

Interview with Stanley Daniels, FAIA



Interviewed by:

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Transcription by John W McDavid

[italics in brackets indicate transcriber's interpretation of intent of conversation]

[Interview begins as Tom Little asks Stanley Daniels to describe the origins of the firm: Jova-Daniels-Busby Architects]

SD: The Firm [Jova-Daniels-Busby] opened for business on January 3, 1966 – so that's been forty-two years ago.

TL: Were all three partners there?

SD: To all intents and purposes. We began by "moonlighting" prior to that. John Busby and I had been at [Georgia] Tech together, and we got to be friends. He was a little ahead of me – he had actually gone into the [military] service after his 4th year, and he had come back to do his 5th year while I was in my 4th.

And we maintained the friendship afterward. And John worked with Henri when he got out of school. Henri was the Chief of Design for Abreu and Robeson, and had come to Atlanta to work for Abreu and Robeson – I guess in the early fifties. And he ended up staying. And so that's how they got to be friends, and I met Henri through that. And a family friend of mine asked me to do a little commercial job, and then another friend asked me to do an addition to a house.

And I asked John to work with me on it. And about the same time someone asked him to do a house. So we set up this little operation in my family's basement. Henri sent us another project a little later on that he wasn't interested in. And a few months after that Henri said to John that someone had asked him to do a job he was interested in. That turned out to be the Festival Cinema – before your time –

TL: I have seen photographs of it – had a sort of modernist interior?

SD: It was located where Ted's Montana Grill is in the Bona Allen building downtown. It was a little ninety seat theater. A guy named George Ellis who was sort of a television character and used to introduce horror movies on TV – and who also did architectural renderings.¹ He wanted to do this little Art Theater, serving espresso coffee and showing art films and that sort of thing – which nobody else was doing around here at that time. And he asked Henri to do it. So Henri "came into the basement" as we said – and the three of us started working together. And we worked like that for over a year. And we had a bunch of projects – and they might have been very small – but there were eighteen of them. I may be telling you more than you really want to know. Anyway, the job that Henri had sent us was to do a town house development. It was 28 units, on Roswell Road across from where the Peachtree Presbyterian Church is now – in fact, it is part of their parking lot now. And

the developer was a woman – which was unusual. She was backed by somebody, and she knew that we were working for other people and would not want publicity about this. But one Saturday somebody called up and said "I think you ought to buy a copy of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution tomorrow – because you're in it!" So we went up to the drug store and bought an early edition and the front page of the Business section of the Sunday AJC was a full page spread about this project with pictures of this little model we had done, and mentioning us of course. So we were kind of concerned about it. I was looking for John Portman about it – but he already knew I was moonlighting. The first time I took a job, I asked him if it was OK and he said "As long as it doesn't compete with our work" – which it didn't. He was just establishing himself at that time: he was doing the [Hyatt] Regency. So I called him, and he said "So What?" I went to work on Monday anticipating the teasing and "looks" and whatever. The firm only had about 20 people at that time.

Anyway, that was sort of the catalyst for John and Henri and I to talk about really opening a firm. We had never really thought about it or talked about it. Henri was Chief Designer for Abreu and Robeson, and they did hospitals and bank branches and public housing. He always wanted them to branch out [and do more]. They had done all

the branch banks for Trust Company [of Georgia; now SunTrust], including the "round building" [Monroe Drive Branch] and other modern things. But mostly they did fairly traditional things. And when they [Trust Company] got ready to build their headquarters downtown, Henri wanted to do that building. But his firm said "we don't do high rise office buildings" and would not make a play for it. So they ended up hiring Carson-Lundin-Shaw out of New York to do the design, and Abreu and Robeson were the local associates. That meant doing Construction Documents and Administration. And that sort of caused Henri to feel like –

TL: "All the heartache and none of the glory."

SD: Yeah – so Henri began to wonder if his future was not necessarily there. So that was when he accepted a couple of moonlight jobs and started working with us. That meant he was ripe for going out on his own. So in a long story, that's how we started. John was working for Heery by that time, and I was at Portman. Henri was still with Abreu and Robeson.

[waitress brings lunch]

TL: I know a lot of people who have worked for you over the years.

SD: Well, it is kind of an "office joke" – because virtually everybody in town, at one time or another, it seems like, has worked for us. In a way, our first employee was Brian Gracey. He was a student at the time – he moonlighted with us

some. Bill Porter was our first full-time employee. Gene [Surber], I think, and a guy named Clyde Pearson, whose father was an architect in Montgomery [were next]. I knew Gene in school, but Gene and Clyde and I had all worked with Portman. And when we opened the office, Clyde had wanted to come with us – but we couldn't do it; I wasn't comfortable with that, and didn't think it would work. About six months later, he said he wanted to work for us, and by then I thought it was OK. So Gene and Clyde joined us. I'm trying to remember – I guess Gene had been at Portman, then he went to Richmond, and then I think he came back and worked for us.

TL: Yes, I have seen in the Colony House drawings some that are initialed "GS" – which I assume means Gene Surber.

SD: Yes: that was part of the original group. Then Peter Hand, Terry Sargent, Steve Swicegood, Brian Terrell. Of course, Joe and Karen League. I don't know – there is a long, long list. Every time a new person at the office comes back from some sort of AIA meeting, they say "I saw so-and-so – and he told me that he worked for Y'all." Or "she," as the case may be. So there have been quite a lot – sort of spread all over town.

