

Oral History Interview

with

ALBERT W. FINK

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and

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By Michael R. Adamson

Adamson: So tell me about your university training and your work experience prior to joining Pankow.

Fink: My university training, I went to—it's Case Western Reserve right now. It was Case Institute of Technology at the time, in Cleveland, Ohio. I went through a civil engineering program, so I graduated in June 1966 from Case.

It was a good economic time at that time, and I had quite a few number of job offers, actually had the highest-paying job offer, I think, of our whole graduating class, and it was the L.A. County Flood Control. So, anyhow, I went to Los Angeles and I was on a one-year training program, and I really didn't think that was for me to begin with. Part of the reason, I guess maybe I should quickly—I guess it's not proper to say this, but Vietnam was going on at the time, and the government actually issued a whole program where you could be exempt if you had a critical occupation, essential activity and critical

occupation, and so this L.A. County Flood Control had that. It was paying the highest. It was in California. I thought, "That sounds great." So I'm off to California.

I went through the L.A. County Flood Control for one year on a training program. We had a different department each month, and at the end of each month, then the department head would call us in. I remember one in particular called me in and, "What do you think of our division?"

I said, "You know, I think you could basically get rid of everybody here. I think we could just do away with this division. It would be more efficient and it would be more cost-effective for the taxpayer." They didn't quite like that.

There was another one I remember where he said, "Well, do you have any suggestions or ideas?"

I said, "You know, there's a lot of valuable property here that has flood control channels. Why don't we just put some kind of precast planks for a structure over it, and then you can build parking garages or parking area, or some of these areas you can put retail."

They said, "You know, Al, you just don't understand. We're getting a lot more money than we can spend here. That's why you're on a training program. You're trying to make money. That's not the idea of this program."

So when my one year was up, I quit, and I actually called Bechtel in San Francisco and I think I just told them, "I'm planning on coming down to work for you." I don't know if they ever gave me an offer, even. Pretty cocky, I guess. I mean, they did give me an offer, so I went to San Francisco. That was in 1967. That was the hippie days, and it was kind of a neat time, actually. I was single at the time in San Francisco,

and there were a couple other guys. We all had this great place right on the water in Tiburon, and it was a good, fun time.

But at Bechtel I was working as an engineer. I did a fair amount of design work, structural design work, which was fun and good. In those days, actually, it was right before computers actually started to catch on, so we actually had slide rules, and I think, in a way, the structural design was almost a little more intuitive. We did some things that you probably know—Hardy Cross, if historians want to take a look at it, it's a moment distribution outfit [analysis] that's pretty intricate, but you could actually get a feel for how that structure moves.<sup>1</sup>

Adamson: What was the name again?

Fink: Hardy Cross. Look it up. Hardy Cross. I think it's one of the early ways of analyzing a structure.

Adamson: So you're designing bridges, dams, buildings or—

Fink: No, buildings mainly. The very first—this doesn't have to do with Pankow, and if I'm talking too much, let me know. But the very first thing I designed, there's a little—should I tell you a quick story?

Adamson: Yes. Go ahead.

Fink: The very first thing I designed was—I mean, I’m out of school. The Flood Control was a worthless organization, I mean civil service and all that, and I’m trying to make money for them, and they said, “Hey, you got the wrong program.” [laughs] So Bechtel, at least, is a good company that’s concerned about what things cost. I was working on a cofferdam for an intake structure. It was on the Missouri River, actually, and it was for a coal-fired power plant. This cofferdam was out of MZ sheetpiling, that linked together, double row, and in between it was, I think, bentonite clay to keep it waterproof, and this thing went down about, I don’t know, fifty feet or so. I mean, it was deep in the water.

I did the design. I had field guys come in that I really, really appreciated these field guys would tell me about the nitty-gritty of how it goes together and all this. But my responsibility was to do the structural design of this structure that was going to have pretty enormous loads from water loads on the outside of this. It’s like a box, a box in the ground with the bottom that’s out, so just the sides of this thing, and it’s down, the sheetpiling are going down quite a ways.

I had two rows of—it’s called a whaler. It’s a horizontal, 36-inches-deep beam that went horizontally all around the perimeter and there were two of these, and it was about 100 feet by 150 feet, so it was large. I still remember that I had this big 14-inch-wide flanges that took that load from the perimeter, and it’s like if you put a box in the water, it’s going to tend to cave in. But around the inside perimeter, you had this whaler system that kept it from collapsing.

So I issued the design. It was before computers, much computer work, and CAD and all this, and I drew up the drawings myself. The guy that I worked for, he was retiring and he really wasn’t involved much at all. The guy, honestly, wasn’t a very good

engineer. I asked him questions, and every time I'd ask him a question, he'd say, "Yeah, that's good. You're doing a good job." So he never gave me much feedback or instruction.

I said, "You know, it's really important how this thing proceeds when they start taking the water out of this. We have to be real careful that these whalers are in, otherwise you're going to put more load and it's going to bend. There's a possibility of this whole thing kind of collapsing inward." This was the old days when you'd have to actually handwrite your notes, so I said, "I'm going to put my list of notes, and I'm going to call them Very Important Notes." You never see that on drawings. I mean, I've never seen it, and it was the first thing I ever did, so I didn't know any better.

My boss said, "Yeah, that's a good idea." I put a whole sequence of what you can do and how you de-water it, when you're supposed to put the whalers in, and the whole sequence of the construction requirements. So anyhow, I'm finished with this and on to something else. I think it was the structural design of—it was actually a plant. It's this ore recovery plant or something.

Anyhow, but I'm at work on a Monday morning, I think, and my friends always come across this way. They're kind of laughing, they say, "Did you hear what happened over the weekend on your cofferdam?"

I said, "What are you talking about?"

They said, "Well, your cofferdam collapsed."

I said, "What are you talking about?" And it actually didn't quite collapse. I said, "How can that be? Jeez." Here I thought I was really being conservative, and, in fact, maybe two months earlier, I was going back to—I'm from Cleveland, Ohio, Case, right?

And I stop at the job site, and the superintendent—it's a big, huge job, bigger than any of the jobs we have at Pankow. I'm out there. The superintendent takes me out. I'm this young engineer. He says, "Let me show you how you fucked up. Let me just show you what you did." He said, "Do you know what a 36-inch-wide flange looks like?"

I said, "Well, I haven't seen one, but I understand. I have the thickness of the web and the flange."

He said, "Let me show you all this." So he takes me out, and he's showing me these—and they were, they were huge members, you know. The 14-inch-wide flange members that were taking that compressive load were big, and he's making me feel like—he says, "You engineers, you're so goddamned conservative, I can't believe it," and he's giving me a lot of crap about it.

I'm feeling like, oh, shit, I guess I was way too conservative, you know.

So two months later, I'm coming in my office on Monday, and my buddy says the thing collapsed. I thought, how in the hell could that be? The superintendents tell me I'm way, way, way too conservative and there's no way this thing could collapse. As it turns out, they didn't put the whalers in. They kept drawing the water out, so it's basically a tub in the water, and they kept drawing the water out over the weekend, even, and they weren't putting in this whaler system that I had designed, at the time when they were supposed to.

It was the poor subcontractor that had the drawings, and I think the superintendent probably didn't pay any attention. He probably said, "Screw it, the way it was designed." But the thing actually bent in a little bit. But they weren't following—

Adamson: Your Very Important Notes.

Fink: —my Very Important Notes, yeah. So the poor subcontractor, Bechtel, went back and said, “Our engineers are so responsible, they put all these notes down of how you’re supposed to proceed, and you just ignored it.” And as a result, this thing pushed in, and they had a real hard time trying to readjust this damn thing. But my Very Important Notes was what saved the day. [laughs] But when I heard about it and then I went, “Jeez,” here’s the first thing I do is a design, and that’s going to be it for my career.

Adamson: Someone who goes to Case Western or Case Institute of Technology obviously has some idea of what they want to do, I would think. So you had this idea of doing construction very early on?

Fink: Oh yes. My dad was a painting contractor. Even in Cleveland, Ohio, when I’d see construction, even as a kid, even, I’d stand there and watch it. We have a property back in Ohio that, as kids, we used to build little bridges and things. Yeah, it was always kind of a thing that I wanted to do.

Adamson: So from the notes you sent me, you didn’t stay at Bechtel very long, though. Did you see it as a career?

Fink: I started at Bechtel, like I said, in 1967, and then I came over here in 1970—I mean to Hawaii. So I left Bechtel in 1970. The reason I left Bechtel, actually, all of us guys

that worked there, everybody's kind of going their own way. One guy, his father had a civil engineering firm. The other guy's going to do something else, and one of the guys wanted to go to Hawaii and get a master's in business, and he said, "We're all single. Why don't you just come along and buddy and all that?"

And I said, "Okay, maybe I'd do that."

So I quit, and actually Bechtel, the guys I worked for, really seemed pretty disappointed that I'm leaving. I said, "Well, maybe I'll come back, I don't know, but I'm going to go and get a master's in business just for the heck of it in Hawaii." I'd never been to Hawaii before. So I left. The guy that was going to be my—because I had never been to Hawaii and didn't know anybody, but he ended up getting married, so he never even came over. So I went myself.

So I was there for one year. I actually had kind of an accelerated program, and I ended up getting this MBA. After that, it was a busy time in Hawaii and I thought, "Well, I'll look around here." George [Hutton] could even tell you this story here a little bit, just real quick. There's too many stories probably in there.

Adamson: No, that's fine. That was my next question, how did you end getting hired by George?

Fink: I think it was June of 1971, and I had a little more to go yet on my program, but I could do some of this in the evening. I thought, "Well, I'm going to look around here a little bit." I drove around the island, and they were building the Turtle Bay project on the North Shore, Del Webb. In fact, George could tell you that story too. But I'm there, I



see Del Webb, so I called, I don't know, whatever day it was I'm deciding, before cell phones and everything, I decide, okay, I'm going to see if I can get a job here. No ad in the paper, but I'd driven by, and they were just starting this thing. So I called Del Webb up and I said, "Do you need an engineer in the field or civil engineer?"

He said, "Oh, yeah, we really do. When can you come by and talk to me?"

I said, "Well, I'm not doing anything right now. I guess I could drive out there."

So within about an hour from when I'm thinking about this thing, I'm out there, and the guy wants me to start the next day. He said, "How much do you want?" And I gave him right about what I started with or what I left off or a little bit more. He said, "How much do you—?" And I told him whatever it was. He said, "Okay, you're hired. Can you come in tomorrow?"

And I said, "Jeez, I was just thinking about this an hour ago. I wasn't thinking of starting tomorrow. Give me a little bit of time." It was like on a Monday or Tuesday or something.

He said, "You're going to have to let me know by Friday. I'm going to hold this open for you, but I'm going to have to know. Otherwise, I'm going to let somebody else. I'd like to have you work for me, but you're going to have to tell me."

So either that day or the next day, I see an ad in the paper from Pankow, so I called George. And George, I think it took a day or two, but we went out to lunch together, and George took me to the job that Red [Metcalf] was on. It was already under way. It was called Kauluwela Elderly [175 apartments, 22 stories, started December 1970; completed December 1971]. The way George tells it, and I can understand this, so George tells Red, "I have this guy who's kind of hippie-looking, has this longer hair,"

and he said, “I think he might be a good guy, but you’re going to have to have him cut his hair,” and all this so. Those were the days, right?

So I called George back. I said, “You know, I’m really interested.” After we had lunch, I said, “I’m interested in working for Pankow. I have an offer right now from,” I even told George, “Del Webb out here, but the guy has to know by Friday.” So I said, “George, you’re going to have to tell me pretty soon here. Otherwise, I might take that job.” Ask George about this. So George felt like he was being pressured a little bit here. He’ll laugh about this.

So George wanted to save me from working for Del Webb, he said, so he said, “Okay, you got the job.”

So I started probably that next week or whatever it was. Started with Red as a superintendent on—it’s this project right here [points to photo on table]. Here it is right here. We finished it in 1971, so I was there when our slipform was up about here so we were slipping it.

Adamson: About halfway up?

Fink: About half, maybe two-thirds, even. We were up a fair distance. I didn’t even know what a slipform is, to be honest with you, and I was there to finish it up too. One of the things I remember, I didn’t realize any of this at the time, but some of the finishing and finishing the project and the finish work is always a pain, and we had, I forget, I think it was these units that was—175 units sold to the elderly. It was [an] FHA Elderly

Housing Project, and it was subsidized. I think it was like maybe a two-bedroom was something like \$17,000 a unit or something.

I remember one of the things that wasn't bought out or finished up was the landscaping. One of the things that kind of goes to show you a little bit how we would do things. So I think George or somebody said, "Okay, we still need to buy out the landscaping, and we have a landscape plan, but you're going to have to work with the landscape architect and figure it all out." And he said, "By the way—." I think it was \$5,000. He said, "You have \$5,000 to do the landscaping," for a big project like this. But that was a fair amount of money in those days, but it wasn't much even then.

Adamson: Yes, it's like fifteen or twenty now.

Fink: Yeah. So for a big project, that was virtually nothing. So I got with the landscape architect, and I didn't know anything much about landscaping at all, but I said, "You know what we ought to do is, let's plan for what this is going to look like ten or fifteen years from now. If you want trees, let's plant these trees so [that] in fifteen, twenty years it looks good. Let's not worry too much if it's going to look okay now, but let's look to the future." So that's what we did, and I've gone back there recently, and it looks great. So these little trees that we planted, they're huge trees now.

So that was my first project. It was a good start, and Red Metcalf always had been my mentor. He's obviously a very good friend. I didn't know much about the real world of construction, so Red and I worked together on this. So then Red went on to the next project.

Should I just keep going here?

Adamson: Sure.

Fink: So the next project we worked together on, it's The Esplanade [209 condominiums, nine stories, started October 1971; completed September 1973]. Let me look for that. Maybe hold off for a second. It's one of the first slipforms. Maybe we should document that too. Should we?

Adamson: Sure.

Fink: Want to talk a little bit about the slipforms?

Adamson: You wanted to finish up on Kauluwela?

Fink: Well, let me go back to Kauluwela Elderly before we jump on to the next project. I think this may have been the second slipform. There was another Kauluwela project [126 co-op apartments, 21 stories, completed January 1971] that was more like a square footprint, and I think we did a slipform. You'd have to ask Red to see if that's the case, but I think this was probably the second slipform project in 1971 that we did in Hawaii. Just real briefly, the slipforms, I think, prior to the ones used for buildings in the earlier days were ways of forming a structure for silos. A slipform is basically building a form. In our case, it ended up being four feet high with plywood.

This job, by the way, on Kauluwela Elderly, maybe just a quick little—me and my stories here. On Kauluwela Elderly we had these tongue-in-groove wood staves that were one inch, a nominal one inch thick, it's like a flooring, and it was forty-two inches high. We had a number of people that had done slipforms, I think more, like I said, on silos and so forth, but typically this form was forty-two inches high.

We had air-jacks and we had special air-jacks later on that were actually fabricated or built by one of the guys that—Herb Walker was his name. So Herb actually made jacks, I think in Mexico, these air-jacks. We have some at MidState [Precast, Corcoran, California]. I think the Smithsonian might want one or the Pankow Foundation. You ought to actually keep an air-jack because that's a—I have some videos, the one that you just saw [on Pearl Two (317 condominiums, 32 stories, completed January 1975)], I have one that's lengthier than that, that shows the slipform operation. I'll have to dig that up if you want it.

But anyhow, these air-jacks are on a jack rod, and it basically pulls this form up. The form, like I said, was one-by-fours or whatever that are joined together, and there's a system that holds this thing together. I'd have to show you a picture or something. It's forty-two inches high.

When we did Pearl, I think Pearl One [301 condominiums, 22 stories, completed January 1975] was actually built with these wood staves again and then Pearl Two, I'll talk about that in a minute, but I'm talking about the slipform now. But Pearl Two is the first one we used plywood. I remember even Red said—I don't know if he'll admit this, but I think questioned—we had it at forty-two inches, and plywood obviously is four feet, four-by-eight, and I couldn't figure out why not just have a four-foot piece. Nobody

knew why they were forty-two inches. That's how it had always been done, forty-two inches.

I finally found out from Herb Walker that the staves that were used in the early slipforms when they were used for silos were forty-two inches, but those staves came from used whiskey barrels. So the whiskey barrels were forty-two inches. That's the reason the slipforms were forty-two inches. It had nothing to do with anything else. So at that time that's when we went to the four-foot plywood. It would have been foolish to take plywood and cut off six inches. No reason for that.<sup>2</sup>

Maybe while we're on this, let me just talk a little bit about the slipforming, because relative to innovation, this allowed us to build probably faster than anybody else built in Hawaii at that time. We were building typically on a three-day cycle, which means that every three days we'd put up another floor. So that's moving pretty fast. You can see how big this floor is here. In the case, as an example, like one of the last slipforms that we did in Hawaii, I think the footprint was about 14,000 square feet. It was Honolulu Park Place.

I think it's important to explain a little bit more about what it is and what the implications are and how it works. So this form allows you to pour all of the vertical concrete at one time, and it's done without typically a poured-in-place structure. You'd take a form, you set it, you pour the concrete, and you strip it. Then on top of that, you put your horizontal structure, your slab, and you keep repeating that. In this case, what you do is there's a form that you only put up once, and that form moves. The horizontal structure, the slab—actually, there's a forming system called flying forms that we'll talk about, too. But the horizontal structure is tied together with reinforcing that goes through

the wall through these blockouts. That's typically how we did this and how we did all of our other slipform buildings, and there were probably a couple dozen of those that we did. But that allowed us to do this three-day cycle. Just so conceptually it's understood what the advantage is, and to try to keep it in real simple terms, if you build a wall or a column and you finish all of those columns and you have a forming system where you set the form, you pour, you put the reinforcing and so forth, but you pour that wall, you pour that column, and then you strip it away. You have to strip it away first before you get a forming system for the floor. So then you do a column, strip it away, you put the form work up for the horizontal, for the slab, and then you pour the slab, and then you do the same, repeat the same process.

In this case, though, you have two critical operations that are going on concurrently. One is building the horizontal structure, and that goes on pretty much independently of the horizontal—I mean, the vertical slipform goes on independently of the horizontal structure. In other words, just again in real simple terms, anything you want to do, let's say we're in an office right now and you want to set up this office. If you have two people doing it, you can do it in a certain amount of time. But maybe you could have six people. Somebody's putting together the file system, somebody's putting together the desk, somebody's putting together the files over there, so you're doing that work concurrently. So if you can do this work concurrently, you're going to do it faster.

So we were able to do this on a three-day cycle by doing every three days you'd put up a floor, a horizontal, every three days you'd put up a section of wall. So that allowed us to finish this at a pretty rapid pace. The advantage to the owner is that the time period to build this thing is faster, so he can start getting revenue faster, he can sell it

faster, and the interim financing is less. So by doing it faster, there's a number of advantages. One is the advantage to the owner of financing, but the other also is just a good part of the cost of building is everybody you have on that site that's not directly pounding nails and moving forms. That's what we call the indirect cost, if you want to call it that. So that's minimized. So instead of taking two years to do this, we did it in one year.

So we were getting quite a reputation of being innovative. We were really known as the slipform contractor, and nobody else was quite able to do that. It's an art and a science and everything else, and tricky and easily screwed up, and we did our share of that too. So that's the first job I was on, is this Kauluwela Elderly job [points to photo on table].

Adamson: Does the slipforming save on the actual number of people on the job site?

Fink: Oh, yeah, substantially. So the productivity or the number of hours required to do vertical forming on a slipform, as an example, and the advantage is that you set it up once. So the higher you go—in this case it's twenty-three stories, Kauluwela Elderly. There's another one that we're looking at right now, this is Pearl Two, and you can see this is thirty-two stories. Pearl Two is thirty-two. This is twenty-three.

So once you set that form up, you can just keep going. So it has a real advantage by the taller you go, because you set the form once. It takes more time to set the form up, but once you get it set up, you don't set and strip it. So typically when you're pouring a wall section, pouring concrete, like I say, you will set it up, and there's a lot to setting up



a pour-in-place form, pour the concrete, you strip it, and then you pour a slab and you go through the same process. So the set and strip is a time-consuming, costly operation.

The slipform, you put it up once and you just keep moving it. There's cost involved, obviously, in the slip operation and everything associated with it. You asked if there's less people. There are significantly less people once you get the form set up and operating it.

Adamson: So you're saying Pankow was the originator of doing this or just the best user of it or the expert in this area?

Fink: I think all of the above. It would be actually good to check the history, because I think prior to this, the application was simple structures where, like I mentioned before, they were silos, maybe grain silos, but this was an application for the entire building. I don't know, I think maybe Charlie may have done something like this with Kiewit.

Actually, maybe Red would be a good person to ask too. He might know more about this. In fact, somebody else, I know you've talked to Dean [Stephan] already. Maybe George would know when you talk to George.

