INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

The Reminiscences of

Robert Kornfeld, Jr.

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PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Robert Kornfeld conducted by Interviewer Sarah Dziedzic on May 6, 2021. This interview is part of the New York Preservation Archive Project's collection of individual oral history interviews.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that they are reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The views expressed in this oral history interview do not necessarily reflect the views of the New York Preservation Archive Project.

Robert Kornfeld, Jr. was a recovery worker at Ground Zero following the World Trade Center collapse on September 11, 2001. In his role as architect at Thornton Tomasetti, he led a team that worked on assessments and restorations of the buildings surrounding the World Trade Center site that were heavily damaged, including Deutsche Bank, 90 West Street, and the Amex Tower. He describes himself as "wearing two hats," that of an architect, and of a cultural historian and preservationist, looking for meaning and considering what could be preserved.

From a vantage point in one of the buildings his team was restoring, he discovered that the footprint of the North Tower—visible after nine months of excavation—looked like the ruin of an ancient temple, with its perimeter lined by columns. Preserving this footprint, which Kornfeld documented in a photograph, became the driving force behind Kornfeld's preservation advocacy of the Ground Zero site itself; it was a physical remnant of the building, a marker of the recovery efforts, and a final resting place for the deceased. This aspect in particular aligned him with the family members of the victims, who were concerned about the push to redevelop the site.

Eventually joining the Section 106 process as a consulting party sponsored by Historic Districts Council, of which Kornfeld is a board member, he was able to engage formally in the efforts to gain federal recognition and protection of important elements of the Ground Zero site, including the tower footprints. He, along with Anthony Gardner, who represented the families, were largely responsible for alerting the larger preservation community to these and other elements at the site that were worth preserving.

In this interview, Kornfeld speaks in detail about his involvement in the Section 106 process, as well as the creation of the National September 11 Museum & Memorial, which was designed around the tower footprints, and incorporated other elements from the site and the recovery period, including the Survivors' Stair, the Last Column, the Slurry Wall, and the World Trade Center Cross. He also reflects on the experience of working at the Ground Zero site during the earliest days of the recovery, including the psychological toll of emergency response work and the function of the respite center at St. Paul's Chapel.

Transcriptionist: Matthew Geesey　　Session: 1

Interviewee: Robert Kornfeld, Jr.　　Location: remote via video call

Interviewer: Sarah Dziedzic　　Date: May 6, 2021

Q: Today is May 6, 2021 and this is Sarah Dziedzic interviewing Robert Kornfeld for the New York Preservation Archive Project. We're doing this interview remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic via video call. And because I don't have your signed consent form yet, I just wanted to ask you now if it's okay that we record this interview?

Kornfeld: Yes.

Q: And can you start by saying your name and giving yourself a brief introduction?

Kornfeld: I'm Bob Kornfeld, Jr. I'm an architect with Thornton Tomasetti [TT], a principal at Thornton Tomasetti. I've been a preservation advocate and preservation architect since the early 1980s. And I guess this interview is concerning the World Trade Center [WTC] site, where my company was the city's prime engineering consultant, and I was working on the site for quite some time doing assessments of damaged buildings and repair requirements for New York City, and then working on restoration of a number of the buildings. That was why I was in position to become one of the lead preservation advocates for the site.

Q: I'd like to jump in and ask if you could explain how you became a responder who had access

to the Ground Zero sites [referring to the World Trade Center complex destroyed in terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001] so soon after the attacks.

Kornfeld: Well, my company was actually called on to respond in the middle of the day on 9/11 [September 11, 2001]. So Richard Tomasetti and a handful of people went to the site. It was in the hours before 7 World Trade Center collapsed. So they went there in the middle of absolute chaos. This is not a plug for my company but I was very proud to work for Richard at that point because he was one of the most famous structural engineers in the world. He was responsible for the design of projects like the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur, and Taipei 101. So he wasn't trying to prove anything. But he was called on by the city to go help them figure how to respond. While everyone else was talking about how they got away from the Trade Center, he actually went down to the site in the middle of the day.

So we organized response teams that went out the next morning, the morning of the 12th. It was all structural engineers. I wanted to do it—sort of. I mean, I really wanted to go with them, although I was slightly relieved to not be allowed to. But the architects did start working soon after that on assessing the condition of damaged buildings around the site. So I was leading one of those teams.

Q: Can you explain a little bit more about what the recovery process was like in those early days? What were you directing your team to do?

Kornfeld: I guess there were sort of two different sides to it, in a way. One is we were doing

things that were technical. So you could focus technically on what you were doing, and safety, not having your teammates fall through a hole, looking for conditions that were hazardous to the recovery operation and developing a scope of work—that kind of thing. But then the other side of it was it was a very emotional experience. So everyone dealt with that in different ways. Some of the people from my company that went in the early days really hated being there, and they did it because they were needed to help. And of course, the structural engineers, in the early days, were really supporting the search and rescue also. So they were being asked is this a safe place for search and rescue people to go in. They were even there to figure out how to take WTC steel that was lying around to construct grillages to support cranes, or to descend deep into the wreckage to assess its stability, that kind of thing. Some people went and did that because it was their duty and they never wanted to go to the site again.

I kind of felt the opposite, where the whole experience was very upsetting for everyone in the city at the time, this constant sense of emergency. But I always actually felt better being at the site and doing whatever I could that was useful. I felt kind of worthless if I was somewhere else. I went as soon as I was allowed. I always felt a connection with the site, a connection with the people who had died at the site. And I had a co-worker who died, a woman who was a transportation engineer for the Port Authority but had worked at our company several years before that. So I was thinking about her every day that I was working at the site. I mean, we weren't close friends but it was sort of like our guy who died in the collapse. Someone from our office collected money for her mother. We heard that she wasn't doing well. So there was an emotional connection also that I certainly felt the whole time.