TL: One other question about your firm: the firm now has a significant Interiors Department. Did that come along about the time of Colony Square? Or was that later?

SD: When we started, it happened that all three of us had an interest in Interiors. And we felt like that I was a piece of the action that was missing from most architectural projects. ASD was operating then, as a subsidiary of FABRAP. But we were the first firm, we think, to do an integrated practice like that. There was never a separate subsidiary.

There were, I guess, three projects that were the cornerstones of our practice: I guess, in a way, Colony Square was the first. Then our first big interiors job was Robinson-Humphrey: the First National Bank Building was under construction, and Sandy Yearly, who was the Chairman of Robinson-Humphrey, was a close friend of Jim Robinson who was the President of First National. And in a casual conversation, Robinson had said he wanted him to move his [Robinson-Humphrey] office to First National. So he said, "Well, I think I'll do that." -- that's sort of the way they did business in those days. So then he felt committed to doing it. Some of the other partners said they were not so sure that was the thing to do. Robinson-Humphrey occupied a couple of floors in the Rhodes-Haverty Building. The floors there were about 4500 square feet -- there wasn't much left after you had the stair and the elevator. So Henri was friendly with some of the people over there [at Robinson-Humphrey] - and the first thing we were asked to do was an analysis of Rhodes-Haverty to see if they

could stay there, vis-a-vis the other. But it was really an exercise to justify the move. So we ended up recommending to them that they needed two floors, which was around 40,000 square feet. And they were going to open a retail Stock Broker's Office on the ground floor. Well, they said that was too much for them to do -- they couldn't believe that they needed that much space. So we did just one floor for them, plus the ground floor space. Then they had hardly moved in when they called up and said "Do the second floor -- we don't have enough space." So that was our first big interiors job. Of course, in those days, that was before computers and before all this Systems furniture. So Interior Design was not a technical kind of field. It was more than "decorating," but it wasn't the technologically intensive kind of business it is today.

Then the third project was Southern Progress.² Those were the three.

TL: You've had a continuing relationship with Southern Progress.

SD: We've worked with them since about '69 or '70. And we just finished their last expansion. I don't know whether there will be any more or not. They've got a lot of space to gather for...

And Colony Square -- which I think is your next question.

TL: Yes -- probably should be.

SD: We opened the office in January of 1966. And the first week of February, Jim Cushman called up. Jim

² [Publishers of Southern Living, and other periodicals].

knew Henri casually. All through their social network – Henri had a lot of social connections. Jim was a Real Estate Broker for one of the old-line Real Estate firms, Ward-White. He had been the mainstay for the development of a town house project just off I-75 at West Paces Ferry Road, called Paces Place.

TL: So you did The Paces?

SD: No, we didn't do that. This is something that Jim had done before. The Paces is what you are thinking of – it's an apartment development. But Paces Place – I don't know how many units it is – but they were nice townhouses. When you go under the Expressway on West Paces Ferry Road – out there by the OK Cafe -- when you go west, you turn immediately to the right to go into Paces Ferry Road as opposed to West Paces -- back there in a kind of little cul-de-sac is where this project is. And that had been Jim's baby. And he had somehow or another kind of consulted with Henri – he had spent a day or two with him just kind of talking about townhouses and residential and so forth. And Jim called us up and said he wanted to come by and talk to us. He had an idea he wanted to explore. We said "Come On!" And we had no idea what he wanted. And he came over to the office and he said that his in-laws, the Alstons – (of Alston-Byrd [Attorneys] – owned a substantial portion of the property here [at Colony Square] and they had asked him about doing something with it. He was beginning to

assemble the block and he wanted someone to work with him. He said he didn't have any money and one thing and another. Jim was probably 35 then. He said they were trying to assemble this: and he sort of outlined the 11.5 acres that became Colony Square. He said: "What would you do with it?" So Henri and I said, "On Peachtree we would put commercial development, and because of Ansley Park, we would put housing to tie them together." So we began to talk about the idea of high rise housing, and then town houses to step down into the Park. And we said that there ought to be some retail to give it some life. And to make it twenty-four hour, there ought to be a hotel. Weren't we smart? I really think so! That just seemed to us like it would be really neat.

TL: What year was this?

SD: It was 1966. And he said "Well, that's what I was thinking too." But I don't have any money, so I can't pay you anything until we get this off the ground. But I will cover your expenses." That meant we couldn't charge for our time, but it would pay for anything we had to buy. That sounded fair, so we said OK.

He said "I'm having a meeting with my Development Team next Tuesday morning, in the Conference Room at Alston-Miller-Gaines. Would you like to come?" We said "Sure!" and then he left. And we said "Oh well! We'll never hear from him again." But that afternoon he called back, and he had some questions about zoning and

so forth. So we said, "We'll get that information for you." So we called the City, or went down there. You understand, Atlanta was still pretty small then. And the Building Department was not the mess that it is now. You could call and talk to somebody and get some answers. I forget exactly what we did, but we called and got all the zoning information. So I wrote him a letter and gave him all the information he wanted; and I said "I understand that we are working on a speculative basis, and that you won't pay us for our time – but that you will commit to us for the project if and when it happens. And he wrote back a letter saying "That's exactly right." So we thought we had cemented ourselves into the project. And how we had the knowledge or the sense to do that, I don't know – but we did.

TL: Did you have a grasp of the scale of it at that time?

