



2-21-2019

# Mortensen, Glen Oral History Interview

Roland di Franco

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/esohc>

---

## Recommended Citation

di Franco, Roland, "Mortensen, Glen Oral History Interview" (2019). *Emeriti Society Oral History Collection*. 75.  
<https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/esohc/75>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the University Archives at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Emeriti Society Oral History Collection by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact [mgibney@pacific.edu](mailto:mgibney@pacific.edu).

FACULTY EMERITI INTERVIEWS  
UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC ARCHIVES



Glen H. Mortensen (1962-1969)

Architect

February 21, 2019

By Roland di Franco

Transcription by Savannah Dughi, University of the Pacific,  
Department of Special Collections, Library

Subjects: Renovation of the dormitories for the Cluster Colleges, Construction of the Pharmacy Rotunda, Construction of Wendell Phillips Center, and Construction of Burns Tower.

## UOP ARCHIVES FACULTY EMERITI INTERVIEWS

**di Franco:** So let's begin. Who are you?

**Mortensen:** I'm Glen Mortensen.

**di Franco:** The narrator is Roland di Franco. Today's date is February 21, 2019. The interview is being conducted in the living room of my apartment. Let's begin by asking some questions. What years did you serve at the university and what were your official titles?

**Mortensen:** I was the architect for the various projects [ ]. My official title was architect. The name is Glen H. Mortensen.

**di Franco:** What circumstances brought you to Pacific?

**Mortensen:** Well I was close by and I often admired the architecture on the campus and I was interviewed by Bob [Winterberg] he was the financial director at that time. And I got the job. Anything else?

**di Franco:** If you had to [relocate ] to come to Pacific what were your first impressions of the city and the people of Stockton?

**Mortensen:** Well I got to Stockton in 1950 and I was impressed with the city and I got a job with Mayo, Johnson, and DeWolf who were on Sutter street and I just started working for them for their projects.

**di Franco:** So what were your first impressions of the university?

**Mortensen:** Oh I liked it. It was good it was old English it had the church and the main hall that was old English, architecture. I got excited about that. I was impressed by what I saw.

**di Franco:** Was there some person at Pacific was helpful for you as you entered the university?

**Mortensen:** Bob. Bob [Winterberg ] he was the financial director at that time.

**di Franco:** There's some questions on curriculum I just want to [ ].

**Mortensen:** [Want me to go again?]Well I wasn't necessarily after changes I was after additions too.

**di Franco:** Let's move on. To whom did you report?

**Mortensen:** Bob [Winterberg].

**di Franco:** Right. Do you have an administrative philosophy and style ?

**Mortensen:** No I don't have a philosophy I have an architecture license and that's what I go by.

**di Franco:** Okay. How did you communicate with Bob [Winterberg]?

**Mortensen:** He told me what he wanted to build and I designed it according to his wishes. What we talked about was adding to the initially the colleges on campus. And that was.....we added to the Raymond College and the other college that they had. We added the buildings to it accordingly.

**di Franco:** Did you make yourself accessible to the university community about your decisions concerning architecture?

**Mortensen:** Oh sure you have to do that. You have to design the thing then have their approval of what you design and [about] that.

**di Franco:** What are the administrative activities that were most productive and least productive?

**Mortensen:** Yeah they were all productive.

**di Franco:** All productive?

**Mortensen:** All productive.

**di Franco:** Who were the individuals at the university who are most memorable and why?

**Mortensen:** Well because I got all from the previous man I was talking about....

**di Franco:** Robert [Burns]?

**Mortensen:** No no.

**di Franco:** Bob [Winterberg]?

**Mortensen:** Bob [Winterberg] yeah. I talked to him most of the time because I didn't talk to the [president] Robert Burns at that time because he was just in the background for help in discussing what they wanted so Bob [Winterberg] was the chief person I talked to.

**di Franco:** Did you have any interactions with students and faculty?

**Mortensen:** No we didn't [get in] touch with the students or faculty.

**di Franco:** Did you observe anything about the faculty and administrators relationships?

**Mortensen:** No.

**di Franco:** Let's talk now about the programs you've been involved at the university that you feel are significant?

**Mortensen:** You had your, first of all you had your two colleges, Raymond College and the other college.

**di Franco:** Covell College?

**Mortensen:** Covell College. It needed to be added to so that's what we did. The addition at before the Raymond College was an area where people could go and talk it was a very informal and Covell College was the whole thing. Not only the...

