

## Oral History of David C. Streatfield for CGL&HS

(Recorded online via Zoom on May 27, 2021)

**David Laws:** I am David Laws. I am a member of the California Garden and Landscape History Society. Welcome to one of our series of interviews with people involved with helping to protect, preserve, restore, and promote knowledge of California's historic gardens and landscapes. Today I'll be talking with David Streatfield. David is emeritus professor of Landscape Architecture and Design and Planning at the University of Washington in Seattle. Born in Brighton, England, he has a long and distinguished career in the teaching and practice of landscape architecture in the United States. As a prolific author David is probably best known to members of CGLHS for his 1994 book *California Gardens: Creating a New Eden*.

Welcome, David, thank you for joining us today. Let's start with your childhood. Where were you born and tell us about your family?

**David Streatfield:** I was born in Hove in Sussex, technically in East Sussex. Hove is a 19th century town. When I was born, it was a separate town - it's now joined with Brighton. I was an only child to warm loving parents Claude and Eileen Streatfield. When I was three years old, my father's mother died, and at that point there was a family mini drama. The question was what's going to happen to Grandpa. Grandpa came to live with us and during the war this was a most fortunate thing. My father served in the Royal Army Service Corps; he was away in Belgium and northern France from about 1940 until 1945. So, Grandpa was effectively my father during the war, and I have wonderfully warm memories of him.

We used to go to church every Sunday at All Saints Parish Church in Hove, which is a magnificent Cathedral-like building. The rector at that time was a retired Australian bishop, Dr. Horace Crotty. Dr. Crotty was a Churchillian figure. He was rather portly with a magnificent stentorian voice, who gave really magnificent sermons. This was a church that was slightly on the Anglo Catholic end of the Episcopal church. So, on high days and holidays, he would put on all his bishop's regalia and there would be a procession through the Church. I think that played an important role in my life because it developed a strong interest in theatrical issues. I took acting lessons. I really wanted to be an actor. That was my great ambition. My parents were not at all enthusiastic

about this. They said, "Well you know, you're interested in history and you like buildings." One of the things that I used to enjoy doing with my grandfather was looking at old churches, of which there were a large number in the nearby villages. One of the people I also remember from my early childhood days was my teacher, Mr. Dickinson. who was also the cubmaster [Cub Scout] At the weekends, he would take us to look at local churches. I think that, and the trips with my grandfather, really sparked my interest in architecture.

And the other big formative influence was taking those acting lessons. I often had to compete in the summer in competitions for reading poetry and in small acting classes, which were held in the Royal Pavilion in Brighton. This is a former royal palace, and I think it's fair to describe it as the most exotic building in Europe. And if you can imagine reciting poetry in the Banqueting Room of the Royal Pavilion, you get a sense of how, at an early stage, I developed a great passion for the exotic. That I think explains part of what makes me a rather odd character. Because of the war I had a rather unusual childhood.

I had two older cousins who went to the same school. My eldest cousin Vernon was the captain of the school and Colin was his younger brother. Vernon went on to Sandhurst and became a Major in a major regiment. They were both very athletic and I was not athletic. I hated games and gym classes. I was an uninteresting boy by most British standards because I didn't conform to what was considered to be what boys should be interested in. I was interested in the theater. One of the things that was wonderful about living in Brighton at that time was that the Theatre Royal was probably one of the major provincial theaters [in Britain]. As a teenager, I saw all of the most famous British actors and actors. This really cemented the great interest in the theater, which I still have. So, in other words, I was an odd character,

**Laws:** That's a fascinating background for our talk, David. Do you have warm memories of school? Was school something that you enjoyed?

**Streatfield:** I didn't really enjoy school very much I did like Mr. Dickinson, who was this teacher who was our cubmaster. Also, the other thing that **is** interesting about my boyhood was that I was a sickly child in many ways. I had three major operations and I had scarlet fever, and I had every major childhood illness, except mumps. So, I was often out of school quite frequently. And, what was interesting about Mr. Dickinson was that when I was in the hospital

having my tonsils removed, he sent me a letter saying “How we're really all concerned about you and hope you're doing well and we really look forward to you coming back.” I was very touched by this. Then, when I got back, he asked me to tell the class about my experience of being in the hospital. So, he was actually a source of strength to me. Later on, I had another teacher who taught history, Mr. Williamson. He was from Yorkshire, and, I think he was one of my best early teachers who encouraged my interest in history.