I think Pankow and us in Hawaii, I mean, it sounds a little cocky, but I think we were kind of the world-renowned slipform people in the country doing it in Hawaii. Now, slipforming was being used. We weren't the only ones. There were other people around the country. But I think we were kind of the—and I'm hesitating saying this because I'm not sure if it's right or not, but I think we were one of the originators. I think we probably did more buildings and perfected it more than anybody else, I believe, and it

was primarily done in Hawaii. There were probably, I don't know if it was twenty buildings or what the number is. It'd be good to find that out, but we did quite a few in Hawaii. We did a few here in California, but it was a process that we used pretty regularly.

Right now we're looking at some pictures. We ought to make some copies of this one. I can do that for you. I'm looking at Pearl One, Pearl Two, Kauluwela Elderly. Those were all slipform projects. In fact, here's Century Center [a condominium-office complex, 42 stories, completed in July 1978]. I think the core was slipped on that. This is a job I was the project engineer on, Wilder at Piikoi [condominiums, 30 stories] slipform building. We have four pictures that we're looking at right now. These are all slipform vertical. The vertical elements were all slipformed.

You can see on this picture I'm showing you right now, the picture of Wilder at Piikoi. This wall right here is slipformed, and you can kind of see at the joint—I don't know, if you look at it carefully, but what we would do is when that wall is basically extruded from the form. There would be a platform that was hung below the slipform, and it was called our finishing platform, finisher platform. We would actually have finishers as this form goes up, and a sand finish would be applied to the exterior of the wall. To be honest, the finish sometimes at the slab line you could see a little bit. Nobody going by today, probably no buyer would even look up there and say, "Jeez, that isn't quite a perfect finish." And it is true. I can actually see these slab edges here, or the slab. I can see the joint where the slipform stopped. Probably if you showed these pictures to anybody else, I doubt that they could even pick that out at all.

Adamson: So just as an aside, in the video of Pearl Two that we looked at, I believe you said that Pankow up to that point had done about two dozen projects, twenty-five buildings before Pearl Two, so they were well known in Hawaii.

Fink: Oh, no, I don't think there were that many.

Adamson: Oh, okay. I was just wondering, the buildings prior to this didn't use slipforming used more conventional methods?

Fink: The first job that George—and he'd be the one to speak to this one, but the first job that George did when he came to Hawaii, and that was, what, 1965, I guess, it was in downtown Honolulu, it was the Campbell Building, and I think it was precast concrete. Like I said, Kauluwela Elderly, I think, was the second one. I think the other Kauluwela job, I don't have a picture of that, was the first one.

Adamson: So the projects in between '65, '70, '71 were more conventional?

Fink: That's right. They were all conventional, yeah, and there was a lot of precasting on top of that. I was very fortunate to be here, I mean be in Hawaii and be involved in the slipforms. What we were able to do, and George was really a master at being able to get a continuity of work, pretty much. The economy just like now, but maybe not quite as exaggerated as today, would go up and down. We were able to pretty much retain a crew that knew what they were doing. This was a tricky little thing to put together, so we

were pretty fortunate to be able to go from one project to another, and we were able to get involved early on.

If you're going to do a slipform, it has to be designed as a slipform. If you're going to do a good flying-form building, you want to be involved early on. That was kind of our lead-in to getting a project, but it was a way of being able to get it working with the design team so it was designed in a way that was economical and could be slipped, and we could use flying forms. So it would allow us the entree of getting involved early on with the developer, with an owner, and be able to guide the design to be able to slip a building, to be able to use flying forms and be able to give an economy to the owner, and, obviously, we, in turn, would have a little bit higher fee expectation out of it. So if something would normally cost \$150, I'm just using a number here, and you're going to give them basically the same product, but instead of costing them 150, it's going to cost them 140, and if out of the 140 you would normally get \$15 out of that, or whatever it might be, you might get a little bit more, but still what would normally cost 150 is 140, that's what he cares about.

Adamson: And he saves time.

Fink: So you're saving time and you're saving cost, and you're giving the same product in the end.

Adamson: Let's just talk for a moment, before we get back into the techniques and some of the buildings, how would George actually put together his team. Now, you said Red

Metcalf was already there, and then he hired you through an advertisement. He was looking for someone—

Fink: It was in the paper.

Adamson: —in putting together a project?

Fink: What actually happened on this Kauluwela Elderly, the project engineer that was on here, he wasn't doing the kind of job they wanted, so they were looking for somebody else. I mean, that's really what happened. I think they got rid of the project engineer and they were looking for a replacement. So that's how I got this job.

Adamson: So this core team you're talking about slipforming was you and Red, and what were some of the other people?

Fink: Yes, Red and myself, and there were guys in the field, a really good friend of mine that we're still close to. In fact, I'm going to go—this is a little aside here from Pankow. As a builder, Red is a good friend, a very good friend of mine, Red and Joanne, his wife. My wife just had her sixtieth. We had a surprise sixtieth birthday down in Ventura. Red, they have a great life right now up in Carson City. So Red came to the surprise birthday party. But then in addition, Tim Cahalane, the Cahalanes, came from Texas to Ventura for the surprise birthday party for my wife, Bev. You asked if anybody else. Tim was one of the guys that was—he really knew how to build these slipforms. He was a

carpenter. He later on went to work for a guy that worked for us, Bill Heine, and he's in Texas, American Constructors. So Tim is still with that company, American Constructors.

But the team I'm talking about, Tim Cahalane was about my age, a little younger, but he was a carpenter. When I first knew Tim and Cathy, we were like a bunch of young hippies. I think I have some pictures of him. He was probably looking about as scruffy as me as the time, I think. But Tim was very dedicated, very sharp guy. He was one of these guys that knew how to put the slipform together. But there were other guys. We had a lot of labor force from the Philippines, Filipino carpenters, and we had these teams and groups that knew how to do this and put it together, because it wasn't an easy thing to do, but we were able to keep these teams together, the field teams, and go from one job to another. Tim was the—I think he started out as a carpenter, and then he was a carpenter foreman, so he kept moving up the ranks like everybody else. But we were able to go from one job to another.

Adamson: So the broader point, then, is when Charlie left George on the tarmac, to basically find more work, building the organization was all George. There weren't Pankow people coming from the mainland.

Fink: No, that's right. What we ended up doing, the people that we had were building internally in Hawaii. So when I started on Kauluwela, there was a guy in the office. I don't know if you've heard of Dick Ackerson. Dick was our project estimator.

Adamson: I've heard the name mentioned.

Fink: So Dick was in the office. He was actually on this job I was going to tell you about, The Esplanade. He was the project engineer on this one, but he was doing the estimating and so forth. So we had the office team, but then the field team was primarily Red, but then we had other superintendents, obviously, so there were other—this Jack Grieger was on this one, this Wilder Piikoi. And sometimes there were people obviously from the mainland that came over for particular jobs. But other than a short part of Red's career, he was in Hawaii. Other than when I went to California for MidState [Precast], I was in Hawaii.

Should we take a break now?

[break]

Adamson: In your notes, you mentioned working on The Esplanade after Kauluwela Elderly, and you said there were several innovations on this project.

Fink: Yes. The Esplanade, I think this was a job, as far as I know, George [Hutton] got involved with this, and I was on this job very early on when we were starting. Actually there were piles. I was the engineer. The project engineer actually was Dick Ackerson. Dick was in the office at the time, but in today's structure, the organizational structure, Dick was really more of our—you know, we have a person called a sponsor that gets the

contracts written and so forth, so Dick was more involved in that, probably, than negotiating with the subs, getting the subcontracts, subcontract pricing and so forth.

This was a challenge from a lot of different perspectives. One, the architect, Leo Wou—ask George about Leo Wou. Charlie would chuckle—maybe not even chuckle so much about Leo. Leo Wou was an artist. Ask Red, even, and ask George what he thinks. But Leo basically—you can see, here's a picture of The Esplanade. You can see it's low-rise, it's a lot of articulation, in and out and up and down and all this. The details of how something was done wasn't up his alley. Leo, he'd kind of wave his hands and he'd tell you what he maybe—the drawings were poor, let's put it that way. If we had a set of drawings like we had on The Esplanade, and that was put out today, our people, we would have to basically redraw the drawings, and that's basically what we did.

In fact, at one point, we had a rec deck, and we had these rec deck structures that were recreational structures. There was a tennis court on top of one of the parking structures, and the drawings were so poor that as an engineer what I ended up doing, I just drew it out myself and submitted it as a shop drawing, basically did the drawings with some of his hand-waving and that's how we built it.

Adamson: Was this the first project you had worked with Leo?

Fink: Yes. Well, the first I did. We may have done—well, no, actually, Leo Wou was the architect on the first Kauluwela building. In fact, you could ask Red about that, because before I started with Pankow, the first Kauluwela, Kauluwela Phase One, I think it was called, was a Leo Wou project. So George and we were used to Leo.



But, you know, that gave us—maybe as a little aside, whenever we had a problem or challenge, we actually did something that was to everyone’s advantage by getting more involved. So in the case of The Esplanade, it was called Kaimala East Development Company, and I think it was a division of Castle & Cooke, because the same people that were the owners were also involved in Pearl One and Pearl Two.

What George was doing was developing a lineage of relationships with the people that could bring projects to us. So I think in the end, The Esplanade as a final product was well received. You can go out there today. I was out there just recently. It’s right along the waterway here, so you can come up with a boat. It was kind of funny, during—I think it was Christmastime, my daughter, who’s thirty years old now, her and her boyfriend, he’s a captain in the Coast Guard, but he took his little boat up here in the evening and we docked along the boat docks and kind of took a look at the whole thing. Even today, I think my wife has driven by there and everything, and my daughter had never seen it before, so it was pretty impressive. I mean, even today. This was 1973, so what is that? That’s thirty-five years later, thirty-six years later, and it’s still looking pretty good.

So this structure, that’s usually where we could put our primary input was the structure, and how fast you would move and how fast you could build it. What we ended up doing is coming up with a system. I’ll try to describe that, and feel free to interrupt me if it’s not becoming clear enough how we did this.

You know what a concrete masonry unit, CMU, block, concrete block, you know what that is, right? Most everybody does.

Adamson: You can explain it, though, for—

Fink: Okay. Concrete, that's a very typical way of building simple structures. The concrete block is typically eight inches or it could be twelve inches wide by eight by sixteen inches. So it's a block that a guy would lift in place and then he would grout. He would take one block at a time and put it together, and that's how you build. You're building with blocks. So a worker's basically taking a block and setting it in place. Typically, if you take two of them that are sixteen inches long, you put the third one on top of it between the two blocks. That's kind of typically how you would do this.

What we did on The Esplanade, though, was we used this block system and we prefabricated a wall section, so right now we're in an office, sitting in this office, and we have a wall. Let's say that this is a block wall right here, just as a way of conceptualizing it. So maybe the wall's twenty feet long and, let's say, eight feet high. We would make that up as one block wall. The units, the blocks themselves, were glued together with the two-part epoxy, and we actually had, I think, a drum and everything else to be able to mix this.

I think there was a way of mechanizing this to be able to—basically what we did is we put down on a very, very flat surface, we put down one course of block that's eight inches high, and then we would run these two beads of basic epoxy glue. Think of it that way. I think it was called Threadline. Again, Red could tell you a little bit more about it. But we would run that bead across, and then you'd set the next set of block on top of it.

One of the things I was involved in was kind of figuring out how we're going to do this. Most of everything that we would do, would be on a—and building buildings are

a real joint team effort. There's no one person that comes up with all the good ideas. When it's being built, obviously it's a big team that's building it. You're like an orchestra conductor as a superintendent or whatever role you have on the job.

But I remember kind of our general operations manager, whatever, his name was Lyle Sheppard, and I was the engineer. I guess I would be kind of considered if Dick was the project engineer, but he was more really like we call a sponsor right now, so I guess I was just referred to as an engineer. The first job, I was probably more like a project engineer, so the actual title designations we didn't pay much attention to in those days.

But anyhow, Lyle said, "Come up with a slick way of building these things," and Red, you would kick around ideas, and we were talking about a movable scaffold system. Lyle Sheppard even suggested to me, he said, "There's special equipment. There's going to be—," like the World of Concrete that goes on today in Las Vegas. I don't know if was World of Concrete. It was maybe more of an equipment show or something that was in Miami. So Lyle Sheppard said, "Why don't you attend that and take a look at some of this equipment and figure out a good way to do this."

That sounded great to me, so I came up with this thing and we looked at equipment, and we ended up getting something that was a movable—we had this scaffold that as you built it—if you can imagine this wall, as you're building the wall, you're going to get to a point where you can't easily put that block on. And the whole idea was to be able to have—today you would have a whole motion study and making sure the ergonomics are—we didn't know what that word meant at that time, but to make sure everything is set up properly.

But what we were looking at is we had a conveyor belt that would bring the blocks up to the guys. The guys are basically taking this block and putting it against—if you're building this wall and you had this setup that I'm just talking about, you have a conveyor belt that brings it up to movable scaffold and it has rollers on it, and the one guy on the end kind of puts it down and it comes rolling across. The guy just takes this block from here, and after you put that line of epoxy, then he just puts it on here.

So the guy is standing up. Right now I'm showing you where I'm standing up. So you're standing up here, and it's right at a very convenient waist height, and you take the block from where it's fed to you and you put it here and you put it here. And it goes about twenty times faster than if you're setting a block wall, you know, where you're buttering the edges and putting it down and all this.

But then you have a wall that's a hollow block wall that's all glued together, and then it's lifted with a crane, and you have reinforcing dowels that come up out of the slab. When you first set it up, you're pouring the slab on grade, and you have the reinforcing at the wall areas coming up, and the reinforcing is all located to be able to come up inside of the cell. Do you follow what I'm saying? It really worked out well. It was carefully planned. You would be able to set that wall over the reinforcing, and then you would put your—we've talked about flying forms and we can do that again in a minute, if you want.

But you would put up the formwork. Again, we're sitting in an office, but if you had the wall set in place here, and the dowels coming up a couple feet from the slab, maybe the number-five bars or whatever they were, I don't know. Then you'd put the wall in place, and then you'd bring a form in, this flying form, and that form forms the slab above, where our ceiling is here. But it forms the slab, and you're up on top of that

form and you're dropping reinforcing down in the cells, and that reinforcing extends above the slab by whatever the splice length is and then you drop the wall. So it was a very efficient way of building.

Adamson: This is all structural concrete. There's not the architectural finish?

Fink: Well, the block itself, the concrete block, was a special block, by the way, too, so it was typical concrete block, doesn't have the tolerance that this has, so we actually ground the top and the bottom, so the fit was much more precise. But that wall served as the form, and the outside of the wall, there was an exterior wall, like you see there in the picture, that was plaster. The inside was plaster, too. So all these walls were plastered. In fact, everything had—I don't know if you're familiar with Imperial plaster, but there's usually a couple—there's a brown scratch—there's the coats of plaster and then you put a final coat of a hard—it's almost like marble in the end. It's a very hard plaster, smooth plaster surface, Imperial plaster. So that's what's on the inside of the walls, on the interior. It was really a high-level plaster finish. On the outside, it was more of a skip-trowel finish and had a little texture to it.

But this job, it was pretty complicated. There were a lot of different buildings. The footprint, if you're familiar with what I'm talking about, the footprint is basically you take a horizontal section here. That's the footprint of the prints and steps on the ground here. It's a pretty large footprint. We were able to schedule this where we had, again, flying forms, where the form was one large form, was set in place in the building, and the buildings were basically duplicated, even though there were different offsets. As

you went around here, there were a lot different configurations of the building, but the basic element was the same.

So if a living room—I forget now if they were all the same bay size, but there was a lot of repetition, so you were able to take these forms and move them around. So on a typical high-rise building, you have a flying form, and usually there's two sets of forms that forms the entire horizontal surface and the slab. When you pour the slab, after you pour it, if you have post-tensioning in it, you have to stress it, you drop the form, and then bring it up to the next level.

If there's two sets of forms and you have one on floor six and one on floor seven, you take the form that was setting on floor five, and you bring it up to the top form. And that's what we did here. I don't know if we had two sets of flying forms or just one. There may have been just one. But we'd form one fairly large area at one time and then bring it up to the next floor.

I think the unique thing about The Esplanade was, first of all, there's always in a contract, you identify the scope, the dollar amount, and the schedule, so we were always good in all of those areas, and, in particular, the schedule was usually a tighter schedule. We were able to build it faster than most anybody else. By doing this Threadline wall system that I mentioned, it was faster. It turned out it was an efficient and innovative way of building that wall. We'd never done that before. So that was The Esplanade.

Adamson: You mentioned or noted that this project at the time was Pankow's biggest project, and this was in 1973, I believe. It just struck me that when I talked to Dean Stephan, he had mentioned that the Citizens Bank Building in Louisville, which in 1972

was a project that put Pankow on the map, as far as high-rise construction is concerned. So this '72, '73 period of time seems to be, for lack of a better word, I'm going to use the economist's moment of "takeoff" in terms of the firm's visibility profile and volume of business.

Fink: I would say, yes, that's true. Yes. I'm not sure when we did The Esplanade, it was the largest project I know dollar-wise in Hawaii for us, and I don't know if it was for the company. But you're right. Again, ask George about this, The Esplanade, because I think it did, it pretty much put us on the map here. This project is still a pretty prominent project in Hawaii. If you come over, talk to Linda [Kunnath] about that. I'll be glad to show you all of these projects here. But these are pretty impressive projects even today.

So we went from the same owner, and this was probably one of the keys to the business, is we would often go from one project to another with the same owner. So the owner is satisfied with this project, happy with it, and he wants us to do another one.

The next job that I was on after the Esplanade was Pearl One and Pearl Two. We have two pictures right in front of us here, I think, and obviously in sequence. It says on this picture here—we'll have to make some copies of it. Did I give you copies of this?

Adamson: No, we're going to make copies.

Fink: Okay. Esplanade, says it finished in '73. Pearl One, it says '75. I think it was probably like late '74, '75, because Pearl Two followed Pearl One.<sup>3</sup> These two projects, if you look at this, it says the owner is Pearl[ridge] Land Development Company, and this

says Kaimala East Development Company. But these were all subsidiaries of Castle & Cooke, as far as I know.

So we're basically working with the same people. You can talk to George. I keep telling you that. Bill Curlett, bring up that name. Bill Curlett [of Oceanic Properties] was the guy that was heading up this Esplanade. So it was basically the same group of people that were the owners, at least, of Pearl One and Pearl Two. These two jobs, this job in particular, Pearl One and Pearl Two, we were involved early on, and that's one of the keys to Pankow and to our business. We were involved early on in kind of setting up what we were going to do, how it would be built, and you can design a building so it's really efficient to build it. You can do the opposite, as is often done, where Charlie always—I think in Pankow we have to be a little careful, because it's a little exaggerated sometimes. Sometimes we look at what an architect might do and feel like there's not as much consideration in the building side of it, how you're going to build it. So it's important, from our perspective, and I think to get the greatest value, it's important early on in the project to integrate the design or at least—there's a term called design/assist. There's design/build. Those are somewhat different, and we can talk more about that.

But getting an early involvement with the person and the party that's going to build it and having that party involved so they know what they're doing and they bring value. If you talk to Dean, he always likes that concept, Dean Stephan. I mean, we all did, and Charlie. But you're bringing value to this where you're basically building something that it produces the result you're looking for at the lowest cost, which makes sense.



So on Pearl Number One, again, it was a slipform, three-day cycle. Every three days you put up a floor. You could see just by looking at this pretty easily that this building is pretty much like this one, except it's taller. One is twenty-two, this is thirty-two stories. So the learning curve actually from these two buildings is you did this one, and then we just go over here and we do the same thing, except we're going up higher.

For the whole crew, it was an ideal situation where the guys working here would jump over here, from Pearl One to Pearl Two, and the learning curve, everything that we needed that we had to figure out was already figured out when we did Pearl Two. So that allowed us really to accomplish what I mentioned before. I have an article here where, in fact, it was written up in the *Journal of the American Concrete*, August 1977. It says number eight, Proceedings B74 or whatever, and this is from the *ACI Journal*, and this is a reprint from it.<sup>4</sup>

What I'm showing you is that the cover says that overlooking Pearl Harbor, thirty-two story reinforced concrete building, and talks about it. It was constructed in slightly over eleven months, six and a half months ahead of schedule, so it was going to be a fifteen-and-a-half, sixteen-month schedule. We built the building in less than one year.

It consisted of, first of all, it was a thirty-two story building. So we did Pearl One. I mean, I'm jumping to Pearl Two because—I just showed you a video, and we're going to capture that, too, for the Pankow Foundation. I was the project engineer. Again, the project engineer role at the time was somewhat similar to project engineer/sponsor that we have currently, because I was out there, and the team between myself and Red—you know, Red used to tell me, I don't know, I think he really felt that way that it's a pretty

even team. I mean typically the project engineer works for the superintendent, the superintendent will tell them what to do, and that's certainly happening on, like, the Allure project. You always work together closely as a team, but there was a lot of latitude that I had as the project engineer, and coming up with Red—Red basically said, "Let's figure out how quickly we could build this."

