because in a year Charlie would be bankrupt and Kiewit wasn't going anywhere. I was just wondering if there were any people on the Kiewit side who tried to persuade you to stay.

Boyd: Tom Paul was the guy who was running it, the L.A. office, but he was a heavy guy, you know, heavy construction. Charlie was just running a little building division out of that big division, and he came out and talked to me when those guys left and offered me the project management position, which I took. He was a straight shooter. He'd come through the ranks of a carpenter, like a lot of those guys did, carpenter up to project manager up to, you know, high places.

Charlie, like you said, he had no graduate engineers until George Hutton, and I came in the same year, and Ross. He realized that's the future, I'm sure, but he had all those really good, well-trained carpenter guys, Ralph Tices and Hendersons and Murk. Murk told me that his father had been there years and years when I talked to him on the phone about—I got this book. Thank you for this.

Adamson: You're welcome.

Boyd: And I said, "I'll start reading this." So I couldn't put it down. In two days I had finished it.

Adamson: Great. That's good to hear.

Boyd: It brings back good old memories.

Adamson: So was the San Mateo Bridge the only non-building project that Charlie did, and he did it because of the slipforming?

Boyd: I think he thought that he could cut a fat hog in the ass. [laughs] He was "Slipform Charlie." They called him "Slipform Charlie." I said, "Wait a minute. It's a doughnut shape. How do we keep it from caving in?" Well, we used zero-slump concrete and it's there for, like, three minutes, and the form passes and it hangs on.

Adamson: And the bridge is still there.

Boyd: Yeah. Yup.

Adamson: Well, I thank you, and I think we can end it there.

[End of interview]