SD: We were so green! We went to that meeting and he had: Senior Partner of one of the big global accounting firms; he had the fair-haired young lawyer at Alston & Byrd, John Moore – who later went to Washington with Carter and became President of something global like the World Bank, one of those kinds of things. There were market analysts, and real estate specialists. We were baffled! They started talking about things like "return on equity" – and we didn't know what that meant! We left the meeting saying "What was this?" and "What was that?" But it was at the

same meeting – we had worked all weekend and put together a little site plan and a little cardboard mass model, so we took that. And they were thrilled with it! We were reacting quickly, and all that sort of thing. But from then on, we were tied in.

A couple of weeks later, Jim called and said that he had resigned from Ward-White and that he was forming this company called simply and elegantly Cushman Corporation. That was so much like him. He said he had rented what turned out to be four little rooms in the Bank of Georgia Building downtown. "I want to open it in four weeks. I'm hiring you to design it – and I'm going to pay you!" He wanted an office for himself, a workroom, a secretarial-reception space, and a Model Display room. We had seen at the time these big hot light fixtures – we had seen these big square tubular fixtures that hung from the ceiling. I forget who made them. But we wanted those and we checked on them. It was going to take something like three months. So we called Trimble House, a local lighting manufacturer, and had Jim Smalley meet us. We asked "Can you do something like this?" and they had them for us in three weeks. We got it all done. Then he had an Opening and he introduced us as his architects. He took that little cardboard thing we had put together for the meeting and a few sketches and made the pretense of a display room out of it. Later we had a real model. And that's how he got started.

About that time, the Festival Cinema opened. We had moonlighted it, but it didn't open until later. We submitted it for an AIA award, and we got our first award. That was really "heady."

TL: Wasn't it printed in the 1975 AIA Guide [to Atlanta Architecture]?

SD: You know, I don't know. I don't think it was around by that time. It may have lasted – yeah, I think it might have been. 1975? It may have lasted; it could have been. It was a little ahead of its time; it was a small foreign-film kind of thing, and that kind of thing didn't last long. George Ellis was a little like someone who has always wanted to have a restaurant, and then goes out and opens a restaurant with no idea what he is getting into. George knew everything there was to know about movies, in terms of production and film-making – but in terms of the day-to-day operation of a theater, that was not something for him. So he struggled for a while -- but eventually his supporters, who were all film buffs, just didn't put enough money into it.

TL: Now we've got things like the Plaza, Garden Hills, and the like.³

SD: Yeah – but he was successful at it for a long time. That was a great story.

TL: Did you guys travel to look at other projects for Cushman to get ideas? Did you do any of that kind of thing?

SD: We did several. We went to L.A. to see Century City. And we went

to Florida for something – don't remember what.

TL: Was the Galleria in Houston done then?

SD: We went to the Galleria. That was where the ice rink idea took form. We went to Dallas and Houston; we went to New York. That's another story: you'll just have to stop me! We worked on the project off and on for several months, and then it seemed to run out of steam. He was getting the property together and all that, but I remember that we had a meeting at his office and he brought in the President of Trust Company [of Georgia]. He was trying to get Trust Company involved. Remember, I was 29-30 years old – a little short of 29 when we opened the office. Here was this guy, the Chairman: Billy Stern. And we would make our pitch about the architecture; and then Jim would of course talk about the other stuff. Jim said something about the economy – it was a little "iffy." And Stern said, "Jim: I can't support this – it's not essential. You know, we provide financing to Rich's so they can buy toys for the Christmas Season. That's essential! But this project is not essential." And kind of, "That was it!" I guess he had had that happen a few times. Anyway, at some point after that – probably in the Spring of '68, I would guess. (I don't remember exactly) – He called up and said that John Moore, the lawyer, had made an appointment for us with the Rockefeller Brothers Fund – for day-after-tomorrow! And he

wanted to take the model with us. It was this model that we had made – it was about yea-big, and we had no way of carrying it. So we said OK. I called up Randall Brothers [Architectural Millwork] and said we had a problem -- we need a crate, and it needs to have handles so we could carry it, and we need it by tomorrow! They said OK – and made the crate. It had two little brass window-sash handles. So Henri & I carried it – he was on one, and I was on the other. So we took it to the airport – in those days, you could walk in and buy a ticket and do anything – so we checked it and flew to New York. I guess we went up the evening before. Jim always went in nice style, so he had made a reservation at the Drake. So we took our crate and everything. The next morning we went over to Rockefeller Center for the meeting – the 70th floor, the top floor of Rockefeller Center. And you go up there, and it's divided into four quadrants: one quadrant is real estate, and one quadrant is stocks-and-bonds, and whatever – four different investment groups. Each one had a quadrant, and all they did was manage the Rockefellers' money. There were five brothers (Nelson, David, Laurence, John, etc.), and each one had a part. It was so thrilling! And we went in and made our pitch and everything. But we were told NO. They said they liked the project; it was a good project; but they had all the money invested in the South and in the Atlanta area that they wanted to do right now. They wanted to spread,

and they were overly concentrated there. So we were headed back home.