It was really a challenge to ourselves, and we liked to do that. So the idea was, okay, we're going to do a couple of things here. We're going to have a thirty-two story building, we're going to slipform it, we're going to have flying-forms, we're going to do a parking structure. I'm showing you a picture right now, but it was a two-bay parking structure, meaning that it's two sixty-foot bays. A typical parking structure has an aisle in the middle, and then on each side you park your cars, and that total is usually about sixty feet. So we have two bays at sixty feet with a ramp that keeps going up.

We ended up—let me talk a fair amount about this for a minute. We had a precast concrete parking structure and what we did is we—and maybe I'll explain. I'll kind of digress a little bit and talk a little bit about this. But we precast columns, and the columns had haunches on them, and the haunches received a beam that was sixty feet long, and the beam itself was post-tensioned. Should I explain a little bit about what all of that is or—

Adamson: No, I think I got post-tensioned from the article.

Fink: Okay. So nobody needs to know what that is. So it's different from prestressing, though, because we set up a precast plant that prestressed, so that's a cable that's straight. You pull it and it puts compression in the structure. This actually has a drape to it, a little

like the Golden Gate Bridge. It has a drape to it, and it actually puts an upward load on the beam itself to counteract the downward gravity loads.

We did the post-tensioning of the beams and we cast the beams onsite, so it was not a precast plant. The columns were cast on site. The beams were cast onsite, and we even had some pretty slick ways of—Red, again, and the whole team came up with ways of we would cast one beam with a form on both sides and then cast another beam and then we'd actually pour in between so we don't have to form it again.

Adamson: This is just for the parking structure?

Fink: For the parking structure. Then we got a crane in here. You can see there's a crane right here in the picture. The crane would erect—first of all, you'd pour the foundation. We had a way of engaging the bottom of the column in a collar-like, and then the column was erected, and then the perimeter of that collar was grouted, and the column was standing there, erected. Then we ended up placing these beams, and there's four levels of beams here. So there's the ground level and then three what we refer to as suspended levels. You keep going around the garage and you're working yourself out with the crane, so you're setting the columns and you set the beams.

Adamson: And the garage is going up while the condo building is going up at the same time.

Fink: Yes. So the whole idea of a fast cycle, and particularly this one that's a year, we're building the structure of the thirty-two-story building, we're building the parking structure, there's other site work that's going on, and in this case I showed you the video that we had here. We had a problem here that I've never seen since or before, really, where the concrete supply company had a problem with the batch plant somehow, and the concrete that was delivered for one particular day, that was the very first slip at the very bottom of the building, that takes the highest gravity load. You can imagine that as you come down through the building, as you add a floor, the load on the floor below and the walls accumulate from the one above. So at the very bottom is where you have the greatest gravity load, at least. And the greatest all the other loads, too, the horizontal load.

At the bottom of the building, the concrete that was supposed to be—I don't remember now whether it was 4,000 pounds per square inch [psi], but the compressive strength of that concrete was substantially less than the design strength. So it was probably 4,000 to 3,000 [psi] or something like that, or maybe less. But we had a real problem, and one of the possibilities was actually to tear the building down.

By the time we knew that the concrete was bad at the bottom, we were already up about ten floors. So you get a twenty-eight-day strength typically, but the fact that we were going every three days, maybe we were up to the eighth floor or something like that, and we were getting our concrete breaks indicating that the breaks were low, usually you have a seven-day break, maybe fourteen days. But twenty-eight days, the information on all of that was just looking really bad.

You saw in the video one of the kind of funny parts about the whole thing, we had a lot of fun in those days. I'm not saying we're not—today things are more, it seems like, a little more complex for the same end result. So when we started this project, I made up the schedule. Bill Heine was involved, too. Red said, "Make the most aggressive schedule you can, a doable schedule."

So I went overboard and actually made it about as aggressive as you could possibly make it with this three-day cycle, and I put it out. We put it out to the subs, and the subs came back, the subcontractors, and basically everybody kind of laughed at it and said, "You guys are crazy," because we were going to build this building that was going to take something like seventeen months—or, wait, what did I say before? Eighteen months? We're going to build from ground up a thirty-two-story building in less than a year, and we were going to do this structure with the slipform, and it was thirty-two stories, so we were doing that in ninety-six working days. I may have put a couple days in there for rain or something, but I put a date. I made up the schedule. It was the old days where you just have a bar chart. You had a little line with a tack on each end, and you knew that little line as you keep—it was very easy to see where you were, and where you were relative to that schedule.

So when we started the building, we were moving along pretty good, and when we got to this point where we knew there was a problem, Red—you gotta ask Red about this, because my recollection of the whole thing was Red had this twenty-five-dollar bet with millwork installer Bill Fulton, everybody said we were crazy, and Red and I were both adamant that we were going to do this. That was our vision of this thing, and we were going to get it done.

When I told Red about the problem, I think I told Red—and I wonder what he would say—I think I told him when it was like fourteen days, “These aren’t looking too good.”

You know, he said, “You worry about everything. What are you going to do, tear the building down? That never happens.”

So we get up and we get these confirmations of the breaks. This is one of the beauties of the old days, and I don’t know if it’s quite as easy today, but when we knew that there was a real problem, we got with the owner, then we got with the architect, Frank Slavsky, with the ready-mix supplier, everybody that was involved, and said, “Hey, we got a problem.” Nobody, as far as I know, nobody got a lawyer involved. We just tackled the problem and how are we going to deal with it.

The structural engineer was fabulous. We ended up, I think—let me see now. I’m not even sure. Was it Dimitrius Bratakos? I forgot who it was now. But what we ended up doing is coming up with a repair program where we would take out certain walls and have to have that repair finished. If we were on the tenth floor, by the fifteenth floor we had to take out a set of the walls, and it had to be done by the time we got to the twentieth, we got this other set of walls.

But we were able to concurrently continue to build on a three-day cycle and take the walls out at the bottom and remove them, replace them, and make it right. We had to gunite some of the walls, but we did all of that concurrently with building the parking structure. We were coming up with the finishes: That’s always a challenge. And we were building the structure itself. I was out there as an engineer, and I think we had like a field engineer. In fact, are we going to get this written out?

Adamson: Yes.

Fink: Okay. I'd like to get a write-up of what we're talking about. Can I get that?

Adamson: Oh, yes. Everything gets in the transcript, and then you read it.

Fink: Okay, so I'll get a transcript, because I want to tell all the guys right now. On this job that had probably the most massive problems that we ever had on a project, where we're taking walls out, Red said, "Hey, you can do it. Just figure out a way of keeping it going on the bottom. We'll keep repairing it." And all the repair work was paid for by the ready-mix company. So when we had a bill for \$50,000 for concrete, and we had another bill for \$45,000 for the repair, so the poor concrete supplier didn't—the insurance company ended up having to pay on this, I think.

We ended up doing all of this repair work, everybody working together harmoniously to get this done, and we finished this, and we finished the slip on the exact day that I had on my schedule that everybody said was absolutely impossible. Red had his twenty-five-dollar bet with Bill Fulton, and when we finished that slip, Bill came in with a bag and there was twenty-five dollars' worth of nickels. He poured them out on Red's desk. I have a good picture of Red sitting counting his nickels, to make sure he had twenty-five dollars in nickels. [To the recorder:] "Hey, Red, did you ever give me any of those nickels? I don't know if I ever got any nickels." [To the interviewer:] I think he kept his nickels to himself. I don't know.

Adamson: You got nothing?

Fink: Yes. [laughs]

Adamson: If that happened today, what factors would get in the way of completing—

Fink: I just think things are more complicated. I think in today's world we have a lot more criteria. You probably have lawyers involved. By the way, Charlie never liked lawyers, particularly, at all, because it would impede the process—rather than everybody working together, instead of having a hammer over everybody's head, if we're all sitting around this room and we have to get motivated by a hammer over your head, it's a little easier just to say, "Hey, we have a problem. Let's tackle it and get it done."

There was a fair amount of testing done. There would probably be a lot, lot more paperwork than there is today [*sic*]. Maybe as a little aside, a little side story here, when we were doing this project, I don't know if you know what blue rock is, but it's a very, very hard rock. The island of Oahu and all the Hawaiian Islands are basalt, it's a volcano, and basically the base rock is very, very solid volcanic rock. Blue rock is an extremely hard rock, probably two to three times as strong in compressive strength as the concrete itself.

So we had a mat pour. That's what the foundation was at this high-rise structure, so it wasn't on piles or anything. It was on a mat foundation. But the elevator core, usually because you have an elevator pit, so the area below the elevator pit goes down



below the bottom of this mat, and it might go down another two-foot-six, or whatever it is, below the typical bottom of this mat.

So we were excavating, and we knew that fairly low or fairly high was this ledge of basalt rock. So there was basically dirt on top of the rock. But in this case, when we dug down for the elevator pit, we were actually getting into the top level of this basalt layer. We had a hole ram, I think, out there, chipping down, because we were supposed to have reinforcing that went down another two-foot-six below the normal bottom of this mat foundation.

So we're in there chipping away, and Red's out there. You hear the chipping going on, and I'm out there with Red. And Red said, "Goddamn, why do we need this?" Again, talk to Red about this. He said, "Why do I need this bottom of the foundation here?"

I said, "Well, I don't think we do, and there's no reason for it. We don't need to chip away on this thing. All we need to do is come down a couple inches, and we'll put a little topping slab on this." I think we dug out maybe a little pit for the water to go into, in the elevator pit. So first of all, we're seeing what's going on and we're thinking about it. I said, "Well, let me give the structural engineer a call. I don't think there's any reason for this."

So he comes out to the job site. I have a pad of paper, just like this, almost, eight and a half by eleven, and we're sketching this thing out. I'm just taking a section through the drawing. We had to change the reinforcing a little bit, but we hadn't gotten to that point yet, so we didn't put the reinforcing in there. But the structural engineer is out there for twenty minutes. We both know—I designed some structures, and he knew that

it wasn't necessary to go down. It's basically a foundation, a big mat, with a little hole in it. But if it's all on this really hard rock, you know, that little hole doesn't mean anything.

So he signed—I might even have that somewhere. But he signed that piece of paper and said, "Approved." That was kind of like a shop drawing in today's world. That was done in ten minutes. Today if we tried to do the same thing, I mean, it would take—we call them RFIs, requests for information. The owner would get involved. He'd probably want some money back. We're not changing anything. We're just being more efficient about it, and instead of foolishly chipping away on this rock that's harder than anything else that you're going to put back, we just changed the design in a matter of minutes, ten minutes. I drew up a sketch, hand-drawn. Today we'd go on our computer and there'd be a nice beautiful CAD [computer-aided design] sketch.

We ended up using that as part of the as-built in the end. We changed how we built the thing, but it happened—I mean, I'm not knocking today's world of how we do things, particularly, but it's just things are more—I don't know if bureaucratic is the right word, but the kind of things that we were able to do that were direct and we had the structural engineer looking at it. He knows what we're doing and why we're doing it. The decisions were made much more quickly, and there were less people involved that didn't know what they were doing. You don't have to have everybody in the world involved in this. It was we're building it out there, and the structural engineer understands that it's the right thing to do, we did it, and, boom, it's done. Instead of talking about it for two weeks, if that was the case, we might as well chip it out and spend an enormous amount of money doing it.

I think this whole thing, this repair that you just mentioned, I think rather than everybody working together quickly to solve it, the ready-mix company looked at what they did, and they acknowledged that their batch plant was screwed up.

One of the things that was a problem for the ready-mix company is they made a claim to their insurance company. I'll say this, and I'm saying I'm not positive, I think it was Travelers Insurance, but I forget what it was now. But the insurance company had people out. We were very careful how we were going to keep all the repair costs so it's a separate record and everything else.

Then in the end, PCI, the ready-mix company, said that the insurance company, they were a big company, and the insurance company in the end said it wasn't a valid claim, it wasn't a right claim, there was no damages. Basically I think they said if we built the building and it fell over and killed people, then there would be a nice good insurance claim, but the fact that we were proactive and we fixed it—I think in the end, the ready-mix company settled with the insurance company. They got paid for a fair amount. But that was something that took a lot of time, so that kind of goes back to the bureaucracy of it all and saying maybe it wasn't resultant damage. I don't know. We weren't really party to the claim. All we knew is that it took forever to settle it.

Adamson: This building we've been talking about won the Associated General Contractors of America Build America Award.

Fink: Right.

Adamson: Did the people bestowing the award have any idea of the story of the repair on the concrete?

Fink: I don't think so.

Adamson: So it won the award for something entirely—for other reasons.

Fink: The primary reason—well, first of all, maybe it's not like the Oscars or Emmys or whatever else. You submit it. There's a lot of awards in construction where you submit a project for the award and then you write up everything that is a certain criteria either for innovation or whatever the criteria is, something really special about it.

This is what we put together in the submission. In fact, we'll make a copy of this, too. So kind of the emphasis was [title of the article]: "Team Cooperation Slashed Construction Time 35 Percent." So it talks about a thirty-two-story building that was constructed in slightly over eleven months, six and a half months ahead of schedule, and that's kind of the theme of this and then how we did it and what it is. It talks about the precast in the garage and how we did the precast. It talks about precast. We had these precast elements here along—they were actually the wall. The exterior wall was the interior wall, the closets. So all of the things that were more of the innovation and then the schedule itself that we adhered to exactly was part of the write-up.

I don't think we—we didn't at the time, we didn't want to kind of couple it. I mean, the reality was the fact that we had that major repair and were able to accomplish that, too, just made this more challenging that we accomplished that at the same time.

That wasn't part of the write-up. It would have been awkward just to—because this was the top award. It was like winning the Oscar or something. Like the Best Picture Oscar, this was the Best—here's a letter from the Associated General Contractors of America, and it's dated April 9, 1976. [reads] “Dear George, I would like to extend my sincerest congratulations to you on receiving the highest honor bestowed by the Associated General Contractors of America for construction excellence.” And the truth is when we finished, it was a well-built building. There was no residual problem once we did the repair. In fact, we made sure that the concrete was really good when we repaired it.

So this was the National Build America Award. [reads] “Your work on the construction of the Pearl Two condominium project is a tribute to the ingenuity and never-say-die spirit of the general contractor. You have every reason to be proud of your contribution to this great industry of ours, for it is you who are truly building America. Ben Hogan, president of GCA.”

So we got a plaque. I don't know where that plaque—it must be around somewhere. I think I have a picture of it somewhere. But we won the top honor. We submitted the project and won the top honor for this project. And this project probably had a problem that was more—if that happened today, man, we'd be all in turmoil. There would be all kinds of discussions whether we have to tear it down, what are we going to do, and everybody would chime in on it.

We looked at all the alternatives of: What are we going to do? What is the right thing to do. In the end, I think I would say as a company, our bottom line really was always what is the right thing to do and what is necessary. Does it have to be torn down?

Well, no, it didn't have to be torn down. That would have been stupid. We repaired it and went on. That was our Build America—well, here, in fact, this is the letter.

Adamson: The original letter?

Fink: Here's the original letter right here. We were going to throw all this stuff away. I got it out of the boxes here. So this is the original letter from the—in fact, maybe the Pankow Foundation should have that letter. However we want to do that, maybe it's better if you hold this and hold this too, but I need a copy of this.

Adamson: I think we'll make a copy of it.

Fink: Okay. Anyhow, that's the story.

Adamson: If I'm not mistaken, Renate [Kofahl] might have shown—I don't know if I've read the article, but she has a box of reprints upstairs.

Fink: Okay. There's probably about—

Adamson: She doesn't have this letter, but I think—

Fink: We had a lot of these.

Adamson: I think she might have one of those.

Fink: I captured one of these out of the boxes.

Adamson: Definitely not the photograph.

We've been talking about projects. I want to come back to more projects, but I want to step back a little bit, just learn more about Hawaii as a business and how Pankow operated there, and also your take on George and Charlie a little bit as people running their operations. So we kind of jump back to where you joined Pankow. One thing I'm interested in is your take on—compare Bechtel and Pankow as organizations and what struck you coming to Pankow.

Fink: Well, when I worked for Bechtel, I'm sure you know Bechtel's a very, very large organization. When I first started with Bechtel, it was Steve Bechtel, and maybe I even saw the guy or met him. I don't even know if I did. But it was a very, very large company and they had projects all over the world. Bechtel was a design/build general contractor, so we did the design of a project, and these were mainly very large industrial projects. They were power plants. They were actually one of the key people building nuclear power plants at the time. I don't know how many. I think Bechtel at that time when I worked for them in 1967 through 1970, either they were either the largest or one of the largest construction companies in the world, so they were all over the place.

In fact, the reason I left—I didn't mention this, but to compare what you just mentioned, the reason I left Bechtel at the time, I wanted to be in the field. I had been in

the office doing design work and so forth. My real interest was in doing the work in the field, seeing things going up. I was in the office doing the design work, so every day I'd just come to San Francisco and go up in the office, right? Actually, the reason I came to Hawaii at the time, there was a project in Libya that was going to be built, and with Bechtel I was actually thinking of doing, or planning on it, actually, and I think that's when [Muammar al-] Gadhafi came into power [September 1969]. I don't know really what happened at that time, but whatever it was the project was cancelled, and I was disappointed. It was one of those things in those days you would work seven days a week, probably pretty long hours, but then you would take off for two weeks and they had a full paid vacation to Europe for two or three weeks or something, then you'd go back on the job. I was single at the time and that really kind of appealed to me. I liked the idea of traveling a little bit and all the rest of that, doing something a little bit different. So I was already in that mindset. So when that was cancelled, all of the single guys in our place, we were all living together, everybody's doing something a little bit different. One guy was going to come here—to Hawaii, when I say “here”—and get a master's in business, and I decided I would do the same thing. Then he never came over, got married, so I just came alone.

So the contrast—I should just cut to the stories quicker—Pankow was a smaller company, a much smaller company than Bechtel. I mean, we were a large company, but we were smaller, and what each individual did had a more direct contribution to—and you could see the results. All the way through my career, one of the beauties of building in general, and particularly for Pankow, is you're on a project, like the one I just mentioned, for one year, you see a building go up and finished from just a plot of land



and a site, a year later you see the building. At Bechtel, I saw one of the projects, there was another one in Palau or something that I had no idea what that would've been like. But this was very direct. You'd be right there, you'd see it a day-to-day result working on the job site, which was really fun all the time for me.

You see the progress every day, and you have a camaraderie with a core group of people, the people in the office. I think in a lot of ways, Pankow has always been a—we call it the Pankow family, and it's true. When something tragic—one of our engineers actually died here on one of the projects [in Waikiki].<sup>5</sup> Maybe not necessarily getting into that, but everybody pulls together. I think just the camaraderie of everyone on the job, you can have differences of opinion. I can't remember on job sites where there was a real fight between anybody, not physical. Everybody pulled together because you had a common goal, and it was a real team on the job site.

The Hawaii, there was a little bit of competition always, I would say, between Hawaii operation and the mainland operation. George was running the Hawaii operation. I mentioned to you about our annual meetings that we would have. I don't think Bechtel, you asked about that, you were part of a very, very large organization. Pankow was a size at that time, and still is, where everybody knows everybody. I just came here to the [Pasadena] office today, and everybody knows everybody. I mean, I know virtually everybody here, I would say, and that's one of the real pluses of it.

Our projects, we would typically, if everything is equal, there's probably a little more preference of doing a concrete building. If steel looks like it's the way to go, we would certainly do that. We would always want to come up with the best way to build something. I think one of the other contrasts between Pankow and Bechtel; you would be

involved. I was involved for the most part all the way through from an early stage in the project, even like Allure that we're doing right now, I'm out there and I continue to be, actually, even in this new role, but you'll see the actual manifestation of what you thought about a year before or whatever it is. You planned it out, you planned the work, and you worked the plan.

Adamson: When you joined Bechtel, did you give any thought to it being a long-term proposition that you changed your mind on?

Fink: Bechtel?

Adamson: Bechtel, right.

Fink: I wasn't sure, I guess. When I joined Bechtel, I was single at the time, like I just mentioned to you, so I think I was more willing to be pretty flexible. Let's say, as an example, it's like a poker game. You kind of play it as the cards are dealt to you, almost, right? With Bechtel, if somehow I went out in the field and I really—that was something I loved to do, and let's say I was the superintendent or something and rose up through the ranks of Bechtel, I mean, that would have been a possibility too. I don't know.

Adamson: After the first project with Pankow, did you have an idea that you'd stick around with Pankow for a while?