I remember when I was in school that there was a competition among all of the schools in Brighton for writing a paper on the Regency Style. I submitted a paper. I didn't win, but I do remember that he helped me with it. And the headmaster, who I did not much care for, wrote a letter when I graduated from that school, saying that he really admired my work on the Regency Style. This surprised me. First of all, that he read it and secondly, that he liked it.

**Laws:** And that he remembered it! How did you make the choice of college?

**Streatfield:** Since my parents were so unenthusiastic about my becoming an actor, I thought well, “What they were telling me was you're interested in buildings, so why don't you consider becoming an architect?” I met the head of the school, which was in the Brighton College of Arts and Crafts. I decided that if I'm going to do this, because it's a five-year professional program, I should start as soon as possible. So, I went to college at the age of 16 and I graduated when I was 21. This was not really typical in those days. Most British students, went to university or college when they're 18. So, in that sense, again, I was an odd character.

**Laws:** So, you graduated in 1956 with a diploma.

**Streatfield:** Right. Then, I got my first job. I accidentally, landed in the Housing Division of the London County Council. Now, the London County Council was a very interesting body because at that time, it had the largest architecture department in the world. I think there were between two and 3,000 people at work, architects, or planners, and related professionals. And, of course at that time, 1956, London was still in a massive rebuilding effort and housing was really at the center of this. I had to take a series of exams in order to become registered as an architect. I wanted to set time aside to prepare for this. That's

how I ended up at the London County Council because I wanted to work initially for a firm who would give me time off for about two or three weeks to study for this exam. And the London County Council said “Yes, we'd be happy to do this because we think it's really important for you to be a registered architect. We want you to be a registered architect. So, that's how I ended up at the LCC.

The other great dream I had was that I wanted to design a multi-story tower block. As I look back on this, I can't believe how lucky I was. I got a plum job on a wonderful site called Dacres Road in Sydenham. It's on the edge of a large 19<sup>th</sup>-century park. I was the job architect. So, here, I was in my early 20s looking after a rather important job. I learned a lot from that experience.

After that I was a member of a three-member team that was responsible for doing the site plan for a huge project on the River Thames, called the Royal Victoria Yard. This was a wonderful site. Its historical roots were incredibly rich. It was the place where Sir Walter Raleigh threw down his cloak so Queen Elizabeth did not step in a puddle. It had cannons looking out over the Thames, a wonderful series of buildings that were rope stores and rum stores and beautiful 18th century terraced houses. We tried in our plan to preserve as many of the original structures as possible and then integrate them with new buildings. I think it was a very successful project. It received a lot of criticism in later years as many building sites of the Council did because of the problems with people living in high rise multi-story blocks. But in the context of the time when we designed it, it was a very successful and very exciting project to work on.

**Laws:** A great opportunity for a young man.

**Streatfield:** Especially when you consider how young I was.

**Laws:** Did get your Certificate in Landscape Architecture at that time?

**Streatfield:** The reason that I got into that program at London University was that I realized in working on both of these projects that a large part of what I was doing was landscape design and my architecture training really hadn't adequately addressed this issue. So, I discovered that there was this two-year postgraduate course at the University of London. Several people I knew were taking this. They were all architects and we were all taking it for the same reason. Not

to become landscape architects, but to become better architects. In other words, to have a larger design toolbox. This program was run by Peter Youngman, who was a very nice man. He read history at Cambridge and he had been President of the Institute of Landscape architects, so he knew all of the leading landscape architects in Great Britain. People like Brenda Colvin, Sylvia Crowe, Mary Mitchell, and Geoffrey Jellicoe. He brought them in to review our designs, which was quite wonderful. Then, in the summer months, he would take us on field trips. We went to see places like Edwin Lutyens' Folly Farm and we went to a wonderful garden, St. Paul's Walden Bury, which was where Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother grew up. it's a very beautiful early 18<sup>th</sup>-century garden. So, this was an incredibly rich program. And I learned a lot from Youngman, who was a low-key person, but incredibly supportive of all his students. A very, very good teacher in a low-key way.