**di Franco:** You mean arts and science?

**Mortensen:** No it was the it was where they ate and the kitchen things like that. The whole [ ]

**di Franco:** Living facilities.

**Mortensen:** And then we did the living room area.

**di Franco:** Oh nice. So you were involved in renovating the cluster colleges and then what other things did you do?

**Mortensen:** [If there was an issue] I did it. Mainly Raymond College and Covell College.

**di Franco:** Right and what came next?

**Mortensen:** What came next was the School of Pharmacy.

**di Franco:** By that you mean the rotunda?

**Mortensen:** Yeah.

**di Franco:** And after that?

**Mortensen:** We did a classroom building Covell college and I think that was it for the university. So the School of Pharmacy and the Covell College

**di Franco:** And then....when did Burns Tower come in?

**Mortensen:** That was sixty-six, sixty two-sixty-three.

**di Franco:** And did you also work on Wendell Phillips?

**Mortensen:** That was a classroom building.

**di Franco:** Could we talk a little bit about all those buildings you constructed anything about the cluster colleges?

**Mortensen:** Well the cluster colleges were in addition to the Raymond College and the Covell College and we were given an outline for what we needed and we do it up accordingly. Initially the Raymond College was the administration [wing] the casual ring and the Covell College was the whole thing. The administrative wing, the kitchens and everything else.

**di Franco:** So there's a very large dining hall over there. Did you work on that?

**Mortensen:** Yeah that was all part of that. On the Raymond the Dining Hall it was already there. You know Covell College we added another dining hall.

**di Franco:** Was there anything special about the motif you chose for the dining hall?

**Mortensen:** No they more or less copied the Raymond College. So about the same size and... for what they were trying to do was repeat the colleges so they could get students from South America up here but that never came about, because they couldn't get them. They had two colleges there that were surplus I guess.

**di Franco:** What building came next?

**Mortensen:** The School of Pharmacy.

**di Franco:** Anything you'd like to tell us about that?

**Mortensen:** We went on a field trip to back east too Bob [Winterberg] and I and some other people from the University and we visit other schools of pharmacy to get some ideas of what is entailed in the

design of them. And it was three colleges one was near Chicago the other two were farther away south. And we came back and it was based on what we saw there we designed the college that we did was school of Pharmacy. But it was quite a deal they had to approve everything and initially when we went out to [bid] the bid came in too high so we cut it down a little bit cut it down in size of the library or cut off the columns around the campus and so that's what we did.

**di Franco:** And the notes say here that School of Pharmacy had 6243 square feet. That's a pretty big building.

**Mortensen:** It's a big building.

**di Franco:** I'm amazed that it only cost \$3,237,326 [ ] building.

**Mortensen:** The original bid was more than that so we had to come back and we met some groups in San Francisco which is part of the college and we told them we could take out all the columns around the rotunda and reduce the size of the library to bring the cost down and that's what we did.

**di Franco:** What's next? Wendell Phillips or....

**Mortensen:** Wendell Phillips Center was next, Jack Holstein he was in partnership with me and he did most of the work on that and that was a classroom building. Small classes and big classrooms and it was [vatted] after the architecture of the School of Pharmacy and if you notice the columns on the outside so it repeats those.

**di Franco:** Anything special about the Wendell Phillips?

**Mortensen:** No.

**di Franco:** Well now to the real trip the Burns Tower. Where did you get the idea for Burns Tower?

**Mortensen:** Howard Bissell was the architect at the campus at the time. He drew up a tower which was much representing the towers they saw in Europe they were built of stone but it didn't catch on to it because they couldn't build a tower like that in these days they had to be all reinforced concrete. So I went through all the procedure that came to me and would pursue through the procedure of drawing some towers and I drew three towers. One of the last is the one they accepted and so it was all concrete, reinforced concrete and so you got what you see. Anything else?