Fink: Yeah, actually. I guess all the way through my life, I don't know have anything fixed with certainty necessarily, but more of a vision that this is what I'd want to do, and even just seeing what the project would be like and recognizing that there was a progression in your career. You would be eventually a superintendent, probably, which is what happened, and you just kind of see it from there. But, you know, when I first started with—I guess it never crossed my mind. Let's put it this way. I don't think it ever crossed my mind, "Well, I'm going to quit and go somewhere else." I don't think I ever really felt that way.

Adamson: One of the reasons people say when they talk about Charlie starting his own company was that he wanted to build buildings, and Kiewit organization was more interested in the highways and the civil engineering projects than in the buildings. Did you have a preference for buildings versus dams, or did that not really enter into it?

Fink: Oh yes, the preference would be buildings. Maybe, again, even with Bechtel, if there was a dam project or a building maybe a bridge or something, that probably would have fascinated me, too. But I think once I got into it with the first job that I just mentioned, this Kauluwela Elderly, and then things just kind of started to roll one after another, and it's something that really fascinated me. I always appreciated everybody involved in it and actually seeing what you could create. It's always been a career that I felt very gratified to be a part of.

Adamson: Now, getting an MBA, it's something that a lot of engineers do, but amongst the Pankow people I've talked to, it doesn't seem like that's something that Pankow engineers do. When you came with the MBA, did you have the idea of upper management in mind?

Fink: No, no. Here's the way that came about. I told you that at Bechtel, I was single. There was a guy that was one of my good buddies. He was, in fact, the best man at my wedding. But he wanted to get an MBA. He was an engineer, too, with Bechtel, and he wanted to get an MBA, so he got everything lined up at the University of Hawaii, and he said, "Hey you ought to do the same thing. We'll have some fun together. At least there's somebody over there that we know." I think he might have even given me the forms to fill out. He said, "Why don't you just do this and see if you get accepted." He said, "The tuition's cheap enough, and it'll take about a year or so."

I had a little bit of money saved up that I could survive for a year. I had a free place to live right on the water as a resident. I always look for free places to live that would be in an ideal spot, and that worked out good. That's another separate story. It was really more from my buddy's doing this MBA thing that I thought, okay, well, it's not going to hurt. It was more coming to Hawaii, spending a year doing this, getting the MBA, more than honestly thinking, okay, well, let's see if I—because I didn't even know if I was going to work for Pankow at the time or anything. So it wasn't trying to have this grand strategy for a career. But I think from a business perspective, just having that background, I think it was good.

Adamson: I want to ask you a couple of questions about Charlie and George's personality-wise and how they shaped the culture of the company, and then we'll come back to a couple of projects. First, Charlie. When did you first meet Charlie and what were your first impressions?

Fink: Well, that's an interesting question, because I don't know. I started on this Kauluwela Elderly project. We'd already been up to—I don't know what floor it was now, it was halfway up, two-thirds of the way up by the time when I got there, so it had already started. Charlie would come out to Hawaii every so often, I think. I'm quite sure on that job he was there. He was on the job, and I'm sure Red [Metcalf] introduced me. I'm actually, as you're asking the question, trying to see if I can remember actually when the first meeting was. But I'm sure it was on the Kauluwela Elderly project.

I know that Charlie would usually normally remember everybody's name on the job that he was introduced to. Anytime he would come out on a job site, he'd have all kinds of questions. He'd say, "Okay, Al, what are those flying forms going for now?" If you didn't know the answer really and you didn't—I mean, I do the same thing, to be honest with you, when I'm on the job here now. Maybe not the same type of question, but a barrage of questions, but that's what Charlie would do. It would be more not that he necessarily really wanted the real answer, he just wanted to let you know that you better be on top of it and know what's going on. Or if there's something that he would question, "Why don't we have shores over here? You're pouring on top." Or he would ask about the schedule. Something didn't look like the quality that he felt like it should reflect, he might ask about that.

I remember I was in the office, it was between some projects, I don't know when it was now. I don't know if Charlie would do this with other people, but I know he would do it with me a lot of times. He'd always ask me, "Are you staying out of trouble?" [laughs]

I'd say, "No, why would I want to do that?"

But Charlie was coming by my office, and he'd always say, "What are you working on, Al?" And this particular time, it was a project we were looking at, and it was called Tusitala at the time. George can tell you about that. We ended up naming it Waikiki Lanais [condominium, 22 stories, 160 units]. Charlie came by and he was looking at it, and he said, "Well, what do you think about this project?"

I said, "Oh, it's a bunch of crap. There's a lot of stuff that could be done with this thing, and it's too bad that it's—look at this." And I showed him where there's two walls on the exterior and in between, the building sets back on the exterior and comes back. I said, "It would be so easy just to throw a slab in there in the other lanai. I don't know why they're not doing that."

He said, "Well, why aren't they doing that?"

I said, "I don't know. That's what I would do."

We ended up, I think that was one of the—you can ask George—but I think that was one of the first projects that we got involved in some fashion with the owner, and it was changed around. I don't know, it was [one of] our salvage jobs that Charlie always liked, and, again, ask George about this, but they stopped the project. There was a crane already in place and we decided—I forget exactly how the structure—but we had these precast, site-cast walls that we put up. We actually kind of redesigned the building with

these lanais, because it was called Waikiki Lanais after that. We ended up precasting these wall panels, and the size of them were somewhat based on the crane capacity. If you take a crane where it's located and you take the radius of the crane, the certain lifting, in other words, the further away you are from where the crane mast is, the less the crane can lift, right? You can kind of intuitively see that. So these panels were actually sized to be able to lift them. They were two stories high. It was staggered. That helps actually with the workflow.

But we ended up pretty quickly redesigning this thing, and we worked with a structural engineer, Jim Adams. I think a lot of the people over there, once we would come up with something really kind of innovative, and we had a splice condition for where we had reinforcing coming up, and we were able to set the wall panels as a precast element. We came up with a way of doing this. A lot of the structural engineers, they liked working with us because we were doing things that were new and different and better, and they liked working with us and for us.

I think that was one of the first. I remember even in the kitchens, we ended up coming with a koa laminate. I thought a lot of the finishes were pretty low-end. This was in Waikiki. Why not have—today it's a very moderate finish level. I wonder what the building looks like today, even. I mean, it's forty years later, thirty-some years later. I think the essence of it was: We put in a dollar and created probably three dollars of value, is what I'm saying. So if you had a large lanai that was fourteen feet deep or something, it was big, and in that case we were able to do that under the building code or under the zoning code, and we were able to provide these very large, deep lanais that were between two walls, so that they were very private. The cost to put in this lanai and

that slab was, I don't know, maybe it was a thousand dollars, two thousand dollars, or something. But even in those days, it created maybe ten thousand dollars or twenty thousand. The value of that was much, much more than the cost to do it, and that was part of the philosophy, always, is to create value. I think that was one of the first. You can ask George about that. Waikiki Lanais Tusitala. I think that was one of the first projects. We were not the developer, but we were pretty closely involved in that.

I don't know, what was your original question to me? Oh, George and Charlie.

Adamson: When you—

Fink: Oh, when I met Charlie. In that case, Charlie came by. I don't know, maybe George was talking about it and we were kind of milling it over a little bit, too. From my perspective, I remember Charlie coming up to my desk and just saying, "What are you working on? What do you think of that project?"

I think, like I said, I said something like that, but I said, "You know, there's a lot of things that could be done here that it's really a shame that it's not being done." Charlie gravitated, and I think we were probably talking about that, too, and George was involved in it. That's the part I remember.

Adamson: Okay. No. Very good. Some of these questions may seem like I'm jumping around, but what I'm trying to get to is how Hawaii did business, how the environment was a little different or similar to the mainland. One of the things, and I hope I have the context right, one of the things Dean Stephan suggested was that Charles Pankow, Inc. in



Hawaii was George Hutton, and people identified with George Hutton. He was a face and this manifestation of Pankow. So I just wondered if you wanted to just talk about how the Hawaii business was George, or how Charlie may have shaped the company.

Fink: First of all, in Hawaii when I started with the company, it was called Charles Pankow Associates. It was part of the Pankow Companies, but it was somewhat a separate entity, almost, from the mainland operation. In fact, when I started, and for quite a number of years after that, we paid our bills separately, we had a separate accounting, we actually had an accounting, a whole accounting branch in Hawaii, and it was a pretty, maybe not autonomous, but I think George—even though George—again, talk to George about this. But he was on somewhat of a short leash with Charlie.

George would always talk to Charlie in a real businesslike manner. He wouldn't call from home. It would normally be if I came in on a Saturday or something, George would be at his desk. He'd close his door. He'd be talking to Charlie, so it would be a very kind of in-depth conversation, I know, between whatever was going on. But George had, I think, a fairly broad latitude of getting work, but I think it was all under the guidelines of what we wanted as a company.

I'd mentioned about Kauluwela Elderly where we had a fair amount of involvement early on. We went to The Esplanade, where we got involved early on, and then that same owner, we ended up going over to Pearl One and Pearl Two. That was because of the relationship that we as a company and George was able to develop. I know George would say, too, and I think it's true, he said we made his job a lot easier in getting work. If we're able to do something at a better cost, we're able to build faster,

build a great building, and also if there were problems we would deal with them, we would take care of it, and with those elements, you have people knocking on your door.

I think just by putting it all together and building good projects and doing it and people seeing The Esplanade—Pearl One and Pearl Two were the first projects in PearlrIDGE. I think I showed you the movie of Pearl, and you can see right here. I'm showing you this in the journal here that it shows our building up—I don't know how many stories it is.<sup>6</sup> One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, about then or twelve stories here, and this might be about the same here.

I know you [that is, the reader] can't see the pictures as I'm talking here, but when we're building Pearl Two, there's another building in the background that started a couple months, several months before we even started. They were doing foundation work. So this is very visible from even—there was part of the freeway. One building is going up kind of on a typical cycle, maybe it was a week and a half every floor, something like that. We get going, and we're starting. After they get up several floors, we start this project, and pretty soon, zoom, we go right past them. In less than a year, while they're still building this project adjacent to it, we're finished. We're finished with Pearl One, boom, we move to Pearl Two. This is something very visible. People would be seeing this from the freeway, even. If you come over, when you come over, I'll show it to you.

So we were getting a reputation as the contractor you want to work with. George was able to create and develop this. George will easily acknowledge that it's the team that we had. I mentioned Brad, but there was a labor foreman, Bob Crawford. "Big Daddy," we call him. He was on the video too. I don't know if you saw him or

remember that. But there was a whole team of people that were Pankow of Hawaii. I think we were getting more and more of a reputation, a positive reputation.

Adamson: So what factors or what sort of culture was there that was company-wide that made Hawaii feel part of a larger organization? I know you mentioned annual meetings. Was it Charlie's visits or just George? Did you feel part and parcel of a company that included the mainland while you were out there?

Fink: First of all, there's always a cycle in commercial building, and Hawaii would seem to lag a little bit. In other words, if things were getting hot over here in California primarily, take a little more time to get over to Hawaii. When things are getting a little toned down in California, it would take a little longer in Hawaii.

There were times that people from California would be coming over there. We built an office building. Tony Giron was the superintendent. He was the superintendent on a number of projects here. There was another superintendent I worked for, Jack Grieger. The last project I was a project engineer and then I went over as a superintendent myself, was a job that Jack was the superintendent. So he was over here. I don't think he was hired over in Hawaii. So there was a crossbreed [*sic*] of people. It was more of people coming from the mainland to Hawaii, but then there was a time when some of the people from Hawaii came over to California.

Like I mentioned, the main connect really was the annual meeting. It was a time when everybody kind of got together. There were relationships where you don't see everybody every day, but I think the annual meeting that we don't have, we haven't had

that for a while now, allowed everybody to get together. We had these project tours where there were slide tours and everybody explained with great pride, usually, and a lot of times people would be nervous about getting up and talking, getting up in front of a podium, but, at the same time, proud of showing what they were doing.

Adamson: Now I'll ask George this question, ask George to tell me what he thinks made him a successful businessman, but it's always good to ask somebody who's not the person you're asking about someone else. So what do you think made George a successful businessperson?

Fink: Well, George has always been an optimist, number one. I think he would look at the big picture of what was to be accomplished. He had a good way of having a working relationship with architects and engineers, but primarily owners. I think the company in general, and it's important in life when you give your word about something, that's very important. It was almost like if there was a handshake, then that was it. I think George would have to get, obviously, Charlie's concurrence and blessing on things, but if you're working with somebody and understanding what do they want out of it, you're able to accomplish and satisfy what somebody wants when you're building a building.

I'm thinking now one example is we did Executive Centre. But the developer, by the name of Bob Allen, we did the first project with Bob that was Century Center. Then a little later on, we did another project called Executive Centre. That was kind of a little bit of a joint venture, and we had some involvement actually even in the development side.

But George was able to [get] work, because we did one building with Bob and that relationship continued, so George was able to develop these relationships and keep the relationships, and the essence of a relationship like that with a builder and an owner/developer is: If the project turns out well, they sell the project, it meets all the expectations, if there's little things that need to be dealt with or big things, even, that need to be dealt with, we take care of it. So we don't shirk our responsibility. I think just by bringing value to the building process and having the owner participate in that value, like I said, if something is going to cost \$150, like I think I mentioned, and we can do it for \$140 for the owner, but we would keep a little for ourselves, too, obviously, it was good business because it was a win-win for everybody, and that's what George was good at doing.

Ask George about this, but I think George, his business skill and his desire and his interest, he had a real interest in getting work. I think George mentioned to me, it's almost a hunt. You get a project, you get the contract, and the actual building of it George was interested in, but it was, "Okay, let's get on to the next one," and that's crucial for any business, particularly a building business where you keep the work coming in. That was George's primary mission, his view of it, and the reality was getting continuity of work.

If you have the ability to get profitable work, then executing it is the other part of it, but getting profitable work is probably one of the most important things in the whole business. But getting that profitable work comes about by satisfying a customer, by finish[ing] a project on time, quality project. It helps that the owner is able to sell that project. Obviously that's a big component that you don't have any direct say on. But if

you end up a project and the owner is pissed off and you're in a battle with each other and they're not satisfied, and they have some little things that need to be taken care of and you just kind of blow them off: That doesn't work. So George knew what it took. I mean, he wasn't doing it just to get the next job, but he was doing it because it was the right thing to do. So I think those are the things that made George a good businessman.

I'm just reflecting a little bit. My father—maybe you don't want to hear all this, but—

Adamson: Sure, go ahead.

Fink: He was born in Austria. He never even lived in a house. He was about as much of a peasant as you can get, and he came over to the United States. He had nothing, and he was a painting contractor after the war. So he was in the Second World War, but he had this painting contracting business. He had about a dozen guys working for him, and he had more work every year than he could do in that one year. So if you wanted your house painted next year, you may or may not be able to get that house painted next year. He wouldn't go in and try to give the lowest price, but it was always quality work, and he wanted a satisfied customer. When you're finished, that customer had to be satisfied and very, very glad that you're the one that did that work. If that wasn't the case, he would do whatever it would take to make sure that happened.

One real quick story, because I've told this story at one of the Pankow meetings here, just to show what makes a good businessman, because my dad ended up kind of

giving or selling the business to somebody that worked for him that was a good painter but not a good businessman. So there's a difference.

The one story is, when we were doing some really high-end houses at one time, and it was just the first start of it, in Cleveland there's a place called Shaker Heights, and there was another place that's even a higher scale. I forget what it was. But anyhow, we did one of the first projects there, and as a kid—I must have been about fourteen, fifteen or something—I'd be painting garages or something. But I'd be there at the very end of the job kind of cleaning everything up and making sure everybody's happy. That was kind of one of my things, my dad would always want to make—he'd always say, "Now, take the woman of the house around and make sure she's absolutely, totally satisfied. If there's anything she thinks isn't quite right, you take care of it."

So this one job, and it's the big mansion, almost, and I'm getting a little tired, later in the afternoon, and she comes up and she said, "There's a doghouse in the back. Is there anyway you could paint that doghouse?"

As a kid, I'm thinking, "Lady, my dad never even saw this doghouse," but I didn't. So my dad comes out and I tell him this and I explain it. I said I told her he might not have even seen this doghouse. He said, "Well, I didn't see the doghouse, but you go back there and you do the very best job you've ever done. There's a little flowerbox there. You paint it just like the flowerbox up here, and you do the trim just like that and sand it down good. Do a perfect job on that little doghouse."

"Okay. Well, if that's the way you want it."

The funny thing is, we must have done thirty houses there for years and years and years, and that lady told her neighbors and her little girlfriends and everybody else about

this contractor that came out here. The doghouse was way out in the back. It was behind some trees or something, or whatever it was. My dad didn't see it. Nobody could see it unless you walk around there. But she raved about that doghouse to everybody, and it was the very last thing we did. I'd tell our guys; I call it "Paint the Doghouse." So when we left, she was ecstatic about the job that was done, and she told everybody about this little extra, that the contractor did a spectacular job on this doghouse, and that's what stuck in her mind. She would tell other people about it.

I think what's a good businessman, some people might say, "Hey, that wasn't part of the scope. I'm not going to do that. It's going to cost you a little bit extra if you want that doghouse painted." A good businessman would say just what happened there, because my dad had work forever. He never lacked for work. So anyhow, that's the good businessman.

Adamson: I don't know to the extent you can make this comparison, because I'm not sure how familiar you are with the mainland or California environment of doing business, but to the extent you can make comparisons that illustrate how business gets done in Hawaii, compare doing business in Hawaii versus the mainland and what you have to do, what kind of different world it is.

Fink: Hawaii is a different world in a lot of respects. You know and we talked a little bit about we did our own development. Fortunately, the primary urban area in Hawaii is Honolulu, so you're very familiar with Honolulu and the island of Oahu and what can be



done there. I think we probably did eighty to a hundred major projects since I've been there.

You know the people that you have to work with at the—there was a Department of Land Utilization, the permitting department right now, so even when you're getting entitlements, you know who you're going to deal with. As an example, when we did the Allure project, the president, Rick Cavanaugh and the guy that was buying property, Tim O'Brien, I think was one of the senior vice presidents or something, they came over and I met them for the first time. Brad Whitaker is the one I think said, "Hey, I have these guys that want to come over and take a look at some property in Hawaii," and wanted me to show them around. In fact, I think I was the one that showed them that the property that we're building on right now.

But also told them at the time that there's a lot of things unique to Hawaii that you're going to have to deal with. There's a whole entitlement process in Waikiki, and I was quite familiar with it. There's a separate entitlement process in Kaka'ako that you have to really know about.

I told them that there's a lot of things here that are different than the mainland. As an example, I said, "You're going to have to go through a whole program just to find any Hawaiian bones." We had to dig thirty-five trenches. I said, "There's certain consultants that can work with you. It's a very sensitive thing in Hawaii. One thing you better do is make sure you're doing the right thing relative to the Hawaiian culture here, that when you find the bones—." We ended up actually working with the Hawaiian families that lived on that land at one time. We cut down some huge big mango trees.

But there's a whole protocol of things that you have to do in Hawaii that I don't think anybody even knows about over here. You wouldn't think about the first thing you have to do is—I don't think you have to dig thirty-five trenches to find bones, but that's what we had to do. We had to deal with that.

But the other side is, too, just the business side of it. There's contractors that have been in business for a long time, subcontractors, and if you try to screw somebody, everybody finds out about it. If you administer your projects and manage them in a way where you're fair to everybody and you're helping to make money for the subs, you know, that word gets around, obviously. It does here too, but it's a smaller geographical environment, and the word spreads around pretty quickly. So there's a lot of things that are different about the mainland and Hawaii.

My mainland experience has been when we put up MidState Precast, but that was, again, in the middle of California, and it was in Corcoran, a small-town environment.

Adamson: One of the differences between Charlie and George seems to be that Charlie liked to visit job sites, but the picture I get of George is that he was more of a salesman who left the construction of the buildings in the hands of people like you. Did George visit job sites?

Fink: Oh, yeah. George would come out, but he probably wouldn't come out—just looking at today, and Don Carp is the head of our office in Hawaii right now, and he probably comes out to the job much more frequently than George used to, I think.

George would bring potential owners to the job and George would stop out, but probably

not as much as, like I said, Don. Or even when I was head of our office for a while, I probably stopped out more frequently than George. George was the salesman, I mean, for one thing. But George participated in some of the things when we would look at innovative ways of doing things.

George, in his early career, he can tell you that he did the details of all the precast for the first building we put together. So he had those capabilities, too, but I think his primary focus and his passion was getting work, which was real important.

Adamson: Like I said, I'm going to jump around here. The last question before we get back to some of these projects. Kim Lum suggested that because of the smaller size of the market, that it was his experience or impression that architects in Hawaii were a little more prominent in a project than they may be on the mainland and that this had some impact on the contractor-architect relationships in the design/build environment. You mentioned Leo Wou and showed me the picture of the Landmark at Waikiki. Is that your experience working with architects in Hawaii, that they [architects] expected to have a more prominent role than they might have under the design/build?