**Laws:** Was this part time?

**Streatfield:** It was. It was an evening course at University College. It was a lot of fun.

**Laws:** It certainly set your path for the future. I understand that you received the certificate in 1962. Then you had a career change at that point?

**Streatfield:** Well, there is another thing that we need to work into this, which was a major factor; I can't really remember why I decided to do this. There was a design competition that was put on by the RIBA. [Royal Institute of British Architects] It was primarily directed towards people who were in the last years of a five-year program, but it was also open to people who had recently graduated. It was a design competition, and it was run along classical Beaux-Arts lines. You were given a site and you were given a program during one day. I think it was from about eight in the morning till eight at night, you had to develop a sketch design. And to my surprise, I was one of six people who were chosen to develop their sketch designs into a highly refined design with a full-blown set of presentation drawings. I won it. So, I won the RIBA Victory Scholarship and Silver Medal. One of the advantages of this was that in addition to getting a very handsome solid silver medal I was able to travel for two years. The first year, I spent three months in Scandinavia spending most of my time in Denmark and Finland, where I met Alvar Aalto and saw a lot of really

wonderful buildings. And then in the second year, I spent three months in the spring in Greece. I concentrated on traveling among the Greek islands studying two things, classical sites and vernacular villages and I had a wonderful time. It fostered a great sense of adventure and wanting to travel and I loved it. I think it pepped me up from being a rather shy sort of hesitant person into being a much more confident man.

**Laws:** Especially during those dreary post war years in England. To be able to get out and explore like that was an incredible opportunity.

**Streatfield:** Yes, it was.

**Laws:** At some point you went to the United States.

**Streatfield:** A lot of my exploration was wanting to travel. My colleagues at the London County Council couldn't really understand why I was doing this. In those days, the best modern architecture was considered to be in the United States. So, I thought well, a lot of new buildings that I want to see are in America. I had a friend who had worked with me at the LCC, and he had come to the United States. In very short order, he had gone on to graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania and became a junior partner of Ian McHarg. So I wrote to him and he said, "Well, I think you have an inaccurate understanding of how complicated seeing all these buildings that you want to see is going to be. It's going to take you years to do this. The best thing that you should do is get a job in the United States. And I he said, given your experience, particularly with that big project on the Thames, which you could classify as urban design, you'll find a number of schools will be really interested in hiring you. He gave me a list of undergraduate programs all on the East Coast. I wrote to them, and only one of them expressed interest. That's how I ended up at Clemson [University] in South Carolina, which was actually a surprisingly good school - one of the best architecture schools in the South at that time. But the problem was that it was in the South, which was still completely segregated. While I was there, they accepted the first African American student, Harvey Gant, who was brilliant. He was a great success, because he went there to get a really good education, not to make political hay.

Then I moved on to Michigan State. I didn't like Michigan very much primarily for climatic reasons. Then I thought, you know, you've been teaching for two years and it's not a bad occupation. I'd never thought

of myself as being a teacher. I thought, in some ways, teaching is a more interesting occupation than working in an office, so I need to take this seriously. I obviously need an advanced degree. I had applied to the graduate program at Penn and was accepted there. Ian McHarg was the founder of the [landscape architecture] program, and was the chair. He was an incredibly charismatic man. He was an inspiring individual and I had a wonderful time when I was there. At the very first class that I took, which was a plant identification class held at the Morris Arboretum, which is the arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania, I met two of my lifelong friends – Narendra Juneja who was a brilliant Indian from Delhi and Carol Levy, who came from a very prominent Philadelphia Jewish family. One of the tasks that we were given in this class was to identify plants using keys. We worked in small teams and. Accidentally, I worked with Carol and Narendra. We had a good time, just identifying our plants, but also talking about life. I think Dr. Fogg was somewhat irritated by us, because he would he would say “Well, the class needs to come to order if we have the permission of the House of Lords.” So, we were known as the House of Lords, which you probably appreciate.