**di Franco:** You talked about the structure of Burns Tower could you tell us a little about that?

**Mortensen:** Well the stresses on the column recede as you go up so the side columns are set back two or three times by the time it gets to the top and that what we call the [iconis curve]. The [iconis curve] was in the famous buildings in France or in Greece. We received the circumference of the columns as they went up so they are smaller at the top than they were at the bottom and that was called the [iconis curve] it gives the illusion of higher than it really is. There's two setbacks with the columns on the edges on the corners and that gave the same [iconis curve] looking at it. That's all. Other than that the building was concrete all the way up. They had to pour the slabs as the outside walls were poured and [ ] they got to the top the colored glass covered the tank. The reason for the tower in the first place was that it wanted the industrial water tank out there on the campus so they decided to enclose it in something. So the tank up there was behind colored glass and the colored glass was picked by me laid out on the ground and then, based on my design was put in up there so that's what you see. The tank was painted

white to reflect the light coming from the corners of florescent tubes in the [dark corners] and that reflected on the tank and it came out through the colored glass. So at first it had a radio tower over there so it had an antenna which came from a ship mast in the middle of the tower and eventually the radio was done away with and so that middle mast antenna could come out. The four spires were all sheet metal and that was done by a local firm so that worked out all fine. Anything else?

**di Franco:** What to tell a story about the big joke on the tower?

**Mortensen:** No I don't want to tell that. I understand that the local fraternity decided to turn all the water on in their campus and then turn it all off at the same time well the pump that pumped all the water off to the tank could not catch up with so it overflowed the tank and the water came down into the radio station at that time and it got Robert Burns' office wet so I understand the student fraternity was kicked off the campus or something like that. I'm not sure of that but that's what I understand.

**di Franco:** Anything else about the tower you'd like to mention?

**Mortensen:** Well you had a big base on it. It had...the base had a concrete slab which was four feet thick and extended out beyond the edge so it had a good base underneath it for all its weight up there. But it never was used entirely because the tank didn't have water in it later on they got the well from the East Bay Water District to service the whole campus and the campus's that we expanded to the south. So they didn't need the tank filled fill water in the tank at all. So it's just sitting up there with no water in it. So the tower isn't over stressed at all as it should be but that's the story behind that but it's a nice looking building. [besides] that you don't see the water tank.

**di Franco:** Is the water tank being used anymore?

**Mortensen:** No its not. I understand it's not.

**di Franco:** So it's an empty water tank.

**Mortensen:** Yeah.

**di Franco:** Is there.....Are there any other buildings you had some...

**Mortensen:** That's the last building we did on campus. We went on to other things and the university when they came to the campus to the south they added a new building there but it was done by other people.

**di Franco:** You mentioned the other day that you thought the Leaning Tower of Pisa was one of the.....

**Mortensen:** It's just one of the.... If it was straight we could have copied the Leaning Tower of Pisa but it's a lot of stones. It wasn't reinforced concrete at all but they had the lack of the solid foundation under that so it's leaning.

**di Franco:** And then you left he university or stopped working at the university?

**Mortensen:** Yeah that was about it.

**di Franco:** And that was sixty something?

**Mortensen:** Yeah. '69 was the last I did [for the] the University of Pacific.

**di Franco:** I came in '72 so I missed you by three years .

**Mortensen:** Did you?

**di Franco:** Was the tower very expensive?

**Mortensen:** It was[n't] very expensive, 421,000.

**di Franco:** That sounds cheap.

**Mortensen:** Sounds cheap, School of Pharmacy was over three million so.

**di Franco:** Great. What do you think the community of Stockton thinks about the university?

**Mortensen:** Oh they love it. They love it. It's very much a part of the town so I think above all I think they love it.

**di Franco:** Do you think the relationship between the university and the town have been very good?

**Mortensen:** Oh yeah, sure. Nice [additive] nice backup piece for architecture and gets used for the building.

**di Franco:** Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

**Mortensen:** No. I think we've covered it pretty well. The tower is fine and it will be there for years it's not over stressed it's got a big foundation without the water it's just sitting there it will never settle so.... The School of Pharmacy I think has turned out fine.

**di Franco:** Anything? Any last ideas?

**Mortensen:** No. I think that's about it.

**di Franco:** Well I want to thank you very much for an interesting conversation.

**Mortensen:** Okay.

**End of Transcription**