Fink: That the architects would have more of a prominent role? I'm not really too sure. Kim would probably be good at comparing the two, but, yes, the architects would have a pretty—architects in Hawaii, we did the Landmark project I told you about. That concept and all that was done without any contractor input until later on when the budget was way, way exceeded and we got involved, got rid of the basement. I think probably the

architects in Hawaii are—Architects Hawaii is one of the big architectural firms, and they don't mind design/assist. Actually, I think they did some design/build projects.

But we would actually work with architects that we would have a little more, I was going to say, control over. As an example, like Norm Lacayo. Norm was the architect on many of the projects. I showed you Honolulu Park Place. I showed you a picture of that. That was one of our developments. Honolulu Tower. Hale Kaheka. It was all slipform with kind of curved surfaces that we were able to do pretty easily, and the slipform process that Norm really loved. But in the case of Norm, he was a real design architect. I like Norm, actually, but I don't think Charlie cared for him that much, and the reason is at the end of the project, even when we're having—everybody said, “Looking great, looking beautiful,” and I had my little video camera—I don't know what happens with some of these videos that I have, but I'm taking some videos there. I told Norm, I said, “Hey, Norm,” I was just kidding and everything, “say something significant here.”

He said, “Just don't bother me with the details.” And that was, I mean, almost hilarious, because that was Norm's—an architect, I don't know how familiar you are with the whole architectural process and getting the documents and plans and specifications. But Norm, he loved design, but doing all the little things that needed to be done and the details was, like he said, “Don't bother me with the details.”

So what we ended up doing is we dealt with the details and we put the details together that we needed to build the building. In a way, it was a plus for us, because we could kind of mold the details in a way that we wanted to. In the case of [Honolulu] Park Place, I was involved early on in the design of it, so I actually drew some things up

myself and passed them by Norm, and it was almost a collaborative process in some ways. A lot of architects, like Architects Hawaii, they're good architects and they're the biggest in the state and everything else. But a lot of architects, if a contractor comes up and—[In the case of Honolulu Park Place and Norm Lacayo] I had drawings and sketches and what the footprints should look like and what—I even had some unit plans for Norm. You do that to some architects, man, and they would really resent that. “Who does this contractor think he’s talking to? He doesn’t have a license as an architect.” But Norm was good about it.<sup>7</sup>

Adamson: The projects you’ve described and the way that they were executed, it sounds like in Hawaii you took the design/build approach to most projects, as they did on the mainland. Is that true, that design/build was the approach to these projects?

Fink: Well, first of all, we were the owner/developer of quite a number of projects at some point in one phase here. The fact we were able to get a good continuity of work because they were our own projects or they were captured projects. In this case, like I just mentioned, Honolulu Park Place, we were the owner. We had different entities. We had a development company. But the primary ownership was Pankow, and we actually had a 50-50 ownership. The way I understand it, and you can ask George again, but 100 percent of the financial risk was taken by the financial partner that was C. Itoh on Honolulu Park Place, and we split the profits on the development side. But then we had a construction contract. We had land that we owned, that the Pankow entity owned or Charlie owned, I guess, and put into the partnership, but it was design/build just by the

necessity of the fact that we were the owner. We contracted the development company, but we contracted with the architect. So we were able to tell the architect what we wanted to do. So it was an ideal design/build because we were the owner. It was like if you're building a house and you're the builder and the owner, it's a design/build.

Adamson: I was going to try and stay in the chronology. You had mentioned the Cliffs [at Princeville] Development, and that brought to mind the general question about Charlie and George getting in on development projects there. Since you were talking a bit about that, can you just generalize about Charlie and George getting involved in Hawaii on development projects and how that sort of fit into the business?

Fink: So many of the projects, there was this property that we bought that I think Charlie and George—I don't know how—again, you'll have to ask George the particulars about this. But it was a parcel that was in downtown Honolulu. I think it was part of the redevelopment of Chinatown. I think it was about 140,000 square feet, something like that, and then there were two parcels that we had. One was the Honolulu Tower project. The other one was Honolulu Park Place that was done quite a few years later. But Charlie and George—I think it was primarily Charlie and George, Russ Osterman, I think, was part of this, too. I'm not sure how all of this broke down, but I think, in all honesty, a good part of Charlie's net worth was created through the development of these, development side, too. There was risk and there was certain times—Dean Stephan could tell you about it, too. But I think there were times when it got pretty dicey with the

banks. Ask George about Crocker Bank. You might want to put that down, Crocker Bank.

But there were times when development in and of itself, like today, it's a pretty risky business. So it created construction opportunities for it. It created opportunities for us to design/build. You were asking about that. Virtually all of our development projects were design/build. We were the ones that hired the [architect]. The contractor didn't necessarily hire the architect, but the development company did, and that was one and the same. I mean they were separate companies, but it was still intent as to further the interest of the owner, so it was all under kind of one umbrella.

Adamson: It struck me that all of the projects in Hawaii were condos and hospitality, whereas on the mainland there's far more office buildings, although there's similar types on both. But I was just wondering if the Hawaii market's different?

Fink: Honolulu was, in 1971 when I started, one of the relatively newer urban areas in the United States. There was a fair demand for condominiums, and that provided a good basis for building condominiums, so it went through cycles. There was always a cycle in Hawaii like there is globally right now. That I know, we didn't develop anything other than condominiums. I don't think there was anything other than condominiums that we did.

Adamson: You mentioned a little earlier about, suggesting that business in Hawaii sort of lagged the mainland, or vice versa. I'm just wondering if you could elaborate more on

booms and busts in Hawaii relative to the mainland, if they followed. The broader question, was there ever a sense that either the mainland or Hawaii, one or the other was sort of carrying the company at one point and the other one was lagging, just to get a sense of that.

Fink: Let's put it this way. Again, you can ask George. But from our Hawaii perspective, I started in '71, and when we were doing Pearl One and Pearl Two, there was grouped together a fairly large number of projects that one followed the other pretty quickly here. My perspective is tainted a little bit, I guess, by just what we felt we were doing in Hawaii, and maybe if you ask Dean or somebody else, they probably may not see it the same way. I think there were times certainly when Hawaii and George felt like it was carrying the company, to answer your question. There were probably other times when, in reality, Hawaii was being carried by the mainland, and fortunately, there seemed to be, like I said, more of a lag.

Right now in Hawaii we have the Allure project going, and at the time when that started, it probably would have been more difficult to start something here, I think, even though Montage was going and we already had [Beverly Hills] Club View [luxury residential tower] going at the time with Fifield. So that's why we got—there was that cross-pollination, too, between the mainland and Hawaii, because Brad Whitaker, like I said, was the one that said, "These guys are going to come over." They were looking for opportunities in Hawaii. So the Hawaii market deteriorated a little bit slower, I think, and there always seemed to be a little bit of a lag.



Adamson: To jump down a level lower, talking about a couple more projects, Lee Sandahl and others have mentioned that Charlie Pankow believed that the superintendent was the most critical role on a project and that he wanted his superintendents to know everything about a job.

Fink: Who said that?

Adamson: Lee Sandahl. Alan Murk was another who talked about the superintendent. My question is relative to you and Red Metcalf. You had mentioned Red Metcalf being in the position of superintendent in your early years. Basically the question is, what did you learn from Red and then how did you apply that?

Fink: What did I learn from Red? I would say how to build, in a real simple term, and what it takes, what it takes to get the job done, how you deal with subcontractors, being forceful and respectful at the same time, basically doing what you say you're going to do, planning the work and working the plan. Maybe Red didn't say that as much as some other people. Just knowing how something goes together and how it's built and what you have to do. Some of those early pictures on Pearl that you saw there, Red was out there. Red was the superintendent, and there's honestly a fair amount of difference, actually, between today's superintendents and the Red Metcalf [kind of] superintendents. Red was out there in the field. He was almost somewhat like the field superintendent. That's not diminishing at all what he would do. You ask Red about this, but I don't think Red was

enamored particularly with the paperwork side as much—I mean, he loved being there, he loved being out there in the field, too.

Jim Thain was a superintendent, but he was the same way. I mean, Jim was out there. It'd be a little like the field superintendent, when they're out there in the field. Today's superintendents in today's world, people are in front of a computer screen. They're doing a hundred e-mails and have to answer all these things that relate to a whole broad range of things.

The things that I really enjoyed with Red, we would kind of come up with ways of what is a good way to do this. Red would suggest something and, "What do you think of this? Engineerically speaking, what do you do here?" That's what he would—and we'd figure out—

Adamson: Was that his word, "engineerically"?

Fink: Yeah, right. Yeah. And one of Red's things, too, would be if we're doing something, he would call it a "who's fooling who?" I mean, he would have his little terms here. As an example, like, we're looking at this *Journal of Concrete* here that ACI that has the Build America Award for Pearl Two.<sup>8</sup> But these are precast panels, and how we do this and where we do it and what the criteria is, you have to be able to pick with this crane, and what is the reach and how much does it weigh? How are we going to erect these things? How are we going to put these—what is the detail? How do you put that in place? How do we swing this in? How are we going to attach these things?

So all of that, we would work out, and Red would be very adept and comfortable in figuring this out. Another guy that's a little bit like this, and I've always enjoyed and appreciated working with these kind of guys, when we set up the plant—I'm skipping ahead a little bit here to MidState Precast. Frank Woodman. Frank has a good way, a little like Red, of understanding what it is, understanding structurally, intuitively virtually what has to be done, how are we going to do this. And it's understanding the building process and what works, what doesn't, what we have to be careful about.

As an example, I put the schedule together for Pearl Two. Red and I would be working together. "Okay, now, Red, how long do you think it's going to—we're going to have to excavate the foundation here, obviously. What do you think? How long is that going to take?" I'm not doing it in a vacuum, so we're going through it together. "Now we're going to have to set up the slipform. Now can we get all those to slip? We can get that all set up and ready to go. We're going to pour the mat foundation, and then we're going to set the slipform up. Okay. How long is it going to take to get that slip set?" I think I did a lot of the details, but we would work really closely together doing this.

Red would come up with some ideas on, "Okay, what if we formed these beams? We'll pour a beam here and pour a beam here. What if we do the one in the middle?" So we'd brainstorm things together, and then we'd do what it took to make it work. Sometimes it wouldn't work. It would be a pretty collaborative—using that word—process, and I always enjoyed working with Red.

You can see right here. Here's the slipform. [points to photo in article] That's a complicated thing. I don't know if you can see that formwork up there. It all moves as one piece, you can see right here. Here's the slip in the wall, so that's going above.

Here's the next floor slab that fits in, and we have these blockouts. What's the best way to do these blockouts? How are we going to do that? It would be always a collaborative team approach and we would include the guys that are doing the work here, too, and people like I mentioned, Tim Cahalane, he was an expert at doing—and really loved and enjoyed trying to figure out a better way to do it.

That was one of Charlie's—the back of our hardhat today, I don't know if you've seen it, it says “Innovate.” Have you seen it? Take a look at it. Take a look at the hardhat. It says “Innovate.” If you take a look at that CD that we have, the Pankow culture CD, Charlie says the key to it all has been innovation, trying to find a better way to do it.

[Begin March 25, 2009 interview]

Fink: Today we're doing this in Ventura. We're looking at a video that was a presentation that was done at the UH Arena for the American Society of Civil Engineers student body, and it's a presentation where we talked about Pankow in general, what our philosophy is, design/build in particular, and we talked about the University of Hawaii, UH Arena, Stan Sheriff Arena. It's a PowerPoint presentation.

The first slide or the first part of the PowerPoint is, "Pankow: Thinking Beyond the Building." I'm describing what that means—it's our byline—and trying to bring some reality and context to this. I'm explaining about the Allure project that we're currently doing. This is March of 2009, and in the beginning of the project, maybe about two years ago or so, one of the big problems in launching this project was that there was a requirement to build an additional sewer capacity on one of the big streets, Kalakaua Avenue, and that would have cost probably ten to fifteen million dollars. We had it priced out. But that was after the owner, Fifield, had already agreed to do this upgrade as part of the condition to get a building permit. Unfortunately, they didn't really know how much that would cost. When we priced it out, like I said, it was at a point where it would have made the project infeasible financially, adding another ten, fifteen million dollars to the project when they had budgeted probably one million dollars. That really wouldn't have worked.

So we ended up working with the city and tried to come up with another plan, something that made more sense, and we found out and really started to understand the entire sewer system of Honolulu. Honolulu had a major problem a couple years ago now

[March 2006] where there was a big major sewage spill that actually became national news, I think. The capacity of many of the major lines was under-capacity, and that actually limited the possibility of developing a lot of sites.

We came up with a plan in conjunction with—“we” meaning ourselves and Fifield. Fifield was really the leader of this effort. There’s a guy by the name of Ben Ortega at Fifield that was probably the key person doing this. But we were the one. I was at all of the meetings. We formulated probably a dozen or so, maybe boiled down to six primary very different schemes and priced them out, and working with the city, we came up with a plan that continued a force main. I don’t want to get into all the little detail of it, but it created a condition where a lot of properties would benefit. The total cost of that was actually a fair amount less than what the city was going to require us to do on a temporary basis on Kalakaua Avenue. So that was probably five or six million dollars instead of ten to fifteen million dollars. It was a much smarter way of doing it, and it benefited the entire city.

We brought—it was called the sewer *hui*. *Hui* in Hawaii means basically a group of people coming together for a purpose. So it’s this sewer *hui* made up of about six other owners, and everybody contributed actually to a proportional amount. But they all contributed to the *hui*, so the cost to Fifield is probably a million dollars, a little bit more than a million dollars that was in the original budget, not ten to fifteen million dollars. It made the entire project feasible.

The byline, “Beyond the Building,” means that we’re not just focused on one element. We’re not just focused on the building. We’re looking at the big picture, trying to integrate all the elements of it into this big picture, and solving whatever problem and

impediment there might be to achieving the goal that we're after of building a project, a good project, and benefiting—probably the primary factor is that it's a benefit to the entire city. It's an upgrade of the entire sewer system that benefited many, many properties instead of a temporary solution that was virtually of no benefit, other than that marginal benefit to us costing three times as much. We came up with a solution that was actually a benefit to the entire city. That's "Thinking Beyond the Building."

The next slide we're on right now, Pankow City, and I'm just talking about the various projects across the country, and it's all in a collage. So that's the next slide that I had here at the UH presentation.

The next one is a slide of Landmark, Waikiki Landmark, and I don't know if we've discussed that before.

Adamson: Not yet.

Fink: The Landmark project [38-story, 189-unit condominium] is another example of "Beyond the Building," "Thinking Beyond the Building," and it kind of ties to the philosophy and the context of the byline. So in that project, on the Landmark project, the developer-owner, [Sukarman] Sukamto, initially what he wanted to do is just to do a typical way of contracting for work. So he said, "What I want to do is have the architect do his work, have it completely finished, and then at the end of the time, we're just going to just bid out the project." That's what they wanted to do.

I said, "Well, why don't we work together? We would really like to build your project, number one, but we would like to be involved so you know what it cost and give

any kind of suggestions on constructability and so forth to be able to cost out the various elements.”

They said, “No, we don’t want to do that.”

So I kept in touch, and George was very much involved in this, too. George Hutton, in getting the job because of the relationship with C. Itoh, they were the finance partner, and we were already doing the work, George Hutton and Pankow, in general, were the ones that were kind of bringing together C. Itoh, or Itochu, or whatever into Hawaii. They were the finance partner for this Landmark.

But one of the problems was they bid it out, and the bid, I think, was probably at least 10 percent or more higher than what made anything feasible. We did not bid the project, but when the price came back, they basically spent, I don’t know, maybe if it’s probably \$6 million or something on design, they spent a lot of money on entitlement and everything else associated with that project, and they probably already spent \$10 million.

At that point, though, they found that the construction would not be feasible because of the cost, and it wouldn’t match the pro forma. So I said, “Well, why don’t we go ahead and see what we can do.”

They had a basement, and in the Waikiki area, the water table is about five to eight feet or so below the surface that you walk on, street level. So by putting in this basement, and in addition to the depth of the basement, you have pile caps, you have everything else in the structure, so we go down below the water probably twenty feet or so.

In order to do that, and we had a really, I think, pretty good understanding of all the different facets of what’s involved in doing this kind of work when you’re



dewatering. So you have basically something that's down—I'm looking at—we're in this room right now that might have a twenty-foot ceiling. So you have a basically huge dam inside that you have to dewater, water's going to come up from the bottom, and in addition, it draws the water table down in the surrounding area that contributes to settlement. There's reasons for all of this, but it would create, first of all, a substantial additional cost. We've priced it out. It was about \$10 million. So putting this basement in was at least \$10 million. That's what they were over budget, \$10 million, at least \$10 million.

So the first meeting I had, I think I was the only one from Pankow there. But we had a meeting with the structural engineer, the architect, the owner, and the whole group, and made this presentation of how we could save basically at least \$10 million. We had, obviously, many other subsequent meetings. But the initial presentation, it was a little bit of a strained contentious atmosphere in the very beginning, because the architects, Architects Hawaii, and we're working with them right now, and we have a very good relationship with them. But if somebody's already done a substantial design, and then you come back and say, "Why did you do that?" and the owner didn't really know where that cost was, he didn't know that the basement was going to cost \$10 million more. I said, "Why do you want the basement? What's the purpose?"

They said, "Well, we have storage lockers." They had 200 storage lockers, 200 little bitty things. They was two foot square, something like that, and so they weren't big lockers, even. They were these storage lockers. If you take 200 units, ten million dollars, 200 units, it's \$50,000 dollars in storage lockers. So are you going to spend \$50,000 for a storage locker? Doesn't make sense, right? So once they understood that and

understood what that cost, and the purpose of that basement, it had a marginal purpose. There was no reason for the basement, really. Just somebody thought, “Well, why don’t we just put a basement in there.” Well, that didn’t make sense.

So we got involved. We had about maybe probably a hundred or more additional value engineering ideas that we integrated into the design, and we got it within the budget that they wanted. It was \$97.5 million. We had a two-and-a-half-million-dollars, I think, contingency that we spent very little of. So it was about \$95 million, \$96 million, instead of, I think it was close to \$114 million, something like that.

So that’s again, beyond the building. What do you do to make a project feasible, and how do you do this in a way that achieves the net result, the end result that you’re looking for, a good project. Just as an example, again, just to understand the value engineering, one specific thing that I recall is we went through a list of maybe a hundred or so value engineering items, so-called value engineering items. This was after the fact, after it was designed. The architect had granite cladding around a round column, and there was about a \$250,000 difference in material supply of the granite of providing a round column versus eight-faceted corners. In fact, I have a picture I can show you later. That was one of the hundred or so items on that list, or maybe 200 items on the list. When I went through that with the architect, said that he really wanted the architect. A lot of times, owners, they have certain things in their mind. They want to do it this way. The architect wanted his round column. I gave them a price. “If you go to faceted, it’s 250,000 [dollars] less.”

The owner’s even saying, “Why do you want the round column?”

He [the architect] said, “A circle is a true geometric figure.”

I said, “What about a true octagon?”

The owner said, “How much is that now?”

I said, “Two hundred fifty thousand.”

He said, “A true octagon sounds real good to us.” So if you look at it today, it’s an octagon. It’s faceted.

The architect looked at me like, “Goddamn it, Al. You know what? You just keep changing my design here.” So he was fixated on this circular column, and when it was \$250,000 less, and to me it looks wonderful, and no buyer would come there ever and say, “God, look at that. That’s an octagon. Why isn’t it a circle?” The architect thought it should. I’m not knocking the architects at all, but we’re trying to integrate all of these things into a project that’s, in the end, going to be feasible. That’s “Beyond the Building.”<sup>9</sup>

So the next slide is Honolulu Park Place here.

[break]

Adamson: There’s a 1993 article in *Pacific Business News* that stated that Pankow used, quote, “a unique precast concrete technique to save time and money on the Special Events Center at the University of Hawaii.”<sup>10</sup> Can you elaborate on that?

Fink: Yes. The University of Hawaii was the first design/build project for the State of Hawaii, and maybe just quickly in the background of it, the State of Hawaii, probably like a lot of cities and public projects, end up being often over budget. They’re often

finished late. That certainly was the case with many of the projects in Hawaii. We actually talked to the governor at the time and suggested, “Why don’t we try a different way, a way that has been successful. It’s called design/build.” Explained to them what it was.

Rik Kunnath, our CEO, was one of the founding members of the Design/Build Institute of America, DBIA. The basic philosophy of it is when you start out a project, you pretty much have an idea, as long as you get a good definition of what you want from an owner, you have an idea of what his budget is, you have an idea of what his time frame, when he wants it, when he wants it delivered, and the quality level and so forth that he wants. Once you get those parameters fixed, the idea is to work in a collaborative method to be able to come up with a design and be able to implement the design and construction to achieve the end result.