**Laws:** I certainly do! Were you're working as well? How did you fund your tuition at college?

**Streatfield:** I made a considerable amount of money at Clemson because the costs of living in a small college town in the South were minimal. I had saved a fair bit of money and I had a graduate teaching scholarship as well, so I was able to go through the first year of graduate school without having a job. The second year I worked part time in a small office. I continued to work for them for a whole year after I graduated. They were a very nice group of people. It was a small office three principals, two assistants and a secretary. They wanted me to stay but I really was not excited about the things they were doing so, I thought, no.

**Laws:** Was this landscape or general architecture?

**Streatfield:** Landscape architecture. And I thought it's time to live in a place where you're going to be physically comfortable. That means is it has to be on the West side of the Rocky Mountains. What's available? I looked at the map and I looked at the schools and I thought well, Berkeley is probably going to be the best place, and so I wrote to them and offered my services. And I got a very nice letter

back from the acting chair at that time, who said, “Unfortunately, we don't have any permanent positions available, however it's possible that during the coming academic year we may need someone to come in on a temporary basis to fill in for someone who is on academic leave, so we may be in touch with you. I think it was, in October that I got a telegram from Garrett Eckbo saying there is a position now available, “Are you interested?”

So yes, the rest, in a sense, is history. That's how I ended up in California by accident teaching as a lecturer for almost four years. I fell in love with California and teaching at Berkeley. And in those days it was very interesting time to be there because. . .

**Laws:** And an exciting time as well!

**Streatfield:** ... the student situation got worse and worse each year. But, I had really good students, the library was fantastic and I discovered that there was very little work that had been done on the history of California landscape architecture. This is an opportunity. So, that's how I started becoming a landscape historian. I had no formal training as a historian. I was largely self-taught. I was supported by a number of small grants from the department. That's how that aspect of my life began. I applied for a tenure track position at Berkeley and I was told by the then chairman of the department Donald Appleyard “Unfortunately, the only course that we could hire you for is teaching history,” he said, “You know that's not enough to make a career. So, I think you ought to apply somewhere else,” But he said, “I will guarantee that I will write a very strong letter of support for you.”

At that time, I had a colleague who came to me one day, he said “I've been watching what's been happening. I hope you realize that there is no future for you here. I have just accepted the position of Chair of the department at the University of Washington and I'd like to hire you. Unfortunately, I don't have a position available at the moment, but if you think might possibly be interested, I think you should come up and give a lecture before you go off to teach at the University of Edinburgh, which is what I had decided to do when I discovered there was no future at Berkeley. So, I came up to Seattle. I gave a lecture. But I wasn't terribly excited by the University of Washington because Seattle was in the middle of a major depression. There really was a sign on the freeway which read “Will the last person, please turn out the lights.” It really was there. I thought, well you know, maybe this will be an



adequate backup plan. So, I went off to Edinburgh. I did not get along terribly well with the chairman of the architecture department who was my immediate boss. I liked my own boss, who was the head of the landscape program. He was a wonderful man. H. F. Clark was a great scholar, a poet, just a wonderful human being. I learned a lot from being with him, watching him run graduate seminars in a more scholarly fashion than Ian had done at Penn. So, I thought, well, it was clearly not going to work out, so what am I going to do? At this point I get a telegram, "position is now available. Are you interested?"

I ended up in Seattle and at that time I had a lady friend in San Francisco and I was continually flying backwards and forwards. That really didn't work out and I thought "It's ridiculous to think that it would work out." So eventually I came to terms with living in Seattle and realized that it wasn't such a bad place to be. In many ways, I was in a very fortunate position because I was playing a major role in building a department. And so, I stayed **here**. I think the one opportunity that I had for leaving was probably in the late 1970s. There was a position available at Davis, which I applied for. I was shortlisted for it and apparently was the runner up. They gave it to somebody else so at that point, I thought well you know, maybe you're going to stay here forever. So, I have stayed here forever.

**Laws:** To put it in context, David it was 1971 when you went to Washington to start the position. So, by 1971 your career is cast for you.