Jim had made a reservation at some nice place for lunch. So we took the model over to the East Side Airlines Terminal and checked it in. Then we went back to lunch. While we were at lunch, Jim got a phone call. That was in the days when they brought the phone over to the banquette and there was a jack to plug it in. It was John Moore, and he said for us not to leave New York. He had made arrangements with John Weill with the Loeb-Rhodes investment firm for us to meet with them the next day. But we said "UhOh: we've already checked the model!" So we trotted over to the East Side Terminal, and it was still there. So we took it back. And then we had to get a cab back uptown. We had learned that if you stood at the curb with that big box, no cab would stop. But it would fit into the cab – those Yellow Cabs they used to have were big, so it would fit right in to the back seat. So one of us stood by the crate up beside the building, and the other went out to the curb and hailed a cab. Then as soon as the cab stopped, we'd run back and get the other one with the crate. So we spent the night and the next morning – this was fun too! We went to John Weill's apartment on Park Avenue for breakfast. It was one of those classic old Park Avenue apartments. And you went up there to a big oriental rug in a big drawing room. We laid the model out on the floor on the middle of the

rug. He had a nice breakfast laid out – I don't recall that we ate it. But we made the presentation, and he was interested. Within two or three weeks, the deal was put together. He brought in some people and by that time Mr. Alston had brought in some people from the Mellon Bank in Pittsburgh. And somehow or another they formed this consortium and we went off to town.

Then we had to figure out how we were going to build such a building. So what we built was 100 [office building]. The deal was that 100 had to be built for \$25 per square foot, and it had to be completed, and leased, and then they would consider financing the rest of it. In other words, it had to be a success.

TL: Would that make it a Class A building?

SD: Oh, you bet! The rent was \$5 a square foot, and that would make it the highest rate in town. People said you couldn't get \$5 a foot. I think the First National Bank Tower was \$4.50 or \$4.75, and we were coming on board a little bit later. So we had to figure out how we were going to do that.

Actually, in that contract – and this was put in by John Moore, Jim's lawyer – they put in something to the effect that if the project did not go through, that we would get some closing expenses for termination. Because they knew that we were adding people – we were going to go up to twelve people. That eventually got to be fifty by the time the project was done. We would not have thought to do that

– or wouldn't have demanded it, for sure.

We built the building and moved in. We were the first tenant to sign on. We were on the third floor. We moved in in January of 1970 – I think it was probably '72 before the next phase began. The next phase was the "rest of it" – the whole thing. Jim said that the terms of the agreement were that we had to be under construction within four months – some ridiculous period of time. So we said we would get a Scheduling Specialist (which was a pretty fancy thing in those days) to see how we could get this all done. And they guy came up with this estimate that this could not be done in eight months. So we said, OK: we will do the best we can. By that time they had brought in Holder and Holder, which was a little firm too. So all these people didn't know what they were doing, and since we didn't know what we were doing, we did it! If we had known it was impossible, we couldn't have done it. So we got it to the point that they could break ground in four months. There was a lot of filling in of things to do afterward – but basically, it was ready in four months. Actually, during that job one of our Construction Administration superintendents punched one of our CA people in the nose and got fired! That was a first.

Another thing we did in those "green" days was when the job had just gotten under construction on 100. We had hired a Project Manager for the job – he was an old

guy, probably 45! Had a lot of experience and knew how to put a building together – which we didn't. He had gone out on the site sometime very early in the job. There was something he didn't like. I forget exactly what caused it. But he stopped work. And all Hell broke loose. Holder called up and said "If this is gonna be the way it's gonna work, we will never get the job done." Of course, he was sorta right. So we got it straightened out and went ahead. You learned a lot in a hurry.

TL: Tell me something about the siting of the project. The zoning. The participation of the neighborhood.

SD: The siting – As I recall, there wasn't a whole lot of zoning problems. When they put all those parcels together, it was zoned commercial along the Peachtree side, and residential on the other side. We wanted a site-specific designation for conditional use. The people in Ansley Park were a little bit apprehensive, so we had to win them over. But this was also the height of the "Hippie Period". All up and down Fourteenth Street there were people selling The Great Speckled Bird [alternative newspaper]. They were having – not quite orgies – but I mean there was a wild time out in the middle of the street all the time. So the people in Ansley Park didn't like that either. It was clear this was going to help. The Great Speckled Bird wrote articles against us because "we were destroying their culture." We used to say we thought it was supposed to

be good to become a "member of the establishment" – and now that we were, it wasn't a good thing after all! Anyway, we had meetings with the Neighborhood. The old Tucker Wayne Building, which was one of S&W's [Stevens & Wilkinson] first modern buildings (around 1940) was on the corner. It was empty, so we invited the neighborhood to see what we were doing. They ended up supporting us, because they realized that instead of watching each domino fall, the entire block was determined. And they knew what was going to happen, and it was "as good as they were gonna get." I guess they might have liked to see it all be single family, but that wasn't going to happen. So they became supporters. So we got the zoning.

TL: Did the zoning include the town houses along Fifteenth Street?

SD: Yeah. And that's the only part of the project that was never built. Jim kept coming back to us time and time again for "another scheme." He always had a different idea. So we did a number of versions. He wanted them to appeal to "quote: ATLANTA". He would come in to a meeting, having just come from some society cocktail party where some lady had told him she had just painted her master bedroom robin's egg blue. And he would come back and say: "These bedrooms – they need to be blue! Atlanta likes blue!" Or, "Atlanta likes such-and-such a kitchen" – because he had seen somebody's kitchen in a house.

But you were asking about the site. The first site plan simply had two office buildings on Fourteenth Street; at one point we talked about moving the hotel onto Peachtree. Pretty much the configuration we have now, but it was perpendicular.

TL: You mean it was rotated 90 degrees from the way it is now?