This sounded good to the governor. He assigned somebody to develop what was called the request for proposal, RFP, and the RFP basically provided all the basic parameters that included the size. They had an idea of what the budget was, also when they wanted it delivered, and a fair amount of detail on how this would work. As an example, on the cooling system, the air conditioning, ventilation system, they would basically say, “On the hottest day in the middle of the day we want to be able to have a packed Arena and have it cooled down to 75 degrees,” something like that. Rather than specifying all the equipment and the detail of it, they just say, “That’s the result we want,” and that’s what was given to us.

We were one of several—I don’t know if there were three or four, how many—different submittals. We were one of them. In fact, just a quick story. One of the parties

that was submitting, they were just establishing themselves. It's a new company. I had heard from the head of that company, and he actually gave me a call and said, "We would recommend and suggest to Pankow that you don't even participate in this because we're going to get the job. We're going to get a foothold in Hawaii, and we're willing to do this job actually at a loss. We know that's not the Pankow way of doing things. You don't build projects at a loss. We're willing to do that, and we're going to establish something [that is, establish ourselves in Hawaii]. This is a high-profile project, and we would recommend you don't even participate, because you're going to just spend a lot of time, you're going to go through a lot of effort, and in the end you're not going to get the job, because we are, and cost is a big factor. So that's my suggestion to you."

I said, "Well, thank you, but we're going to participate." So it was good to know that ahead of time from this guy. But the crux and the purpose for that story is that what we came up with was at a lower cost, it achieved what the University wanted, and we did make a profit. The other group proposed something, and they didn't do it as smart as we did. I mean, that was really the bottom line. We built a project and designed a project that was built ahead of time [schedule]. Actually, we delivered it about a month and a half ahead of time, and it was at the cost without any change orders other than scope changes that were added later. It was at the same price as we gave them in the beginning, and it was at a budget that they had in mind. So that's the design/build philosophy.

You asked how we achieved that with our construction. So what we came up with before we made a submittal, and one of the interesting fun parts of, I think, my career and design/build in general, is that you can come up with creative ways of

integrating the construction, the constructability with the design, and coming up with a better way to do the work.

Dean Browning was our sponsor on this project. I was the regional manager at the time. There was another fellow, Russ Mills, he stayed with us just a little bit, but he was our chief estimator. On a real collaborative process with the input from everybody, we came up with: “How are we going to build this in a way?” (Russ was actually very much of a participant in this, too.) How are we going to build this in a way that builds it better, faster, greater quality, achieves all of our requirements of safety and everything else? How are we going to do this and do it smarter? So we came up with a structural system, and that’s what I’m going to talk about a little bit more. We actually have this on a DVD in a PowerPoint presentation. I can give that to you. It shows how we did this.

This Arena was circular, and we came up with a very simple structural system where there was a 10,000-seat Arena that was in plan. It was circular. We had a dome on the top. It’s a geodesic dome, and it was done by a company called Temcor [based in Gardena, California]. I think the company was actually formed or it was an outgrowth of—I don’t know if you heard of Buckminster Fuller, “Bucky.” He came up with the geodesic dome. Buckminster Fuller’s philosophy was very much like ours. It’s: How can we do something to achieve a final result and do it cheaper, faster, [with] better quality?

The dome itself, 320 feet span, free span. It was tested for hurricane winds; very, very light [structure], and it takes all the load. So it was a very, very smart way of building this dome, and I’ll show you some pictures of this. So part of what we came up

with, though, was a better way to build the structure, and that's what I'd like to spend a little bit of time on and explain that.

As we're doing this, I can show you, hopefully, the video. I'm going to put this on. I'm putting the video right now that we're looking at on mute. But we came up with the—let me just back up. A stadium typically has a structure that supports the seating plank, and that structure is usually made up of columns, and then there's a beam at a slope called a raker. Very typically the other contractor that I mentioned came up with doing all of this as a poured-in-place system. In other words, you create the formwork. You put the reinforcing, put the formwork up, pour the concrete, strip the formwork, go up to the next level, and repeat it.

What we came up with was a way of doing all of this work on the ground, so conceptually somebody even not knowing much about construction can understand that it would be simpler to build something right at ground level where you're reaching in and doing the work there, and then take it and you pick it up and lift it up. That's what we did.

So these bents that we referred to as bents, they're made up of three columns. There's a crossbeam at the first level, and then there's a raker beam that has the steps. It's called a raker because it's like a rake, I guess. It has these steps that provide for the seating plank. There were a total of thirty-two of these bents, and we stack-cast these three high, and what that meant is that the thickness of the bent, I think it was one foot four inches, so times three is four feet. So we had a four-foot piece of plywood.

So rather than making it something that's different than a four-foot piece of plywood—you know, let's say we could get away with one foot. Let's say it was one-

foot-four edge or maybe it's one-foot-five. You say, well, what about one-foot-four? Because then you take one piece of plywood and you build this three high. So we stack-cast these three high, put a bond breaker so you could lift it.

They were very heavy pieces. There were, like I said, thirty-two that went around the perimeter. Right now we're seeing that on the video. They were erected. They were thirty-two pieces that were erected in ten days. Mike Liddiard was the superintendent, and he had this thing down to a science here. We had kind of a precast expert on there, too, at the same time. So these were precast on site, which was a little different than we have a precast business, MidState Precast. But it's different than that where you do it in a plant and ship it out.

The perimeter structure was bents with seating plank, and then the top was made up with a—you called it a ring beam, and there were sixteen of those, so it would span between two bents. There was a joinery, something that joined it together. There's one big ring at the top, and, again, maybe conceptually, if you have a dome that's 320 feet in diameter, the reaction is landing on that ring beam, and it's actually putting tension in the beam. It's a tension ring beam.

So that entire system, again, was erected in ten days. I'm going to kind of go through this a little bit faster and show the erection. I don't know if we have the ability to integrate PowerPoint at some point, or I'll give you a copy of it. But if it's on a PowerPoint, you can see. We're erecting it right now. We're putting it into a socket. You can see the bent that's being erected with the crane.

The next thing we do is go through and take all thirty-two of those, put those up, and then after that, we put up this thing called the ring beam. Right now I'm just



showing the ring beam. There's a special structural connection, very heavy pick. I think it took two cranes to be able to lift this in place, but, again, the alternative would be to put up scaffolding, and I don't know if it's sixty feet or fifty feet in the air. Then put up formwork, poured-in-place. You could see, intuitively, that that would be a lot more expensive than building it on the ground and lifting it up in place, because all of the concrete in the building has to be lifted in some fashion, either by a bucket lifting it up, or doing it all in one big piece on the ground and lifting it up.

So in concept, that was the way we ended up building smarter, the quality was better, because you can control it on the ground. The safety was better because you don't have guys working up in the air. Obviously, you can do that safely, but it's a lot easier to do it on the ground and then lift it up, and that's the way we did it.

So after we got the structure done, the next step then was to put the dome on, and the dome is a geodesic dome. It's by Temcor, Buckminster Fuller, and we're looking at a picture of it right now. There was a mast that was up. I don't know if it's a hundred-plus feet or whatever it is, but there's a mast that comes out of the middle of the Arena, of the circle. Around the perimeter, there are pieces of this geodesic dome, and all of the pieces are assembled at ground level.

The picture I'm showing right now shows the interior of the dome up. It's about maybe a third finished right now, but the pieces are being added from the seating plank. The pieces are being added incrementally around the perimeter, and then the entire thing is lifted up, almost like a big umbrella or tent in the middle. It's lifted up as one piece up to the next level, and then the new pieces are added to it.

That continues until you get the entire dome completed, and then it's set on top of what's called the—here's the next picture that we're showing here, so it's almost finished. It's set in place. The dome is set in place.

So it's a project that we completed ahead of time and at the cost that we originally told the owner. There were no change orders other than scope changes, like I said. I think they increased the seating a little bit, and they had that as a possible provision to begin with. So the advantage was that up-front before the owner spent any money on design, which could be maybe 6 percent, 10 percent more of the entire cost of the project, that money, you don't spend the money, design it, bid it out and find out you're way over the budget and you can't even build the project. So it's a much better way of building. That's basically been the philosophy and the thrust of the company.

Right now I'm just showing in this presentation that I made at the University of Hawaii, I'm showing the Allure project. Across the street is what I talked about on the Landmark project. The Allure project, again, was very similar, where we had a budget to meet, it was \$158 million, and if we didn't strike that and hit that budget, the project wouldn't have gone ahead. That's what the owner said, and that's probably true.

So we had to come up with a whole host of value-engineering ideas. I think there were over two hundred. The new people at Pankow are very much integrated into this philosophy, so our chief estimator at the time, Mike Vachio, was very much involved in putting this value engineering together to be able to achieve the budget.

So that's the story. I don't know if there's anything else here that's on this video that we're looking at, but I was just explaining the connection between the Landmark across the street on Kalakaua Avenue, the Allure project.

By the way, in Hawaii if you look down Kalakaua Avenue, there's about five or six major projects that we did, or maybe more. Starting from the mountainside, there's Hala Kaheka, Century Center. Hala Kaheka was our project that we built as a developer, condominium project. The Century Center was built, I don't know, it's probably twenty-five years ago or so, and Red Metcalf was our superintendent. He's the guy that I worked with on many, many projects, a wonderful person and a real master builder. I mean, Red really knows what building is all about.

Then the next project is our Landmark that we talked quite a bit about. We're doing the Allure project down the street. Just recently we finished two major projects. One is the Waikiki Beach Walk project, a complete transformation of that area that was really kind of rundown, scruffy, not even welcoming to go into. We finished that about a year and a half or two years ago. Then right down the street is a major shopping complex that's been transformed completely. It's the Royal Hawaiian Center, and Kamehameha Schools is the owner of it. So we actually finished it about a year ago, but we're kind of wrapping things up now. The first project I did as a superintendent is a little further down the street, the Pacific Monarch, and it's a forty-story condominium project. We have a couple of other projects. Some of the very early ones are down in that area too.

Adamson: Are these all within what they call the Waikiki beach area?

Fink: All of what I just told you, with the exception of the Hale Kaheka, is a little outside of the Waikiki boundary, but it's within a mile or so, and Century Center is just adjacent to it, and our office building is nearby too. We did work at Ala Moana Shopping Center

in the Center Court. So in that little area there's been a substantial amount of work that's taken place.

What other kind of questions are you're going to ask, just to get an idea—

Adamson: Well, I'm interested in—so we left off in the mid-eighties from the last time, and the questions I'll try to get to are business-related in how the Hawaii office responded to booms and busts, and sort of tie that into your career as to what you did. Then if we have time, I've got some wrap-up questions on just Charlie's legacy and a couple of other things.

Basically in the eighties and then into the early nineties, there was a period of boom and busts, and I'm just wondering what you and George and the office, how they responded to take advantage of the good times and then how you responded to the bad times, the lean times.

Fink: Well, one of the things we did in the eighties was we had a development arm where quite a few projects were our captive projects. In other words, we are the ones that own the project, we were the ones that created the work, the construction work ourself through the development entity, and that actually in a lot of ways worked well. There were risks because there's obviously substantial risks if you're a developer. It depends on how you get the money, whose money it is, and if there's equity at risk, how that works. But we kind of created our own destiny to some extent through the development entity.

One of the more recent initiatives that we have that's been launched primarily by Rik Kunnath, and all of the top people are in alignment with this, is to figure out a way of what are we going to do and how do we diversify ourselves to be able to get through these lean periods. I just talked about the UH Arena. That was during a lean period, that was in the early nineties, and commercial work, condominium work in particular, was virtually nonexistent. To fill that gap, we purposely went after public work. That's one of the reasons we pursued the design/build on the Arena. That's right around when George Hutton had left.

But prior to that, we did work and had some diversity in commercial work. We did work at Ala Moana Shopping Center, as an example, but the vast majority of our work were condominiums. There's a certain cycle to the condominium market, and the truth is that we were subject to that cycle. So when condominiums were hot, then we were working. We had a continuity of work. We were able to achieve that continuity, and that had a real contribution to being able to keep the workforce on the teams that were building slipforms, as an example, from one project to another, because, for the most part, they were our projects. We were able to structure the timing also to be able to keep that workforce intact, and building slipforms is very much of an art and a science and quite difficult, actually, to do it right. But we were able to have a team of guys that were quite adept at doing that.

But to answer the question about how did we go through these ups and downs, I would say on the peak times, we did quite well. Other times, it was pretty lean. And during those times, at some point we had some pretty significant reductions in staff and people. In business, you'd always attempt to keep the best of your people. The ones that

weren't performing to the highest level would basically be let go. That's always a little concerning when you start letting people go, but in a way it would bring down the overhead associated with your workforce.

One of the things that the company has always been good about is we don't have a lot of capital invested in equipment. We don't have cranes and heavy equipment and everything else that requires maintenance, and we have to take care of it, storage and everything else, and you kind of tie up your money that way. We don't really do that.

At one point, though, we did have our own capture or our own internal equipment company. Maybe it's a tongue-in-cheek kind of joke that went on with a lot of our field staff. We were going to rent this crane from Chaskow, and it was an internal company. Red would be one of those guys, too, that would say, "Hey, I can get a better crane and a better something else from somebody else at a cheaper price."

Then Chaskow was, "Okay, well, then we'll drop our price a little bit." But it was an internal separate company that we don't have anymore, and it tied up capital and didn't really—there was a marginal purpose for it, so we don't even have it anymore.

But I guess, in general, the idea is any cost that you have that you have a commitment to, the idea was to be able to have flexibility when times are lean. As uncomfortable as it is, if you don't have the work, then you lean out your staff. So for better or worse, that's kind of how we dealt with it. I think there's a perception, and like I said, Rik Kunnath has been good about this, that we need to figure out a better way of getting through the lean periods like the period we're in right now today.

Adamson: Just a follow-up on one of the points you made. Traditionally, I guess Pankow didn't get involved in public projects because of the bidding. It was design/bid/build rather than design/build. Did Charlie have any resistance to getting in on projects like the UH Arena and subsequent projects?

Fink: Well, I think, the UH Arena may have been a little bit of a turning point for Charlie and for the company. The fact that it was design/build, the fact that we as a design/build entity took full responsibility for it, and the fact that the competition, even though it was price-related, we had the lowest price, we were able to design it conceptually in a way that made the most sense, we were able to achieve profitability that we were after at least. The fact that it was public, but it was public with all of those conditions, made it very attractive.

Charlie was very, very supportive of the Arena. He was very proud of the Arena. In fact, maybe just a quick little story about it to show Charlie's pride. So we had a lump-sum number. We had a scope defined. Charlie came out there one time, and there was some hairline cracking, cracking in the concrete that's just kind of necessary—or not necessary, but, I mean, that's the nature of concrete. When Charlie came out there, and it was the architect that we had wanted the concrete stained, which we did, and the stain itself brought out the cracking, really telegraphed the cracking. The architect kind of liked it. He liked that kind of little cracked look. He liked that. Whatever aura of architectural beauty that he saw, he liked it. The architect liked it. Charlie came out, he saw this thing, and it looks like cracks all over. To me it didn't look good, either. And

Charlie came out, and he said, “Boy, this doesn’t look good at all. Why don’t we put some kind of coating on here or something?”

I said, “Well, it’s a lump-sum price, and if we put it on, it’s going to be at our cost, more than likely. Maybe we can get the state to pay something.”

Charlie said, “No. It’s design/build. It’s our responsibility. To me, it doesn’t look good, and I think what we ought to do is put a coating on it. What do you think?”

I said, “Well, I don’t like it either.”

He said, “Why did you let it go like this?”

I said, “Well, the architect said he liked it.”

Charlie said, “Well, who cares about the architect?” Maybe we shouldn’t get that on there [that is, on the recording]. [laughs] But he was overriding the architects. He said, “What do other people think about it?”

I says, “Well, you know, the owners aren’t really enamored with the fact that it was cracking like that.”

“Okay,” he says, “if that’s the case, if the architect likes it and nobody else likes it, I don’t like it, you don’t like it, let’s not keep it this way. Let’s just go through and figure out what can we put on here that lasts, that’s going to be good, a good product and make it look better. Let’s figure that one out.”

So we did. We put this coating on that he wanted, and it cost us some money. But in the end, Charlie was very proud of that Arena, I believe, and he wanted it to be good. He wanted it to be kind of a lasting legacy. It cost us a fair amount of money to do that, but that was secondary to what we were leaving. If we were going to leave something and people walk in there and because it was stained concrete that the architect



liked these little cracks, but 90 percent of the people coming in there, if they actually looked at the floor, they would wonder, “Jeez, what’s wrong with this thing?” So we changed it and we fixed it. It wasn’t a structural concern or a structural issue; it was just the aesthetic of it. So my point is that, in design/build, the integrity of Charlie, the integrity of the company, was: We want to produce the result that we’re proud of.

Adamson: Now, in the last fifteen years or so, municipalities, states, whatever, have slowly come around to rewriting the rules of the game so that you can do design/build in the public sector. To what extent have Pankow people or maybe the DBIA taken an active interest in getting these rules, as it were, modified to allow design/build in the public sector?

Fink: Well, as an example again, after we finished the Arena—that was the first design/build project in the state, the state had another major—probably the largest construction project ever undertaken by the State of Hawaii was the Hawaii Convention Center. Because of the positive result of what we did at the Arena, the state decided they were going to do this on a design/build basis. In fact, the governor at the time was the one that said, “Hey, it worked so well here, let’s do it again.”

They developed a request for proposal. The request was patterned after the design DBIA, and we participated in that. We did not get the job. Probably of the disappointments in my career, that was one of the big ones, because I really thought we got the job. Probably one of the major lessons learned is we didn’t really give them what they wanted. Pretty much before when I could talk to everybody, and people in the team,

the evaluation team pretty much let me know what they wanted, and they wanted a particular look. They wanted an architectural look that was part of what was prevalent in Hawaii as good architecture was a roof structure called the Dickey roof, and it had a break in the roofline.<sup>11</sup> They talked about that's what they wanted, and when they talked about it with our architects, they kind of pooh-poohed it and said, "That's good in a house, but for a big building that doesn't make any sense."

There were other things that they wanted ahead of time. They didn't dictate that's what they wanted, but this architectural "Hawaii[an] sense of place" was just coming out, and we didn't really follow what they wanted.<sup>12</sup> It wasn't dictated. It was just something that you kind of knew was what was wanted and you didn't really respond to that in the way that another team did. In fact, it has this Dickey roof that they wanted. If Bev's listening here, she'll say, "What? Why didn't you have the Dickey roof?" That's what's on there right now, but we didn't have that.

As a result even of what we did, I think, at the Arena, planting the seed there, there was recently a competition for design/assist, initially for design/build, at the West Oahu campus. There's a lot of military work that's design/build right now. There's bachelor BEQ quarters for the navy that's design/build. More and more, I think it's becoming a way of delivering projects on design/build. And it's DBIA. Charlie in particular has been a strong advocate of building with that process. If it's not a design/build project, at least we feel like it's good and important to have the contractor involved early on so everybody knows what it's costing, and you can basically create a design and be able to move the design in a way to allow it to meet a particular budget. That's what we do all the time.

Adamson: This question goes back a bit. I mentioned this before we started. Talk about Charlie, especially with the company using arbitration, writing it into their contracts to minimize legal costs and minimize exposure to lawsuits, litigation.

Fink: Arbitration and mediation, but maybe more arbitration initially at least, was one of the crucial items that we would have in all the contracts with an owner. In fact, if an owner said he does not allow arbitration, Charlie would basically say we don't want to do the work. Part of the reason is, first of all, if there's a dispute of any kind, if it's with the owner, subcontractor, if there's anything you don't quite agree on, the process to resolve that is through negotiation, through discussion. Charlie's view—mine is the same—that the legal process basically is a process of battling. Even the term “Esq.,” that stems from in the old ancient days if two kings are in a dispute about something, the way you resolve it, you bring your armies, everybody battles it out, whoever kills the most people is the winner, and that's it. Esquire. Then after that, they would have the squires instead of the kings' people and the kings battling it out, and then they'd have these surrogates, these squires, going out and doing the battling, same thing. The English legal system is pretty similar, where basically both parties go into battle. Whoever wins in the battle is the winner. It's not that they're right, but whoever is the more powerful is the one that wins, and then they get the settlement, they get the money.

That process itself is very much of a process that it enriches the legal profession, from Charlie's point of view, and it's not knocking the legal profession particularly, but

it's a process of battle. The process of arbitration or mediation is a process of—the intent is it's a process of, at least mediation is, a process of working things out.

Our contracts have provisions. All of the contracts with our subcontractors, with the owners, and even in the development days, we had provisions in the agreement when we sold the unit for arbitration, and we have stipulations of—it actually says that if there's a claim, if there's a dispute, we first resolve that dispute just by discussion, by negotiation, and if that doesn't work, then you go into mediation, where the parties are really not bound, and then the final is arbitration, but not litigation.