**Streatfield:** Yes. Now I was hired to teach general landscape planning which I did for several years and I quite enjoyed it. But I also wanted to teach history. History was being taught by one of my colleagues and it was obvious that he was not going to make way for a younger man. So, I thought, well, I've assembled enough information in my work on California to be able to teach another kind of history, which is focused more on the 20th century. So, for several years I started to teach a 498 class, which is something that's not part of the regular curriculum. It's something that a faculty can elect to teach on a subject that interests him and he's well-versed in. So, I did this for several years and I remember that, one year our program was being accredited and one of the people on this accreditation team said, "You know you have on your faculty a man who is a very accomplished teacher in history, and you should make this class that he's teaching part of your curriculum. So, the department did that and then eventually my older colleague

retired and so I was able to teach two history classes in landscape architecture and he'd also started to teach a class in the history of urban design. So, I took that over so I ended up teaching three history classes. I actually found those more satisfying than teaching studios. I came to the conclusion that I really wasn't a very good studio teacher.

**Laws:** What was the difference in teaching studio versus the other?

**Streatfield:** Well, I think one of the things that was the difficult piece for me was that teaching studio is being able to be supportive of a student's ideas and helping them develop ideas or discarding something that's inappropriate and selecting something that's more appropriate. I never thought that I was terribly good at that. I think I was actually probably better than I realized. But then I found that lecturing was an opportunity for me to be an actor again. I had complained to my wife once, I said, "You know I what I really wanted to be was an actor." And she said, "Well, of course, you were an actor. What the hell, do you think you were doing? You were acting!"

**Laws.** You mentioned your wife. David, at what point did you get married.

**Streatfield:** Well, that's an interesting story. She was a very remarkable woman. She came from a well-to-do Bay Area family and she was born in Pasadena. Her mother hated living in San Marino so they moved back to the Bay Area. She went to school at the Anna Heads School for Girls, which was a major private girl's school in Berkeley and then went to school at U. C. Santa Barbara and then went on to New York. But her parents didn't support her being in New York at all. She came back in, I think, I can't remember when. But, she lived in San Francisco for several years and took a design-build course at Berkeley. She worked for a design build firm for six years and learned how to build drystone walls, and how to run large estate gardens and so on.

Then she got priced out of living in San Francisco and she moved up to Seattle. She looked at the some of the courses being taught at the University of Washington in the summer. One of them was a course that I taught called The History of Environmental Design in the Pacific Northwest. She thought, that would be really interesting as I know nothing about this region. So, she became a student of mine. We went out and we hung out quite a bit Then we got together as a couple as a

result of the visit to Seattle of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip [in 1983]. I don't know how this was organized, but there was a special faculty convocation at the University of Washington for the Queen and the Prince. The deal was that all faculty had to attend in their academic regalia and if you did this you got two free seats, so I thought this will be fun. And I invited my wife Madeline and a friend to come as my guests.

Madeline was probably the best dressed woman there and, as my therapist later pointed out to me “Madeline was doing two things. She recognized the importance of the occasion; she was also saying “look at me.” And we actually became a couple about two days after that. We had the idea that marriage is about two things. It's about property and it's about children. Neither of us wanted to have children because we thought we'd be lousy parents and we didn't have property. And then something happened. The premiums for Madeline's health program went through the roof. She knew that the University of Washington had a program for domestic couples so she went to see them. They said, well, yes, we do, but it's for same sex individuals. Madeline came back and she said, “I could have a sex change. You can have a sex change or we could get married. So, we got married. I've told this story to several people, I said “We got married for singularly unromantic reasons.” The response has been “No giving your wife good health care is actually a really loving gesture, so no don't say that.” We got married, I think, in 2006, and it was fortunate because Madeline had quite a lot of health problems at the end and **that** didn't leave a huge dent in our finances.

**Laws:** That's quite a story, David. When you married Madeline, what was going on in your career at that time and did being married change your focus or anything about the direction of your career.

