



SID HOFING

I was deeply involved initially with the sports programs, and started down on Stockton Street in Trenton as a real young boy, in junior high school, started playing basketball where they had regular teams, and the ceiling was not a normal basketball height, so it was very interesting, you almost had to shoot your basketball straight as opposed to a regular basketball shot.

Louis Kahn did not want to talk about fixed construction costs or estimates, he was going to create something special that everybody would come to see and utilize, and it would last generation after generation. But when the board at the time, they were watching every penny and without any concept of fixed cost they saw that the Bath House had a substantial cost overrun. And so that disturbed the board at that time, and they passed on Mr. Kahn to design the rest of the facility because they were scared how they would face the crisis of a cost overrun?

Basically his concept was to create something new, different, and something that would really represent some architectural advancement, and a contribution to mankind. Everybody was excited initially after the Bath House and the use of the Bath House, but you couldn't pin Louis Kahn down as to what the cost would be for the entire facility. And so then they went to the second stage of retaining another architecture firm. It was going to be contemporary the entire facility, but they wanted to have some control over the cost.

Your friends were there, your family was there, your children were in the day camp on the grounds and the children were on the swim team, and then there swim meets there. So the facility was really utilized by our family and by everybody really.

You went there on Sunday. They had a snack bar so you had your lunch there, so you didn't leave until dinnertime to go home. They had volleyball, they had badminton, they had baseball there. At the time it was in our view a large facility, you know, we really had not seen that type of facility being developed. In contrast to the Stockton Street that had no land whatsoever, this was something large, the basketball court met the maximum standards, and there were activities there regularly, so the JCC at that time was really utilized.

It was exciting to meet, an architect who was able to create something beyond the conventional architecture. He did not dress well, you saw that he had his idiosyncrasies, and he expressed himself in creative terms as opposed to just conventional presentation.

When he described the type of facility that he wanted to create, it was something that nobody would imagine as having ever seen in this area. In this area we look at conventional colonial type of architecture, and contemporary architecture really didn't play a role in the Trenton area. To find a contemporary home in western Trenton, it was basically from the colonial era or the provincial era of architecture, and here was Louis Kahn wanting to create something totally way ahead of his time.