The litigative way of doing things is you have, for one thing, the one thing that Charlie used to talk about, too, is if it goes to a jury trial, particularly in construction, you have a whole group of people, probably the vast majority of them know very little or nothing about—they know what construction is, but they don't know much about how it works, what you do, and your fate is in their hand. Charlie was absolutely adamant that that doesn't happen.

I don't think we ever had—one of the things that we talked about, Tom Verti was real good about mentioning this many times in interviews, that we've never had litigation with an owner. At the end of a project, if the owner feels like somehow they've been wronged in some fashion, we work it out. We want to leave an owner with a good taste in his mouth at the end of a project, or all the way through, but we're not going to do battle with them. We're not going to go into litigation. We've never done that. If you want to tarnish your reputation, all you have to do is do battle with the big owner and that word gets around. It's just not a good way of doing business, but it's not the right thing.

So the philosophy of the company, my view of it and I think everybody, all the major players throughout history, we want to do the right thing, and the right thing isn't getting attorneys involved. We get attorneys involved, by the way. A real good proper role is when you have anything, a condominium project or whatever, to get the agreements very, very well spelled out with absolute clarity and have everybody in the relationship understand what their role is. If the parties in the relationship aren't fulfilling their obligations, like a subcontractor, as an example, we're going to do whatever it takes to make sure he does that. We'll call the bonding company, we'll get rid of them, or do whatever it takes to achieve the result we're looking for, and to stick with the agreement.

So if you have an agreement with somebody and they say they're going to do something by a certain time, a certain quality level, they're going to deliver it by a certain time and they don't perform, we're going to be pretty tough on them. That's part of the philosophy too. We want people to produce the results that they agreed to. If somebody agrees to something, we expect them to perform that way, and if they don't, we're going to come down pretty hard on them.

Adamson: I hope I'm not shifting topics too quickly here.

Fink: No, I do it all the time.

Adamson: But I want to get through a few of these questions. This question gets to the main point about sharing ideas within the company on doing projects. My Hawaii project

example is Ala Moana Center. It's my understanding that like the Tyler, Brea, and other malls on the mainland, that this mall was renovated and expanded while it was kept open. My question then goes, was there a cadre of people within Pankow then who became experts on these projects? My question goes to how then did one experience inform the next and the next, and how you benefited from experience and shared that.

Fink: Well, I think in the earlier days, we would have what we called an annual meeting, and that annual meeting was an opportunity for everybody in the company to see what everybody else was doing. You mentioned about Ala Moana Shopping Center. We did a renovation there, and we had some pretty good ways of doing demolition. There was a superintendent, Bill Bramschreiber. I don't know if you—

Adamson: Haven't yet.

Fink: —talked to Bill or know about Bill, but he was a superintendent out there. We came out with ways of doing demolition, tried to minimize the impact because it was a shopping center that had to be kept open. There's a lot of conditions that have to come into play to do that. Obviously we did the same thing on many other mall expansions across the country. This is a type of work. We did a fair amount of shopping centers, and the requirements to keep an active open shopping center were shared, just like you mentioned.

I think, though, on just the things that we would do, like precast, as an example, we set up this MidState Precast, and we can talk about that a little bit later, but the way of

doing work is we did talk to a fair extent about the UH Arena. That precast, that way of doing that, was a result of many other precast jobs that we did in the past. I don't know if it was the AT&T Building or whatever on the mainland, but in some of the very, very early Pankow literature, you can see what Charlie did even maybe before the Pankow Company was even founded in precast.

So it was a way of building, and maybe not a specific, bents and stack casts and all that, but that process of building something and then erecting it, which is a precast way, or another thing is tilt-up, where you take that panel, you cast it, and then you lift it up, that's being done right now in Hawaii with PSPL [Pankow Special Projects, Ltd.], by the way, on a Time-Warner project, and it's ongoing right now. But that way of building is entrenched in the company. The tilt-up that was being done by PSPL right now, I think it's one of the first times they've done that. That's really an outgrowth of what they did at UH. It's what we'd done before. Dean Browning is heading that up, that group, and I'm sure Dean was very much involved in a lot of the details of it, and it goes back to what we did at UH. It goes back to what we did at UH, and it goes back much earlier to what we did on many other projects. But that way of building gets passed on. I took a video of what we just recently did, a tilt-up, just to try to make sure that that legacy in the way we do work is passed on.

Adamson: This question gets to land use in Hawaii. I'm sure we could go on for ten hours, but just one question. The example that came up in a 1991 article in *Pacific Business News* stated that a condominium project like Honolulu Park Place came along

once every forty years, and I'm wondering what they might have meant by that and what, if anything, that says about doing business in Hawaii in that area, anyway.<sup>13</sup>

Fink: Well, I'm not sure what the article meant about it comes around once every forty years, but there's definitely, in the building of condominiums, there is a cycle to it. It goes through the economic cycle. Right now in 2009, everybody's suffering, and so it does go through cycles. The Honolulu Park Place was built in the time frame where it was at the beginning of that cycle, and we did sell all the units, but it was a property that we had actually owned for a while. I think there was one large parcel that we bought. It was out of that area that you're referring to. Honolulu Park Place, it's at Nuuanu and Beretania, and that corner used to be part of Chinatown. So that area was getting pretty run down, and it was an area that the city then—I think it was called the Chinatown Redevelopment or something like that.

We ended up, Pankow, I think, that was kind of the development side again, bought that property. It was about 140,000 square feet. George and Charlie were very much involved in doing that. I wasn't into that at all, other than when we built Honolulu Tower, about 72,000 square feet. The other Honolulu Park Place was the second parcel that we built.

Hawaii has a limited land area. The urban area of Honolulu is somewhat limited, and because of that, you don't get necessarily all of the construction activity that you might have in an area like Southern California. But at the same time, it concentrates the building in a certain area.



Right now, today, there's an area called Honolulu [actually, Hawaii] Community Development Authority, HCDA zone, that comprises the kind of primary urban core, and there's two primary landowners. One is Kamehameha Schools, and they have a master development for it. The other is General Growth [Properties] that's having some economic problems, but they have a master plan with substantial number of condominiums, but also it's a mixed-use project with retail and offices and everything else.<sup>14</sup>

But the fact that the article says every forty years, I'm not quite sure where that all came from, but it does go through cycles. Once you build on a piece of property like that redevelopment area, and you put two major buildings and towers on it, I would imagine—hard to say, but I would imagine that it will be there a hundred years from now, I would think, in some form, because it would be functioning. It has to be reconfigured in some way. I don't know. But once you take a piece of property like that and you develop something on it as a concrete building, it's going to be there for a while.

Adamson: Two of the things you wanted me to ask you about when I first briefed you about this interview were your participation in the precast hybrid moment resistance frame, and then launching MidState Precast. So if you take those two in turn.

Fink: The business cycle in Hawaii was pretty slow at that time. It was in the early nineties. I'm trying to think. The early nineties it started to—late, early nineties, I'm not sure when that whole turnaround occurred. But Charlie had asked in 1999 if I would

come back and help launch this new company. It was MidState Precast. We had the site identified, and there were two projects that would be at the front end of this.

The one primary reason, actually, of starting the company was to be able to build this project. It's called the Paramount now. Third and Mission was the early name of it. But it was this moment frame that I'll talk a little bit more about. Prior to that, though, there was another project, Red Ward was the superintendent, and that was another moment frame project that was a parking structure. It was a major parking structure that was at the shopping center at Stanford. That was our first project.

So in 1999—well, I think it was actually in the year 2000. I'm trying to get my dates correct here. We just had our ten-year anniversary, supposedly, but I think the first precast was actually in March of—I'm trying to think when 9/11 happened, too, because that was a little bit later. But I think in the year 2000 we had our first precast for Stanford. I may be mixed up on the time of it.

The guy that was our precast expert—I don't know if you've talked to Frank Woodman.

Adamson: No.

Fink: Frank is our precast guru right now. Frank was a field superintendent and a superintendent, but he knew more about precast than anybody else, so it was Frank and I that were out there. I was taking care of probably more of the business side, but just my nature, I would get involved in all the nitty-gritty elements of it, too.

I think you've talked to Joe Sanders. Joe was very much involved in developing this. Between Charlie and—I don't know if you've talked to Dean Stephan about it, but Dean was very instrumental in creating and developing this moment frame. The long name of it is precast hybrid moment resistant frame. It's a mouthful. Just for whoever's listening or reading this, a moment is actually a force times the distance. That's a moment, just so everybody knows what that is. This frame, if you push on something, a building of any sort, and if it's just a connection, a pin connection, let's say, at the joint of the horizontal vertical member, it's going to push over. So the way it's resisted, if you think of just a moment frame in general, if you have columns in a beam and at the joint of the column in the beam, if it's pretty much connected and you try to push on it, it's not going to push over, because of that connection. It's not like if you had two columns and a beam on the top without much of a connection, you just push it and it will push over laterally, so the moment frame resists that.

The entire building is built of a series of the exterior, a series of these moment frames. They're precast, so it's done offsite in a plant, shipped to the site, and it's all interconnected together with [cables]. These are stressed afterwards. There's a thing called pre-stressing. Post-tension is after. You stress it afterwards.

It takes all of these frames and basically pulls them together. The way it works in an earthquake in a seismic condition, the building will move. The seismic energy and the energy of this lateral movement with an earthquake is absorbed in this frame, and the energy is actually absorbed in the connection between the beam and the column. The beam/column intersection has reinforcing at the top and the bottom, and it acts like—I think, actually, Joe Sanders has a couple presentations where he explains it. It's on the

Web, too, by the way. We talk about it in terms of it's actually like a shock absorber, where that if you push it, a bar on top would go on tension, and then the bottom could go on tension, and the reinforcing is a grade of steel that allows that flexibility.

So we came up with a way of developing this technology. MidState was the company that did it for the first time. There were people from all over the world that came to see what we were doing. There were engineers that came here from New Zealand that stopped to see what we were doing.

A lot of the little detail of this we had to create and develop and innovate ourselves. There were some real tricky details where this frame actually went around a corner, so there was a 90-degree angle. The cables actually passed through a column in the corner, so that it actually made a 90-degree turn with the cable when we stressed it. We had to figure out how that all works. We had to figure out how you create that interface between the column and the beam, and that was kind of—Red Ward was on the—I don't know if you've talked to Red yet.

Adamson: Yes.

Fink: Oh, you have, okay. Did Red mention about this?

Adamson: We didn't go into this detail.

Fink: Okay. But he came up with certain ways of creating this interface that I mentioned. It's a little grout joint. It was a real important detail of how this thing works.

We ended up making some mockups at MidState. Like I said, there were a lot of little details of how you get into this area, how you grout the interface. We actually came up with some patents. I think I'm one of the patent holders of it in the company, obviously. It's basically in the public domain, but Charlie said, "Let's not come up with these great ideas and have somebody else take our ideas and patent it like it's theirs." So we did actually do some patent work on some of the detail conditions.

Basically, in the end, the idea is to make buildings more earthquake-proof. So the Third and Mission building, the Paramount Building, it would be fascinating, if there's a major earthquake, to see how it really works. Supposedly it will move and in some ways you can think of it as snapping back because of the cables that are in there. Like I said, there's these half-inch cables that are stressed and they're not grouted, so in other words, it's like a big rubber band that goes from one end to the other, and there are 270,000 pounds per square inch (psi). It was the cable itself was very high-strength steel, so it was 270 [thousand psi] versus 60,000 [psi] reinforcing steel. So when you stress it, it pulls the whole thing together and it acts in a unified way and allows the building to move.<sup>15</sup>

That's what we set up, MidState Precast, to be able to build the project. At some point, then we decided let's just keep it as an ongoing business. We developed a business model, a business plan. We created a business plan, and that became kind of the basis of how we would set this new company up.

I was pretty much engaged in a lot of the business aspects of it. We ended up buying some additional land. We got it rezoned. It was ag[ricultural] land. It's not easy to do in California, but there's a lot of ag[ricultural] land there, so I don't particularly feel

bad that we took this very small portion of it, you know, ten acres or something, and rezoned it. But because it brought employment into the area, it was actually supported by everybody in the little town of Corcoran. We ended up expanding our MidState Precast plant to be able to get enough land area that we could actually produce what we needed to. It was mid state, in the middle of the state, to be able to tap into both the Northern and Southern California markets.

Right now, MidState, by the way, it's kind of almost strange to understand this, but they have a project—because of the shipping costs, it's a lot more. They had a project in Oregon, and it's another arena [Matthew Knight Arena]. I think it's the fifth arena that we've done, so we have some expertise in doing that. I assume we had the lowest price and the best product. We're actually doing a project right now that we just got recently. I have to give them a call and congratulate them, by the way. I meant to do that. But we have a project in Oregon.

That harkens back to another thing that you mentioned, the legacy of the company and what we're able to do. If you want to know about precast, there's a lot of people to tap into. If you want to know about tilt-up precast, I think Frank Woodman was out there just observing, almost, and gave a few pointers, but they pretty much knew what they were doing just recently. But it's part of the culture of the company to be able to do these things.

Adamson: So this arena is or isn't a Pankow project?

Fink: That's another point. The first arena that we did, the first large arena that we did, Clark was the general contractor, and MidState—that's another thing that we had to grapple with. MidState actually was an independent precast producer that sold product to other general contractors. In the case of the first arena that we did, we were not the general contractor. In fact, I think all the major arenas that we did, we were not the general contractor. MidState Precast is a—we produce it and we erect it. So I don't know on the Oregon arena if we're doing the erection of it. I assume we are. But we would produce the precast and erect the precast for another general contractor. So we were acting basically as a subcontractor.

Adamson: Special Projects was set up—well, as Dean Stephan and others have put it, got the company through the nineties or some part of the nineties, but it was a direction that was something Pankow had not done because it was a big building construction company. My question to you is, when did Special Projects come to Hawaii, and what impact did it have on Hawaii's business?

Fink: Well, when George left—and that was, what, 1991, I guess, I think when George up and left—I don't think we had PSPL, Pankow Special Projects already established. I was involved early on with a guy, Arnie LePrade, actually that was in charge of that to start with, and we had smaller projects, like you said. A lot of it was TI, tenant improvement work, and rather than try to get these big—one of the analogies that was talked about a little bit off and on is the woolly mammoth is the huge game that you get and would sustain you for a while and all that, but you could starve to death in the

meantime, so you'd eat all these fruits and berries and everything else, and that was the PSPL model. So it's a smaller project. You don't have as many resources tied up in it. It usually goes a lot faster.

I think in the early nineties is when we started it in Hawaii. Right now, PSPL in Hawaii, it's a legacy that's continued on since the early nineties, and PSPL, that was way before MidState Precast, but that has, like you said, during the lean times, it really sustained the company. It was smaller projects. It wasn't necessarily tied to being able to get these huge loans. In today's world, as an example again, somebody with a little bit of money, they could renovate their store or do a smaller project, whereas it's virtually impossible to get financing for a major project today. So this is another one of these time periods where PSPL is bidding us over here. We're able to survive today in a good part because of that.

Adamson: The résumé indicates that from 1991 to 1999 you were Hawaii area manager and director of business development. I just want you to talk a little bit about what you did during this period and also talk a little bit about the Hawaii office after George left.

Fink: Well, after George left, first of all, we had some ongoing work, and I think the last contract that George signed was the Landmark project, and that was at the end of the cycle again. Unfortunately, at the end, it didn't really sell out, and that was a little bit of a problem in and of itself, and there was another project. Again, we were not the developer of the Landmark project, but we were on this project called [Nuuanu] Parkside, and that was ongoing when George left also.



In fact, when he left, we were supposed to do these huge projects that included—I told you about this Universal Motors property, that six-acre parcel. In 1991 the [unclear] was still around. We were going to do all these projects over the North Shore. As the regional manager after George left, that tied up a fair amount of my time and effort.

There were some ongoing litigation issues that were not necessarily construction-related. Not even litigation, arbitration that had to do with that Universal Motors property that was basically Charlie and Russ Osterman. I was really intimately involved with that because I was involved in the negotiation of the contract with Cutter, and these contracts. There were about two or three legal things that had to be dealt with. One was actually a lawsuit against our attorneys on the Parkside project. There was another—not the attorneys. I think there was a residual thing with this problem that we had with the banks, with Crocker Bank, I think. So there were several major legal things that had to be dealt with that consumed a fair amount of my effort, and then, like I said, we had the Landmark project going and then we had the Parkside project. I think we were just setting up this PSPL too. So in the early stage, that was absorbing a fair amount of my time.

We recognized that after the market turned like it is today in 2009, there aren't going to be any more condominiums, so that was the major kind of project that we built, and that's always been a little bit of a problem, because once that turns, then you have no work. So that's when we got the UH Arena, so I was involved in that, the UH Arena.

There was a time when what we did was we hired Kim Lum, so Kim came over and he was our regional manager there for a while too. So we did a shopping center in Pearlridge and so forth, but I don't know if there were any major projects later in that

time period, and then I left. There was, like you say, business development, but I left then and went over to get this MidState Precast set up.

Adamson: The September of 2003 article in *Los Angeles Business Journal* stated that Pankow Builders, the company, quote, “offered small company intimacy and large company capacity,” unquote.<sup>16</sup> My question is, how did Charlie Pankow and others shape the firm’s culture and develop its organizational capacities?

Fink: Well, I think the culture, on more of a personal side, the human side in all of this, in fact, my last day with Charles Pankow Builders or Pankow as a company was January 15 of this year, 2009, and so I’m on a kind of a consultant basis right now. I think my career is a good way of looking at the culture of the company. When I started, the superintendent I worked with was Red Metcalf, and Red is a wonderful person and he’s a master builder. He knows how to build. All the things that we’ve talked about of what’s important and having integrity and keeping your word and doing a good job and doing quality work and everything else on a no-BS basis, that’s Red. He has a great sense of humor. He doesn’t get all pissed off at anything, usually, and he wants to produce and achieve the result that we looked at in the beginning.

I think on the culture side, we have annual meetings every year, we all get together, and we refer to ourselves as the Pankow family. I think from a number of perspectives, first of all, you haven’t even asked about this or mentioned it, but Charlie was the owner, the primary owner. You can talk to George about this. He was the one that owned—it was his company. But there were other people, like Bob Carlson, who

Bev and I just had dinner with his wife. Bob passed away a number of years ago. Talk to George about it. Bob was one of the early founders, and Russ Osterman, and it was really, as George would tell you, it's Charlie's company. For all of the better or for worse, Charlie allowed everybody to participate in the ownership of the company, and that's a big, big deal, I think. So it's not like you're just one of the little workers. Work would be easier. You're a part owner of the company, at least a major—it's not disseminated through everybody in the world. At one time it was. There were a lot of office people and office managers and so forth that participated. That's been changed somewhat with the current structure. But the idea was, in whatever appropriate capacity, to let everybody participate in the benefits and what we achieved in the profitability of the company.

So today, even, when we're making money, the people first starting out in their early years they're benefiting by profit-sharing and one of those things called Senior Associates right now. But the philosophy, I think it was partly an outgrowth of when Charlie worked for Kiewit, in that people were able to buy into the company. So part of the culture, maybe it isn't talked about that much, but it's the ownership and participating in the ownership of the company that I think really creates a career for people.

I just mentioned to you we just had a phone call a little bit ago from the wife of one of the guys that worked with us in the eighties. It was Tim Cahalane, who was the field superintendent, the superintendent who did all our slipforms and so forth, really a great guy, good friend, and that continues today. I just talked to Red Metcalf last week sometime, the guy that I worked with thirty years ago.

[break]

Adamson: [We were talking about] the wedding you're going to and keeping in touch with people in the Pankow family.

Fink: I think part of the legacy, an important part, actually, and one of the things that's been real special for me in my career is just the people. We have really good people. We have people that are stand-up people. In today's world you hear about Wall Street and all what goes on, people trying to get more than what they're entitled to, and the greed and everything else. You hear all that. I don't think that existed here with the company. I mean, people are always interested in making money and all of that kind of stuff, but at the same time I think there's a mutual respect with everyone within the company, and if somehow somebody's outside the boundary of doing the right thing, other people frown on it. As a company and a group of people, that's one of our standards that we hold up. If we screwed up on something, on a job, as an example, I think everybody feels an obligation we have to make it right. If it's our fault and we did something that we shouldn't have done somehow or somehow the result isn't what the owner expects, we take care of it.

Adamson: What have you and other top managers done in the past decade or so to ensure that the Pankow Company endured not only past Charlie's lifetime, but after everyone who knew him personally has retired?