SD: No – it was 45 degrees. Actually, Paul Friedberg⁴ worked with us – after we got the project pulled together, we brought in Paul Friedberg as our Landscape Architect. He was the one who looked at the site plan and said “You know, we’ve got this odd configuration of streets. If we rotated it, we would be addressing the street corner more prominently and it opens up the views instead of closing them.” And it was a good idea! So we did another site plan and went to a meeting and Jim said “What’s the matter with the way it was?” So we explained to him why we thought it was better, and he said “Well, let me think about it.” Then we went to another meeting -- I guess it was over a perspective of time -- and Jim started the meeting by talking about the rotation and what a wonderful idea it was and why “he” had done it. And we thought, OK if he thought of it that was fine. And I will say, he was a visionary in many ways and he was always willing to listen. I’m not sure that every time we did it we would tell him the right thing, but it was a risk we took. But he was always willing to listen, so that all

went very well. So that’s how the site plan developed.

Now, the original site plan did not have two stories of shops. The original concept was shops around an open court that had a wonderful fountain and stair that actually Paul had kind of developed. And you could kind of walk up and the roof of the retail was the plaza level. And it was kind of an open landscaped space. The second floor got added for financial reasons. Stewart Ward, the analyst who by that time was part of Cushman’s organization (he had been independent before) – was trying to make the numbers work for the whole thing. So one day he came up with the idea that you could double the amount of retail space by adding another level and it would be very inexpensive. But the imputed value because of the projected rents changed the whole financial picture. So that’s how that happened. Unfortunately, people didn’t want to walk upstairs to a second floor of retail. But in a way it didn’t matter – because it got the deal going. Certainly didn’t matter to us! And then the skating rink came in. And then the roof over it. But even then the only part that was enclosed originally was the immediate retail area. You were under cover, but you went outdoors from 100 to the Skating Rink. But the skating rink had to be climate controlled.

TL: Was that about where the Concierge and Security Desk are located now?

SD: No. It started where the Calder [wall painting] is. The rink started at the Calder and went all the way to where those stairs [to the hotel] are now. Those stairs weren't there then. And where the Calder is was the Skating Rink Office & Lobby – you went in there to get your skates on, in the shop, and then you skated on out from there. And above it was to have been a very fancy restaurant. But when they made the deal with Fairmont [to operate the hotel], the President of Fairmont suggested we bring Ernie's Restaurant from San Francisco. Ernie's was one of the really top restaurants – it's not there anymore. Grand! Down in Jackson Square – red velvet and all. It was a fabulous restaurant in its day. So Victor Gotti – he and his brother had the restaurant – came to Atlanta and we gave them a tour of the restaurants in Atlanta so he could see what it was like. At that time it was The Midnight Sun and the Rue de Paris – they were the top restaurants, and a couple of others. So we did an eating tour. Then we went out to San Francisco and visited his restaurant and he took us around. That was really fun! Ultimately he decided -- We maintained a little bit of a relationship with him over the years for quite a while; and we would visit the restaurant -- not that we went to San Francisco every week, but three or four times over the years we went to his restaurant. The last time I went was with my wife when our children were in high school. And it wasn't the same place.

Times had changed. Those formal restaurants just weren't what they used to be. He had had this wonderful wait-staff and this particular waiter who would always wait on us. Because he had introduced him to us the first time: his name was Ron. He was one of those kind of waiters – you know, very professional waiters who are very friendly and warm – not stuffy – but really know their stuff. So you feel very comfortable with them and it just makes it a wonderful experience. I had taken my wife out there once and he had taken care of us. Then later, this other time with the kids – he had died. It just wasn't the same. Shortly after that, they retired or closed – they had other restaurants, and I think they closed this one. Anyway, he decided not to come to Atlanta. Because – there were a couple of things – he said the restaurants in Atlanta charged similar to what he was charging, but you didn't get nearly as much for your money. But the main thing he said was that there was not a professional wait-staff available in Atlanta: "I don't think I could operate that way." So he decided against it.

Later, Brennan's, who they had also talked to, came to Atlanta and opened a restaurant where 103 West is – Brennan's out of New Orleans. And it didn't do well at all. It was the same scene: they didn't have the kind of personnel for a fancy operation than people had learned to expect.

TL: I think it has changed in the last fifteen years since I have been here.

SD: But I still don't know that there are "professional" waiters like there is in those cities. There's a class of "good" waiters – but they are different.

TL: Why do you think things like the "Mini-Rich's" failed? Wasn't there an Abercrombie & Fitch at one time?

SD: They never opened. That building was designed for them. But they never opened. I don't know about the "Mini-Rich's" – it may be that that mall was just ahead of its time. People were not willing to pay to park to go to a shopping facility. And there were not enough people in the area to support walk-in shopping. Rich's was the only real clothing type operation – and there really wasn't much clothing; it was more of a boutique. They had cosmetics and specialties. They opened one there – and another, I think, at the Omni. The Omni had high end shops too, and they didn't make it. They had a Hermes, and Rizzoli, and a couple of others. They really didn't make it.

[waitress offers dessert/coffee]

TL: What happened to the shops?

SD: There weren't any other shops to create a reason to go there. And that store [Rich's II] was always strange. You went in – and what was there to buy? They'd have scarves, and this-and-that – but I think it just didn't make sense. I remember where the other one was: it was at Peachtree Center. Not at the Omni. And it didn't do well either. I guess it was just poor merchandising.

TL: You talked about Fairmont. Were they on board at the beginning? Or was it later? I have some pictures of the Fairmont.