**Streatfield:** I'll tell you what ended my career. Actually, no, I need to back up a little bit. One of the things that I started to do when I arrived at the University of Washington, which was actually very satisfying, was **to start** a study-abroad program. I was one of the earliest people to do this. In the summer of 1972, I took a group of students to England and I did that every other summer until 1986. It was when my mother got seriously sick and she died, the following year. Then I stopped doing that and a weird thing happened to me. I was chair of my department for almost six years, and when I was stepping down as chair a small group of students came to me and said “We want you to

take us to Rome.” I said “No, that doesn't make any sense. I don't like Rome.” I had been in Rome in the 1950s and I hated it. It was dirty and I thought it was ugly and all the museums were in a terrible condition. Of course, I didn't connect all the dots. The reason they were in a poor condition was that Rome was recovering from occupation during the war and was in terrible shape.

Anyway, the University of Washington's architecture department **had** started a program, which happened every autumn quarter, called Architecture in Rome. I said to these students, “You can participate with the architects in that program. It's well run, and it has a very good reputation. When I said no, they said we want you to take us we don't want to be with the architects, we want our own program. So, rather reluctantly, I ended up taking students to Rome. I worked incredibly hard that first year. I walked all over Rome. I don't think I've ever walked so much in my entire life. But I got to know Rome through this. And I came to realize that by 1997 Rome had changed dramatically. It looked different. The colors were different. One of the things that had happened was that the city of Rome had decided to celebrate the millennium by fixing up the city. So, they fixed up all of the major museums. They put a lot of money into fixing up major sites, like the Campidoglio. A lot of buildings were cleaned and restored to their original colors. In 1870, when Rome became the capital city, the first king of Italy was the King of Piedmont, who lived in Turin. He was used to dark, northern Italian colors. He insisted on erasing Rome's character as a southern city. This long process of recovery which the city undertook was largely finished by the year 2000.

I took students to Rome every other year until 2006 when I had an accident. I broke my left elbow and my right ankle. That was the last year that I taught. I permanently damaged my elbow, but I didn't have elbow surgery on it. I thought, this is probably the best time to retire. The University of Washington has a really interesting retirement program. When you retire, for 40% of your salary at the time of retirement, you can teach 40% of your teaching assignments. In my case, this meant two classes, a year. You could choose what those classes are. It was a program that is run out of the provost office; the departments love this because you're a freebie basically. I thought, I need to find out more about this program. I talked to about seven people who either were in the program or had done it. And I asked them the basic question, “What's it like?” What is fascinating is that

almost every one of them said, “You are going to love it. No more committee meetings, you will love it.” And this was, in fact, one of the great perks of this program. All you were required to do was teach. You didn't have to sit on any of these tiresome, tedious committee meetings. So, it was a wonderful way of easing out of full-time teaching. And by this time Madeline and I, we had fallen in love with Italy, so we would go back to Italy, as frequently as we could and explore on our own. We spent a lot of time just exploring different Italian cities and looking at gardens

**Laws:** So, when was it that you retired from full time teaching?

**Streatfield:** I think this was 2007. For five years, I had 40% rehire.

**Laws:** Now all along you'd been a prolific writer and publisher. We haven't talked about any of the things that you wrote during that period. The book that I'm most familiar with is the one I started off with which is the 1994 *California Gardens: Creating a new Eden*. Tell me about creating a beautiful book like that. How did you go about it?

**Streatfield:** It had been in the works for a long time. I can't remember exactly how I discovered Abbeville Press, but the editor that I worked with, who was one of the leading editors, I think was from California. She was very excited about the idea of doing a book on California Gardens so she steered me through the process. It was painful at times because so many of my original drafts had to be completely rewritten. I got very frustrated and thought, “Is this damn book ever going to come out?” Well, it did finally come out and I was fairly pleased. I think part of the problem was that I was used to academic writing, and this was a book that was designed for a more popular audience. Making that adjustment was not that easy.

**Laws:** Did you have an editor to help you work through that?

**Streatfield:** Well, I had the editor.

**Laws:** Okay, so they helped you learn to write in a different style for this audience.

**Streatfield:** Write in a different style. Exactly.

**Laws:** Are there any other major book projects that you worked on during this time?

**Streatfield:** Well, I am currently working on a number of things. I'm trying to write a history of the Streatfield family. Going back to the Tudor period, bringing it up to the end of the 19th century. I'm also thinking of writing a short book, about the house which Madeline and I restored and the garden which we created together. It will really be a tribute to her because she was the gardener. I'm really just the custodian of this place. But in some ways, I see this as a tribute to a very successful marriage and partnership. Something that is a thing of great beauty and serenity. The difficulty of dealing with her death and now being alone and facing my own death is made a lot easier by living where I am, in a house and a garden that is just rich with wonderful memories.