Fink: Well, I think part of what we all have to do, what I've attempted to do, is pass on whatever knowledge I have. When we're building the Allure project, the capacity that I had or continue to have to a certain extent as an operations person in Hawaii is to work with the younger people and try to pass on whatever knowledge I have of all the things involved in trying to get a project done, focusing on it. I keep using the phrase "the devil's in the details," but you need to understand concurrently the big picture, the vision of what you want to do, and at the same time, try to understand all the little components and the details that make it all work. What I try to do is pass that on to the younger people. I'm taking some videos right now of the various projects, a way to try to capture that and pass it on.

I think part of what we did in establishing even the design/build in Hawaii with the Arena, part of what we did with the precast company in MidState, I think of that as a contribution to the legacy of the company. I think what we do and how we do work, and being able to get involved early on on a design/assist basis, I'm trying to pass that on to the current generation of people. When I'm talking to our chief, who was our chief estimator and is a sponsor now, Mike Vachio, I'll do that in a way where I try to, as much as I can, explain what it is, why we're doing it, try to pass on whatever knowledge and experience that I have. During the day I'll spend a good amount of time just doing that.

Adamson: Looking back over forty years in the construction business, what has changed most about the industry during your career?

Fink: You know, sometimes partly tongue-in-cheek and in truth and reality, too, I'll talk about the old days and this is what we used to do, and I think as an example, what I'm thinking of specifically to show the difference, in the days when we did Pearl Two, I think I told you about it, there's a video that I showed you how the concrete strength, not anything we did, but it was the concrete supplier, the concrete strength was way under what it should have been, and it was a major, major problem. It would be today, and I think today it would be a lot more difficult to try to handle it. But what we did is we recognized what it was, we formulated the solution. We didn't have attorneys involved. We did what it took to fix it, and we did it as expeditiously as possible. A little story of doing this in less than a year and Red Metcalf had a bet with Bill Fulton, the millwork installer, that we're going to finish this in a year, and we couldn't jeopardize Red's \$25, right?

We got it finished on the exact day that I had on the schedule, and the differences are the schedule was a handwritten bar chart. Today we have very sophisticated schedules. In the old days there, we didn't have computers when I first started. In some ways, I'm not knocking any of the technology we have, it's wonderful, but a lot of the stuff was done by hand. I think I had a really good understanding of where we stood in cost. We had this labor distribution report that was required every week, and we had a monthly cost analysis. But I think by doing it by hand even in the very, very early days, I had a good picture of what it was. Nowadays, you feed everything, the information, into the computer and you print it out, and maybe it's not even analyzed to the extent that it should be.

So I think in today's world, including globally, what's amazing is that you have—I'm just going back to the crisis that we have today, the financial crisis. You have these very sophisticated computer models. You have dozens or hundreds of Ph.D.s that are in the Federal Reserve and then the Treasury, and everybody else that does all these sophisticated analyses with all these sophisticated computer programs, nobody even saw what's going on. Three years ago, four years ago, I thought, "We're going to have a real problem." If I can go out and get a million-dollar loan just by signing my name, and everybody else can do that, and money's just there just for the taking and prices are going up and everything else, we pulled everything out of the equity side of the market. I thought, "Tough times are coming, because the cycle is going to be coming through here."

You have sophisticated analyses being done by dozens or hundreds of Ph.D.s, again, like I said, in the Treasury Department and the Federal Reserve and all the Wall Street people and everybody else, and nobody sees the obvious. Today we have—and I'm kind of showing the opposite side of it, because there's a very positive side to the technology. So we talk about BIM [phonetic] and everything else.

But going back to construction again, as an example, I'm going back to the old days of Pearl Two with Red, and we had a design—I don't know if I mentioned this before; maybe I did. But we had a mat foundation that I think was four feet thick, and we were getting down—when we get into the elevator core area, it's a little bit deeper, and we were getting into the excavation of this. We were getting blue rock, very hard. It's much harder than concrete. It's very, very hard rock. We're there with the hole ram rat-tat-tatting and trying to remove it. Red's out there, and he says, "Al, come on out. Look

at this. God, this is stupid. Why are we doing this? We're trying to remove two feet of this hardest rock in the world to put concrete here. Why are we doing that? If there's a little bit of hole in the foundation, doesn't that still work okay?"

I said, "Yeah, it does. It may be all we need."

He said, "Well, we're a couple inches below the bottom of the elevator pit. What if we just put some topping on there somehow?"

I said, "I think it's a good idea. Let me call the structural engineer."

Called the guy up, he comes out, I have an eight-and-a-half-by-eleven notepad with my pen or whatever it is, and we draw up a sketch. He said, "Let me do a little quick analysis. I think it should be perfectly fine. It's a good idea, and we could change the reinforcing, and you don't have to go down and try to—." Because we would have to dynamite and blast that. The guy's out there for ten minutes, I do a sketch, it takes me forty-five seconds to do my little sketch, and he signs his name, and he puts an okay on it, and we put it in an as-built. He said, "I'll call you back, but just to make sure that it's okay. Don't actually implement this for another hour or so. Give me a chance to do a few little calculations, and I'll call you back."

He calls back in an hour, hour and a half, he says, "Hey, it's fine. Perfect, Al. Let's just go with it."

"Okay. Fine." I already have an approved drawing, a little sketch, and we order the reinforcing and revise the reinforcing. We don't go down in there. I tell Red, "Hey, just put a top, that's all we need."

"Oh, great, wonderful."



Today that would take weeks. It would go through an RFI process, request for information. It would go through the structural engineer. We still talk directly to the structural engineer in most cases, but it would go to the architect. Everybody gets involved. The owner would say, “How much money am I getting back?” We didn’t give any money back in that case. It was the same thing, same result.

Today there’s a lot more of a process that’s more formal, more structured, and in a lot of ways that’s a real plus. In some ways it’s not. I think some of the things that we were able to do a long time ago, we can’t do today. It’s just today it’s a different time, and in some cases I think it was simpler, a little easier to achieve. As long as your heart was in the right place and you’re doing the right thing, people question that today. As long as you do that and everybody’s supporting the same thing and it could be done efficiently, why not?

Adamson: I think we have time for one more question, and that is, what is the best way of understanding the contributions Pankow people make individually and then the company as a whole make to the building industry. Individually, I’m thinking of the professional activities and things that Pankow people do, and then as a company I know people have distilled it down to concrete and design/build, but if you have your own take on the contribution of the company to the building industry.

Fink: Well, I think, like you said, concrete and design/build is a big part of it, but I think the way we do business is an important contribution to the building industry in general. Part of our reputation is built on doing the right thing, doing it with integrity, and

hopefully that same philosophy kind of spills over to everybody else. I think everybody else is trying to do that to a certain extent also. But I think part of our contribution is taking the innovations that we created, and as an example, getting into the specifics, again, the moment frame that we talked about. That's not something that we're just trying to hold on and glom onto ourselves, do whatever. We were instrumental in creating that. But at the same time, Charlie and the company, we want it—that's open to the public. It's been actually something that's been done by other precasters, so it's a contribution that spills over to the industry in general.

What we're doing this for right now in obviously the Pankow Foundation, that was something that Charlie felt very strong about, to the point where the bulk of his net worth, I believe, is in the Pankow Foundation. His family and his children and everybody else, they have their own careers and their own path in life, and they're well taken care of, but the bulk of what Charlie had, he wanted to put into an entity that would perpetuate the idea of innovation, of doing things in a better way. That's the thrust of, I think, just of the unfoldment [*sic*] of the universe. That's why we went from a planet without anything on it, to I'm looking out here to the trees and to everything else that's part of—somehow there's a process. I don't know what you want to call it, if it's God or whatever, but it's a process where things evolve and the unfoldment [*sic*] is coming into an arena that's improving. I'm looking out there at all the colors of the planting out there. How did we go from the Big Bang to the planet that we have today that was pretty barren to these plants out here? It's a continual evolving and opening in the blossoming, and part of the Pankow legacy is doing the same thing, that we and all of us have to

contribute to that process of doing things in a better way. We talked a lot about the [UH] Arena as an example, but it's doing things in a better way.

When the first design/build of the arena took place, then after that, as a result of the first one that we did, somebody else built the design/build the Convention Center. There's been multiple projects been the same way, and I think Pankow has been a leader in making that happen. I mean, obviously, we're not the only ones. There's a whole culture to do that. But we've been on part of the leading edge of doing that, and I think the people in the company have been the contributors to doing that.

There's a DVD, a video, that's been put together. I don't know if you saw it. It's the Pankow culture. One of the things that stuck in my mind is Charlie saying, "The basis is innovation, and we need to always be on top of what does it take to do something better." How do we achieve the result we're looking for in a more cost-effective way, but achieving that result with quality, achieving all of the goals and the desires of an owner? How do we do that in a better way?

Because we'd still be rubbing stones together as cavemen if we didn't figure out a better way to do everything. You can look around today at all the technology. I'm looking at the big screen TV and everything else. Thirty years ago, this didn't exist. Construction, unfortunately, lags kind of the innovation that everything else goes through. If you look at the electronics and the explosion of Moore's Law and everything else that relates to the digital technology, what do we have in construction? One of the things, in Charlie's view, and the legacy of the company is that we need to do the same thing in building, in construction, and we need to figure out better ways to do it. That's, I think, the primary legacy of the company.

Adamson: I think that's about all the time we have. I thank you again for your time.

Fink: Okay.

Adamson: It's been a great interview. I think we'll leave it there.

Fink: Okay. Good.

[break]

Adamson: As an addendum, you had a couple stories that illustrate Charlie's sense of humor.

Fink: Right, yes. That's what you want to call it, but it's kind of everybody jokes with me that I have all these stories. But the two in particular maybe just to get them documented here, we'll call it the camel story and the finger story. But maybe first the finger story.

When George [Hutton] left, it was kind of a time of a little bit of tension, and Charlie's out there, and I'm the regional manager then. He's out in my car. Charlie always liked everything cold. He liked—when we had our annual meetings, everybody would be shivering in there. In fact, one time Red Metcalf in an annual meeting, you can

ask Red about it, he went over in the corner of the—we had wherever the meeting room was, and he huddled up in the drapes, even, because it was so cold.

So we're in my car in Hawaii, and it's humid and warm outside, and my windows are both open several inches on both side, and we're talking. It's pretty intense, whatever the conversation was, and Charlie had his fingers—I'm driving, and he had three fingers hanging on the window. I didn't even notice it, but he had three fingers on the window, and I had my window open a little bit. Without even thinking or talking much, I push my little lever that puts the windows up. My car at that time put it up pretty fast, and so Charlie's fingers got caught in the window. He pulls his fingers out, and I could see that the window was actually up there, seated up into the—it went all the way up [to the top of the window], and he pulls his fingers, and he's rubbing his fingers. The first thing, without censoring what I said at all, I kind of laughed a little bit, I said, "I always wondered how powerful those windows are."

Charlie says, "They're powerful."

I thought after I said that, I guess, I must have thought, "Well, that wasn't very sensitive." He's rubbing his fingers. I said, "Are you okay?" He kept rubbing his fingers. I said, "Are you okay?"

He said, "Yeah, yeah, but it's going to look like the Yakuza in Japan, if you're bad, you get your fingers cut right at the joint," supposedly. He holds up his right hand with his thumb and his little finger, and the three fingers are down. In Hawaii it's called a *shaka*, but it's his three fingers.

So he's rubbing his fingers, and he holds it up, and I said, "Are you okay?"

He said, “Yes, but it’s going to look like the Yakuza got to me,” and he shows me like he doesn’t have his three fingers there. He’s actually kind of joking about it, but I could see that his fingers were actually hurting a bit when I caught his fingers in my car window. In fact, when I left, I took my pen and I put it in there and I put the window down like that and pressed the button again, and they put a crease in the pen. So my little car I had, it was some pretty strong windows there.

So that was, I don’t know, ’91 or whatever, maybe, when I went over to MidState. Charlie was very proud of MidState, and he had Ralph Kiewit, who was a good friend of Charlie’s, and Dean Stephan was there. They came in on a Learjet, so Charlie, I think, the three of them and the pilot. They’re all going to come and take a tour of MidState, so they landed at the airport in Corcoran, and I went out to pick them up. I had my car again, and I was there. I drove Charlie, so Charlie’s in the passenger’s seat again. I’m driving, and my windows are down a little bit like this. For some reason, I had trouble with my damn car windows sometimes, and I’m trying to put my windows up for the air conditioner again. The window on Charlie’s side, it was down a couple inches, and I couldn’t get the damn window to work, and I said, “Charlie, I can’t get this window to work. I’m sorry, I can’t get it up.”

He said, “I had it disconnected.” [laughs] This is ten years later or something.

I said, “You still remember when I pinched your fingers?” I never even talked to him about it. I said, “You still remember when I pinched your fingers?”

He said, “I remember.” We laughed about it. So his little quip of humor there when I told him I couldn’t get my window up, he said, “I had it disconnected,” we got a chuckle out of that one.

Adamson: So you had the same car ten years later?

Fink: Well, no, it was a different car. It's just the windows weren't going.

Adamson: Oh, I see. He just knew.

Fink: Well, yes, he remembered back when I tried to put the windows. He said he had my windows disconnected.

The other one is the camel story, and a real quick one on that. Tom Verti and I, when we had our annual meeting, there would be chairman and co-chairman. Between Tom and Joy [Haystead], they did all the work, and I'm the one having fun. We had our annual meeting. It was at the Huntington Sheraton or the Huntington at Pasadena, beautiful place. It was all redone, and the ballroom was called the Viennese Ballroom. It was a drop ceiling was removed, and it was a beautiful ceiling.

We were in that ballroom for the first time, and we had this thing called the Arabian Nights affair or something like that, and today you probably can't even do it with HR. But it was basically guys, and that's part of the change, too. Fortunately, it changed. I have twin daughters. So I don't think we had any women in that meeting. But it was one of the first times we were going to have something kind of grand and special that wasn't just a sit-down dinner. So we had this thing that we had two camels in the grand ballroom, and we had maybe a dozen girls and ladies that were dressed up in

kind of the Arabian Nights affair here. They were serving drinks and wine and we had all kinds of food, and we had this big tent.

Tom had set up, and we had an outfit, a costume, for a sheik. So I quickly and Tom suggested—Tom Verti, by the way—“Who’s a good sheik?” I graciously and very quickly said, “Okay, I’ll be the sheik.” It was a kind of a fantasy that would play out for that evening as the sheik, like with my harem girls.

Is this stuff supposed to be on the tape like this? It’s okay?

Adamson: That’s fine. That’s fine.

Fink: Okay. So nobody knows about this. Nobody knew about it. Charlie knew about it. There was a little entry area that everybody was supposed to meet at seven o’clock or whatever the time was, and everybody kind of knew something was going on, but nobody knew what it was. I was trying to set up the scene in there with the camel, and everybody with the hotel was at our beck and call. I asked them to bring out a big bowl of grapes, which they did. I asked one of what I thought was the best looking and cutest of my harem girls to sit with me, and she would feed the grapes. That was the scene there, very chauvinistic here. [laughs]

So the scene is being set up, and the camel trainer is off a ways, a little ways there, but he brought his camel over. The camel is kneeling down. She’s feeding me grapes, and the girls are kind of around. The other ones there had little fans, and they’re supposed to be fanning the sheik. I was really playing this up.



A couple of them weren't paying any attention, and like a good sheik, I clapped my hands like that to get their attention, and when I did that, I didn't realize it, but that was the signal for the camel to get up. It shoots up in the air, and the camel trainer comes over and starts swearing at me, "What are you doing? That's the signal for the camel to get up."

I said, "Jeez, I didn't know that. Sorry about that."

So we get it all reestablished. Everybody comes in. It's kind of a wild thing, especially the camel there. I'm sitting on the camel, and one of my harem girls are up on the camel feeding me the grapes as we're coming in. There's a tent there. Girls are serving wine. We have all kinds of food. It's quite a little event. So after everybody gets in, we decide to take a few pictures, and one of them was going to be with Charlie got on the camel, and I graciously gave two of the best of my harem girls to sit with Charlie on the camel. Just for the heck of it, I don't know why, I think I was the one that started this, but I clapped again, everybody else is clapping, and, again, that's the signal for the camel to get up, right, and I knew that all along. The camel was struggling to get up, and Charlie's a big man, and the two girls, and the camel can't quite make it. The camel tries to get up. The camel falls over. The girls fall over. I mean, it's kind of a disaster scene, and I thought, "Oh, shit, what did I do here now?"

Many years later, I told Charlie, I said, "I don't know if you remember this, but I have to kind of confess here. You remember the whole thing with the camel and what happened with it?"

He said, "You started clapping your hands. That was it." So Charlie knew all along. He never said anything about it, but I didn't know that he knew why that all

happened, but he knew right away. He knew that. He said, “When you clapped your hands, everybody else started clapping, and then that was the signal for the camel to get up. The poor camel couldn’t get up and it fell over, and then I fell over and the poor girls fall over.” He knew it all along. [laughs] But he never gave me any shit about it, never said anything about it, and I didn’t know that he knew about it. But I thought it kind of bothered me over the years, not too much, though, that that happened, and he was fine about it.

So, anyhow, those are the two stories.

Adamson: Okay.

Fink: That’s it.

[End of Interview]

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Hardy Cross (1885–1959) developed the moment distribution method of structurally analyzing large, reinforced concrete building frames. It remained in general use until the 1960s, when computers allowed engineers to change the way in which they evaluated structures. He also developed a method for modeling flows in complex water supply networks.

<sup>2</sup> See, also, Red Metcalf’s discussion on this topic in his interview in this series (pp. 76–80).

<sup>3</sup> The Esplanade was completed for \$9.5 million in September 1973. Pearl One was completed for \$8 million in January 1975. Pearl Two was completed for \$10.4 million in September 1975.

<sup>4</sup> “Team Cooperation Slashes Construction Time 35 Percent.” *Journal of the American Concrete Institute* 74 (August 1977).

<sup>5</sup> Al Fink explains that the individual died while he was the superintendent on the project, but his death was not job-related.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Al Fink elaborates: A lot of architects “do not like contractors to critique [*sic*] their design even if there are major cost impacts.”

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> On the design and construction of Waikiki Landmark, see Maria Torres, “Waikiki Landmark Achieves a Hawaii First,” *Building Industry* (August 1992); Gordon Wright, “Twin-Tower Condo Provides a Gateway to Waikiki,” *Building Design & Construction* 34 (December 1993): 46–8.

<sup>10</sup> Christine Rodrigo, “Precast Concrete Cuts Costs,” *Pacific Business News*, 23 August 1993, A6.

<sup>11</sup> Named for architect Charles W. Dickey (1871–1942), who employed it on the Alexander and Baldwin Building and other landmark structures of the interwar era, the double-pitched hip roof features a wide, projecting eave extending at a separate, shallower pitch from the main part of a high roof. On Dickey’s architecture, see Robert Jay, *The Architecture of Charles W. Dickey: Hawaii and California* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992); J. Meredith Neil, “The Architecture of C. W. Dickey in Hawaii,” *Hawaiian Journal of History* 9 (1975): 101–13.

<sup>12</sup> Historian George Kanahale deployed the phrase, “a Hawaiian sense of place” on behalf of

“resurrect[ing] some authentic Hawaiian-ness in Waikiki.” In the late 1980s and early 1990s, local designers applied it enthusiastically to architecture more generally “by reflex rather than reflection,” as one critic argued. Capping steel-framed buildings with Dickey roofs was one expression of the trend (“Not Another Dickey Roof!” *Honolulu Magazine* 38 [February 2004]: n.p. Accessed online at <http://www.honolulumagazine.com/Honolulu-Magazine/February-2004>).

<sup>13</sup> Michelle R. Thompson, “Park Place Timed for Local Market,” *Pacific Business News*, 13 May 1991, 31.

<sup>14</sup> On 16 April 2009, General Properties filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. With a stated \$27.3 billion in debts, the filing was the largest in U.S. history for real estate. At the time of the filing, the owner of Faneuil Hall, the South Street Seaport, and more than 200 other properties was the second largest mall owner in America (Daniel Taub and Brian Louis, “General Growth Files Biggest U.S. Property Bankruptcy,” Bloomberg, 16 April 2009. URL:

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?sid=anaZwxRpYcTw&pid=20601087>. Accessed 20 July 2009.

<sup>15</sup> On the implementation of the precast hybrid moment-resisting frame in the Paramount, see, for instance, Larry Flynn, “Framing the Moment,” *Building Design & Construction* 42 (August 2001): 32–4; David B. Rosenbaum, “Record-Height Concrete Building Uses Quake-Resistant Precast,” *ENR*, 14 June 1999; Laurie A. Shuster, “Keeping It Together,” *Civil Engineering* 70 (March 2000): 44–7; Todd L. Whitlock, “All Shook Up,” *Urban Land* 59 (June 2000): 31.

<sup>16</sup> “Charles Pankow Builders Ltd.: Celebrating 40 Years of Building Excellence,” *Los Angeles Business Journal*, 29 September 2003, S7.