SD: I assume you're going to use some discretion! Well: Jim floated a number of hotel operators. And we had designed kind of a prototypical hotel. We had designed something, but it was just a concept-stage. It was enough to present to people, but obviously it had to be tailored to whoever the operator would be. We had meetings with Sonesta in Boston. And Bill Tabler, who was a prominent hotel architect in New York at the time – he designed all the Hilton Hotels, and they were kind of "merchant" hotels – they weren't unique. He was "formulae."

TL: Kind of "industry-standard?"

SD: Industry standard! The "Tabler bathroom" and so forth. We brought him in as a consultant. Then at some point they got to Fairmont. So we went out to Dallas. They were originally in San Francisco, then they had bought the old Roosevelt in New Orleans, and they had built a hotel in Dallas. So we went to see that. I guess we did a lot of traveling now that I think about it -- but it was over a period of time. We went to Toronto and Montreal – the Bonaventure hotel in Montreal. Anyway, Fairmont got into the picture. And we begin designing a hotel for Fairmont. And Dick Swig was the head of Fairmont – his family were huge owners of real estate in Boston and San Francisco. He was sort of the "less-favored" son – the one who was

thought to be not as capable. So they had given him this little Fairmont Hotel to play with. He actually had turned it into.... The Fairmont is an old building that opened right before the earthquake. It was destroyed, and it had kind of a checkered history – it reopened as a hotel, and then it was an old-folks home, then it was turned into an army facility during WWII. So he took it back after WWII and turned it into a hotel, and made a big success of it. He was very full of himself! (He was kind of obnoxious!) He came into the deal, and in his management agreement, there was a clause that said that the interiors were to be designed in “the Fairmont Style.” No definition of what “the Fairmont Style” was. So “the Fairmont Style” was whatever Dick said it was. And he wanted Barbara Dorn to do the interiors – she was a San Francisco “decorator”. A woman of a certain age – that could have been anywhere from 65 to 90. She was tall – and, I guess, very sophisticated. She wore a floor-length leopard skin coat. She sort of swept in and out. We really liked her – she was a hoot, but we liked her. And she had a younger woman whose name I can’t think of right now – who was kind of her go-fer and sort of made it all happen. And she was very nice. She had worked with Fairmont Hotels for a long time. She had kind of racket – she would make these trips to what we called “the Orient” in those days – to Asia. And she bought all these artifacts. Foo dogs and stuff like that. And she would

warehouse this stuff and then when the time came she would put them into her installations and sell them. You know – she paid three dollars for them, and then sold them for \$7500! Who knows? I guess a lot of Interior Designers do that. But they were integral to her style. And of course the Fairmont in San Francisco was “glitzy San Francisco” -- with the gilt, and the marble, and red velvet, and velvet tassels on everything. And it looked OK there because it was sort of “the scene.” But it was not exactly what was gonna go in Colony Square. So that’s what she was imposing on us. And she knew it was not right! And she would say “I’d rather do something else, but Dick is my client, and that’s what he wants.” And so we did it. We would complain about it and suggest alternatives – but they were never accepted. Well, when the building opened, it was such a disaster! I remember, on the day it opened, we went to lunch there – up on the main level, there was a dining room. There was sort of an alcove, and we were sitting there – and across from us there was a banquette with about eight or ten “ladies-who-lunch”. Several of them were mothers of people I had grown up with. We overheard them talking. And when we walked out, we said: “This hotel is never going to make it!”

The problem was – aside from the fact that it was not very attractive – they came to town with an attitude of “We’re from San Francisco, and we know what’s best, and all

you rubes will like it or not.” Well: the rubes didn’t like it! There was this attitude that just pervaded the place. If people did not like something – well, they were just too unsophisticated to appreciate it. So the operation was, if anything, worse than the decor. I think if it had been a fabulous operation, people would have come to think it was good – even if it was (ugly). So they pulled out.

TL: So it didn’t last very long at all?

SD: Two or three years. Then it went through several different operators and several different renovations. None of them were terrible successful – I think they did OK, but it was never a real success. But I’ll bet “W” is going to be different – they are doing a full re-do. The building is thirty years old now.

TL: Let’s talk a little more about architecture and materials. Why did you choose concrete as the major material? And why is some of it pre-cast and some of it is cast-in-place like Colony House?

SD: Well. [long pause]. We wanted concrete – Well, the office buildings are steel-frame, and the rest of the complex was concrete frame. Some of it was economics. We weighed the various choices for the various buildings and picked the material that was going to be most effective, as we saw it. We wanted a little bit more refined look for the office buildings; we didn’t think the rough concrete was going to be acceptable. We tried to bridge the two by doing the poured-in-place base for the office buildings, and then [pre-cast] concrete

for the rest [upper floors]. And we tried to wed the hotel to the apartment buildings [beton brut poured concrete] by using the board-form concrete. I think the office buildings looked better before they put the coating on the concrete. I liked the roughness of it better. Holder had some trouble with the concrete; there are a few places that look kind of rough. But I still thought that was more satisfactory than the coating. Of course, the coating didn’t come until many years later.

TL: Luckily, the Condo Association decided not to coat the concrete at Colony House when they did a restoration recently.

SD: You know, with the concrete – what we expected of the contractor was a little bit ambitious for their capability. We didn’t have a tradition in Atlanta for that kind of concrete work. So there wasn’t a lot of experience in it. We had to accept a lot. We couldn’t even attempt that now -- they would tell you immediately what’s cheapest. I guess there was some of that with this [project] too.

So that’s really how it came about: we were trying to get some differences in feel so it wouldn’t be static.