**Laws:** Can you tell us a little bit about the garden? How big is it?

**Streatfield:** Two city lots. So, it's a total of 8000 square feet. The house sits on the northern of the 2 lots. The other lot has a huge madrone tree. Madrones are in serious decline in Seattle. This one is considered to be one of the healthiest in the city. We sit on the edge of a steep hill. When you're looking at the house from the street, it's two stories. It's four stories at the back, which gives you a sense of how much it slopes down. We planted a lot of trees. We started the garden I think, in the mid-1990s. It's really come into its maturity this year. I don't think it's ever looked as beautiful.

**Laws:** Seattle is famous for rhododendrons. Do you have any?

**Streatfield:** We have a lot of species rhododendrons in our garden.

**Laws:** Is there much hardscape?

**Streatfield:** There's virtually no hardscape. There is an area that we call the *gravel pit* which **is** our entertainment area in front of the front door. It has three seats in it. We sat out there a lot with our friends where it's shaded. It's just a lovely space and it's a beautiful place to look out into the garden. One of my favorite places to sit in the evenings is a place where I can watch the dying light and I can see the water and Puget Sound off in the distance and see the madrone tree. It is paradise.

**Laws:** It sounds gorgeous. Do you have other favorite gardens around Seattle that you take visitors to see?

**Streatfield:** Well. I quite like the Bloedel Reserve. I've taken a lot of students **there**. It's changed a great deal. There used to be a wonderful garden in West Seattle called the Walker Rock Garden. I think it is now in very poor condition. But it has an incredible story. It was created by a man who worked at the Boeing Company in a rather low-level engineering capacity. He had a regular daily job. He created this garden on a fairly small lot. In some ways, it's rather like our garden. He gathered rocks from all over the state of Washington and created structures with these rocks. It's a sort of fantasy. It's somewhat like that garden in Los Angeles that was created by that crazy man.

**Laws:** The tall towers. [Watts Towers]

**Streatfield:** It's not as ambitious as that but it's in the same spirit of realizing a fantasy.

**David Laws:** What are your favorite gardens in California?

**Streatfield;** Well, I love Thomas Church's Donnell Garden.

**Laws:** Yes, of course.

**Streatfield:** And a garden that Lawrence Halprin created for one of the daughters of Mrs. Roth of Filoli. It's one of Halprin's finest gardens. [Spencer Grant, Hillsborough] Talking about Filoli, I wish that it was maintained more in the spirit of Mrs. Roth when she was still living there. The kitchen garden was effectively a working garden. It didn't have the show areas. That's a vanished life and keeping it had potential value for people to see something like that. So, in that sense, I think that they've made a mistake, by creating demonstration gardens.

**Laws:** More like a Hollywood set than a garden you'd live in?

**Streatfield:** It was productive space and it should have been kept as productive space. Then there's Lotusland in Santa Barbara that I've always liked for its fantasy elements

**Laws:** A theatrical garden indeed. That should appeal to you, David with your acting background. You were, I believe, at one point working on a book on Lockwood de Forest.

**Streatfield:** Yes, I still am still working on that. Trying to find the right publisher now is the problem.

**Laws:** Are there other books that you are working on - other than the Streatfield Family and de Forest?

**Streatfield:** That's it. That's enough.

**Laws:** If you had to choose just one project that you worked on throughout your career to tell us about, what would that be?

**Streatfield;** It's probably my own house and garden. We had a lot of fun fixing up the house. It was a rundown Arts and Crafts house. It's not a true restoration but we tried to take it back to something close to what it had had been. One of the big differences is that it now has double glazing throughout out, which made a huge improvement on the heating bill. And then the back part of the garden was an absolute disaster. It been neglected for something like 20 years. It took us at least five years to get the weeds under control and then we had finally to rebuild it. The impetus was a big storm on the actual day that Bill Clinton was inaugurated for his first term. A 100 mile-an-hour storm blew down our street and knocked over three trees in our front garden. The insurance paid for a new sidewalk and Madeline said "This is good material. We're not going to let this go to waste. So, she took a sledgehammer and she knocked all of these big slabs of old concrete into smaller, more manageable pieces. All of the walls in our front garden were built from the old sidewalk.

**David Laws:** A great reuse of materials there.

**Streatfield:** Good use of material, yes. There's an important lesson - don't waste anything.

**Laws:** Looking back, David, are there any roads that you didn't take that you look back on wistfully and say "I'd really like to have tried them."



**Streatfield:** No, no. Recently, courtesy of Zoom, I saw the actor Bill Nighy talking with some other fellow actors. He said “Having regrets is not a good place to go.” You know, he's right, he's right. No, I have no regrets at all. I realize that I had a rather odd career but actually, in retrospect, it's been a satisfying one. I have met some amazing people. Some of whom were my students. I've had some incredible students, Christy being one of them

**Laws:** Are there other people who played an important role in your career?

**Streatfield:** H.F. Clark who I worked under at Edinburgh University was a major figure who I admired a great deal for his modesty. One of the lessons I learned from him is that is that you don't have to be flamboyant and shout from the rooftops all the time to get attention. You can do really good work very quietly.

**Laws:** If a young person came to you today and said: “I want a future in landscape architecture.” What advice and direction would you give them?

**Streatfield:** Remember that it's been defined as the art and science of landscape design. That's a correct definition, but I think what often gets lost is that it's a service profession. You're making improvements to the environment for other people and it should not become a vehicle for self-expression. I think there's a real danger, and I've seen this among a number of students, to see it as an opportunity to make a major mark, which is their expression of themselves rather than looking to find opportunities to make changes which are going to improve the quality of lives of other people. That takes me back to one of the things that I learned when I worked at the London County Council. Here I was, a child of middle-class parents, coming from a solid middle-class background, designing an environment for people who were poor, for the most part. And they had different values. One of the biggest things that I learned from that experience, in six years working there, was trying to find ways of harnessing my creative abilities as a designer **to** the service of people whose whole way of life and whose objectives were totally different from mine. I think that's a problem that all designers still face frequently. So that's something that I think all students whatever field they're in, but typically landscape architects, need to be aware of, to

be sensitive to who you are designing for and not brushing aside differences.

**Laws:** That is important advice for any public position, especially a bureaucrat.

**Streatfield:** Yes, absolutely.

**Laws:** Do you have anything else you'd like to tell us that you think our readers would be interested in. We've covered a fascinating career, David. You talk about it being odd but it looks like you planned it out perfectly from the age of six or seven.

**Streatfield:** The thing is there was no grand plan. I thought about this when I was preparing for this interview. I thought, you know, there was no grand plan. I know that some people have this idea that at this age in my career, I want to be here, I want to have done this. But none of that is true.

**Laws:** There was no grand plan, but it turns out, there was a great design and I congratulate you on your success in carrying it off. We all get great pleasure from the work you've done and added to society. So thank you and if you ever come up to Point Lobos do let me know, I'd love to show you around some of my favorite spots. I've been researching it recently because a lot of people claim that Robert Louis Stevenson borrowed bits of it for the design of *Treasure Island*.

**Streatfield:** Yes.

**Laws: Recently:** I came across something written by his step daughter in law, where she claimed, very specifically, that this was the case. So, I'd love to show you Spyglass Hill one day.

**Streatfield:** Yes, I'd love to see that. I always thought that the inspiration was the garden where he lived in Edinburgh, where there's a little island in the middle. So here was this this man who was remembering his childhood fantasies.

**Laws:** John Steinbeck was the same. He borrowed a little piece from here, a little piece from there, and created a world of his own.

**Streatfield:** And that's what all great creative artists do.

**Laws.** Absolutely. So, thank you very much for joining us today. I've enjoyed talking with you.

**Streatfield:** Thank you.

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