TL: Well, I think it’s beautiful. Out there in that little area where you walk into where the Tishman-Speyer offices are now – in that little area, where you can see Hanover House, all the different types of concrete sort of come together. [long pause]

Did you guys have anything to do with the art that was commissioned for the project?

SD: Yeah. We found Dorothy Burge⁵ – who did the sculpture out front, which they moved. I don't know why they moved it; I wish they'd move it back.

TL: Henri has already told me that – that he wished they would move it back.

SD: She had had a show at the High, and we remembered it. So we sought her out. In that show, there was a maquette of that piece of sculpture, and we liked it. So we talked to her about developing it. The first sketch that she did was to make it half that size – for a certain amount of money. And we looked at it and said "That just won't do it – the scale is all wrong!" And we had her double it. Actually, Gudmund Vigtel was the Director of the High at that time. So we consulted with him a little bit. And we all decided that it had to be bigger. I think when we started out it was going to cost \$10,000 – and maybe ended up costing \$25(K)! I think it was probably the most ambitious thing she ever did. I thought it was a great success.

[As for] the Calder [painting] – I talked to Jim about that a while back -- I thought that those were not really Calder's -- that we had just found them somewhere and reproduced them. But I talked to him, and he said "No – we paid a royalty for them."

TL: Yes – I read in an interview with Henri that that was how it was actually done. He said that they paid a royalty and it was executed to Calder's design.

SD: So I guess it really IS a Calder! The wall hangings that were in the lobbies [of the office buildings] -- we designed those and had them made. Who did that? I think it was What's-her-name Davis. Can't think of her first name – I don't know if she is still in that business. She used to make lots of these banners and stuff for commercial use. So we designed them -- we couldn't afford anything better -- and had her make them.⁶ But we were involved in all of it. You know, what's good about it is ours, and what's bad about it is ours! We had a very free hand. They had a lot of confidence in us – some of it may have been misplaced. But in many respects, it was an ideal relationship. Not that there weren't babbles along the way. Jim moved his office onto the top – 24th – floor, and did an open-plan Herman Miller office. Many a time, we walked out of there screaming at each other – at least a few times. He could be very over-bearing. I made two or three plans for vacations – of course, you usually didn't take a vacation – but then I planned a trip, and I think three times in a row I cancelled two or three days before the trip. Because he'd say something had to be

⁵ Dorothy Burge was not related to Atlanta Architect Flippen D. Burge, according to both Stan Daniels and Henry Jova.

⁶ Henri Jova remembers the banners as being made of felt,

rather than quilted, and executed by Mary Ann Busby, wife of architect John Busby.

done, or you need to be somewhere. Finally I did schedule a trip to Mexico. And really, until I was actually sitting on the plane, I didn't think I was going. When I got to Mexico City there was somebody calling my name. I looked around and it was one of these tour-type people, you know, with your name on a placard. When I identified myself, he said Mr Cushman had made arrangements for him to chauffeur me and to take me to certain places – anyway, he had arranged a number of things for me, and I thought it was very nice. He could be very gracious that way.

TL: One reason that DoCoMoMo started looking at Colony Square is because we started looking at the plaza as a certain type associated with the Modern Movement, especially in the United States, post-WWII. There were a lot of office buildings, with either enclosed malls, or plazas. This project had both. It seems to me the outdoor plaza – the roof plaza – has been under-utilized completely.

SD: Well the idea originally was for that plaza to be a space for the apartment-dwellers. Maybe to some extent for the office-workers. To be able to get outdoors and have some outdoor space and so forth. I guess it is just enough removed that it is not quite used like that. Later, when the shops were there, we thought maybe it would be attractive. I don't know why it didn't work. If that restaurant had ever been developed up there as a

means of drawing people up, I think it might have made a difference. There's just not a magnet up there to take you up. When we were here, maybe once in a blue moon if you really wanted some air, you would go there. But the place that's really active is on the first level, outside of where Houlihan's [restaurant] used to be.

TL: Everybody goes out there to smoke cigarettes!

SD: Yeah. Or to sit out there and eat. It would be nice if there was some sort of a food element up there – a cafe to support it. But I don't think Shout [nightclub/bar/restaurant] is that kind of thing.

TL: I think it is on the down-swing anyway.

SD: It was not a very attractive addition. For one thing, it was very cheaply done.

TL: I used to love to eat at The Country Place⁷ And when it became Wildwood, I liked that too. Did you guys design all the restaurants?

SD: We designed the restaurant that was originally in the basement of 100. It was called Brothers Two – these two twin brothers from Florida, the Ott Brothers, operated it.

TL: What's in that space now?

SD: I don't think there is anything in there now.

TL: It is always amazing that people are unaware of that whole big loading area underneath the complex.

SD: But that's not under 100 – the lowest level of 100 is the first level of parking. That was all parking for a

- while, and then there was an access into that level, which helped the restaurant a lot. It was a steakhouse.
- TL: Let's talk a little more about how you got the neighborhood to buy in.
- SD: You had one question in there about why we designed the apartments the way we did – the Corbusian model.
- TL: Yeah – the crossover. That's the kind I live it, and I love it!
- SD: That was an "insurance" thing – insurance in terms of the success of the venture. There weren't any high rise apartments in Atlanta to speak of [at the time]. There certainly weren't any in such an urban context. And we had some concern that if you had a conventional design, with half of the frontages on the Plaza and half of them on Ansley Park – that people would not want to live on the Plaza side. So by doing the through-floor apartments, we were able to have two thirds of the units to have an Ansley Park exposure. So a lot of people might have both – but they always had Ansley Park. That was the idea at the outset. But it turned out that the apartments on the Plaza side rented quicker than the ones on the other side! Nobody anticipated that; everyone was a little apprehensive.
- TL: But with the way the development has happened at this corner, I think it turned out that way now – the view towards Ansley is the more desirable.
- SD: We have friends that have moved into one of the top floor units in Hanover [House]. Their unit has a view through the void between the two office buildings; and you can get a glimpse through between the hotel and 100. Plus the Ansley Park [view] – where they've got a terrace on that side. And that's spectacular! They've done a great job there. They've got ALL of it! You've got the close-in view, and you've got the distant view.
- TL: Just a general question – kind of a summary. How does this [Colony Square] fit into the firm's development [Jova-Daniels-Busby]? How does it fit into your career?
- SD: I think we sort of started there. It was one of the projects that put us on the map. We got a lot of publicity, both locally and nationally. It took us from being a young start-up firm to being an established firm – very quickly. One of the reasons we were able to get the job was that it was a busy time, and the established firms like FABRAP and Toombs-Amisano-Wells and some of the others did not want to fool with a young developer like Jim [Cushman] on spec. So it made it possible for us. It threw us into an area where we could be considered for projects of scope and substance. It did not throw us into the "developer" area. I think we maybe were not cut out for that, to some degree. Also: the project went bankrupt, and there was a recession at the same time. There just wasn't any "developer work." So we turned our extension to institutional work and build-to-suit and that kind of thing – as opposed to "developer" work. And we never veered back the other way. I guess

not enough people came looking for us for that, and we didn't pursue that. In that sense, I guess we never "capitalized" on it in the way that we had hoped. On the other hand, it gave us a lot of credentials in terms of size and scope. It met one of our goals: which was to have an impact on the city. It certainly did that!

TL: As a way to kind of wrap up. It [Colony Square] has kind of been "your baby" so-to-speak. There have been lots of alterations and so forth. What's your feeling about that?

SD: Well – generally, they've been OK. I've never been too fond of the lobby renovations in the two [office] buildings. I think they're a little bit "slick" – and now they look kind of dated. I think that the Mall renovation is more successful. When the first new owner took over, and they were going to do some renovation – we tried to get the work. But I don't think they wanted to have anything to do with anybody that had been involved in the first go-around. So we really were not considered. They kind of treated us "nicely" while they were trying to get this bankruptcy thing settled. Once that was over, they didn't even want to talk to us. We were a prime claimant, and they had to get that worked out. We were owed a lot of money – though not nearly as much as the Chase-Manhattan Bank – but they didn't get their money until we got ours, because we had not subrogated our interest. The only reason we hadn't subrogated our interest –

which we certainly would have done if anybody had asked us – but nobody asked us; it was just kind of overlooked. Almost any kind of developer project has a subrogation clause in the contract. We happened to be at the front of the line for claims. So we ended up getting like ninety-cents-on-the-dollar. It really worked out OK for us. Otherwise, I don't what would have happened. We owed a lot of people out of that money, but they were all patient. So we got it worked out.

TL: Anything else that occurs to you about the project?

SD: I think I have told you the whole story of my life. But it's fun. It was exciting – you know, you get a few projects along the way that offer this kind of excitement, if you're lucky. The Southern Progress work – they've been an exemplary client because of their total commitment to quality. They are the kind of client who, if there is a choice between doing it "better" and doing it "cheaper" will always pick "better." We got to do graphics, and interiors, and everything for them. And they say that our design established their culture. When you go there and see it – I never go there that some employee won't come up and say "I love working here." And they take such good care of it. Most of the buildings you do, the day you walk out bad things start happening. But that doesn't happen there!

The Carter Center – that was an unusual experience. That was a unique kind of thing too.

TL: We'll save that for another interview!

SD: Yeah – let's do another one on that. I have plenty of stories for that – some of which I can't tell until....

TL: If you talk to young architects who have a passion for Modern Architecture about where they want to live, (at least among the ones I know) the two places they want to live are Plaza Towers & Colony Square.

SD: Yeah – Plaza Towers is such a pleasant place. Just an elegant, simple, modern tower. The fellow who designed that was Gene Lowery. The architect of record is Ted Levy – but Gene was the designer. Gene was an irascible sort of a person. And he was one of the crowd that worked with Henri [Jova] and John [Busby] at Abreu and Robeson. He was one of these architectural snobs that could be really obnoxious. Although he did a great job there – I can tell you this story about him! He died shortly after that. Our first office was on Cone Street, right there by the [old] Federal Reserve Bank. And Abreu and Robeson were two blocks away. The first couple of years there still connections – he might come over for lunch or something. You know how Cone Street runs down to the back of Macy's Garage. There was a hotel there called The Atlantan; there was a restaurant in there called The Miami Buffet where we would eat sometimes. Well, he came over for lunch with John [Busby] and me – the three of us were walking down the street. This woman approached us – a fairly

nice looking woman – and told us this story about how she had run out of gas after she had taken her children to school. And she looked respectable, and I felt sort of sorry for her. But Gene turned around to her and said "Sister, if you're going to tell that story over and over again, you're gonna have to have a better memory for faces." I was embarrassed, thinking, "Gene – how could you do that?" – but it appears she had stopped him before.

TL: Thank you for talking to us Stan.

SD: This was fun!