Q: And I'd like to ask for you to describe something that you made clear through photographs, of just what it looked like down there. Where were you observing Ground Zero from? And what kind of things were you seeing?

Kornfeld: Well, the buildings I was dealing with for the most part were hi-rise buildings surrounding the site, like Deutsche Bank and 90 West Street and the Amex Tower [3 World Financial Center], which were heavily damaged.[1] Amex was impaled by World Trade Center columns up to the twenty-sixth floor and had a wing that was partially collapsed. Deutsche Bank had a ten-story-high hole where columns were knocked out. 90 West Street was extensively fire damaged. A number of other structures that I dealt with had damage that was not structural but was widespread, like cracked stones and broken glass, even up to the fiftieth floor or higher, and posed a severe risk for people working beneath. This included World Financial Center structures, like Tower 1, the south bridge and gatehouse, and Liberty Street bridge. Working in the towers surrounding the site, riding swing scaffolds, surveying damage and doing façade restoration was the aerial war that the public never really saw. Getting tall cranes there to pick damaged steel out of buildings hundreds of feet above street level. It was not part of the emergency that people saw on TV but some of it was pretty dramatic in its own way.

For the overall emergency response, DDC [New York City Department of Design and Construction], was the lead agency. There were really three aspects. There was the subgrade part. Mueser Rutledge, who originally designed the slurry wall and bathtub, was the main consultant. Then there was the above grade work. Thornton Tomasetti was lead for structural safety for the

[1] This paragraph contains substantial edits and/or additions made by Mr. Kornfeld during the transcript review process.

emergency operation, consulting LERA [Consulting Structural Engineers] who was original structural engineer for the towers and forty SEAoNY [Structural Engineers Association of New York] firms who helped staff the operation. And the third aspect was the surrounding buildings. Some of those were heavily damaged. So that was my realm, focusing on façade damage and roof debris early on, then restoration projects.

I spent a lot of time high up in buildings looking down at the site. And one of my distinct memories from early on—because the architects didn't get involved for a couple of weeks, it was a relief for me to finally be involved and able to go play a part in the response. I just remember looking down from the fifty-second floor of the Amex Tower, and the scale of this operation with these sort of Gothic-looking remnants of the towers, going up to fourteen stories above grade, and just hundreds of people and the roar of all the machines in this entire giant zone. It was this biblical struggle. It was kind of amazing to see. It was emotionally intense—the Gothic ruins and the craters belching smoke, and at first there was still some remote hope of finding survivors.

And then, as the emergency progressed and got under control, and all that steel was removed above grade, it went from being "The Pile" to being "The Pit." After months of being there, I started to feel kind of psychologically numb, like I would just look down in this gray hole and not be able to feel anything. And I just had this sense of wearing two hats at the same time. I always looked at things like a cultural historian or preservationist. We're always looking for meaning: what is there in this mess that's going to be some sort of enduring thing that should be preserved? There was a lot of spectacular beauty in the emergency operation itself. It was lit like

Hollywood lighting. I'm sure a lot of people saw from a distance this brightly lit sector there with smoke rising and these Gothic-looking tentacles. Also, the way it was being cut up with oxygen lances—the torches—where you would see showers of sparks. It was kind of amazing-looking and I just wished that there was a way to really document this. Of course, that's from earlier on. But later in the operation, I was wondering what is of the enduring physical remnant of this.

Then one day—and this is in the photos that I sent, I was kind of looking down at the site, and this was at the end of the operation, where the demo had gone all the way down to what is called the B-6 level. It was the lowest level of the garage where all the garage framing and the columns of the towers met the ground. It's where the towers were really anchored into the foundations. People use the term "bedrock" a lot. It really refers to that B-6 level.

Anyhow, when the emergency operation got down to that level, right around the time of the closing ceremony, I looked down one day, it was actually June 6 [2002]. I saw what looked like the floor plan of the tower, of the North Tower, on the ground. I wondered what am I looking at? I think my mind has just snapped. Did someone paint that as a memorial? It looked like it was drawn on the ground with a pen. And then I slowly realized that it was the basement level and the way the floor plan of the towers look, it's reminiscent of the ruin of an ancient temple because there were these large columns all around the perimeter. When you looked at the towers, it had the steel columns. There was a structural tube of columns on the outside, basically ten feet on center. At the seventh floor the columns branched out into three columns, and that became the typical modules that you would see all the way up to near the top of the towers, with three

columns connected by three spandrel plates—essentially ten feet wide and thirty feet long—the modules that were showered all over the area, impaled in the ground. But looking at the B-6 level floor plan, these big box column bases on ten-foot centers sort of looked like the plan of an ancient temple or something, these column bases around the perimeter that had been cut away by iron workers. Anyway, that was a moment when I just said, that's it! That's amazing. That has to be preserved.

So I had a couple of photos I had taken on June 6, 2002 and I really didn't know what to do with them for a long time. I assumed that the redevelopment would be horrible. It would be some process of different super moneyed interests and super arrogant designers all fighting over what was going to happen. So I was kind of feeling like I would be happy to never go there again.

But I saw a *New York Times* article. It was actually Anthony Gardner, who was the head of one of the family groups. He was quoted fighting the state, because they had felt they had been betrayed in the redevelopment. I guess, the governor, Governor [George] Pataki had gone to the family groups and said, where the towers stood, we will never build, the footprints will be an enduring monument, like Gettysburg [National Battlefield]. Then there was kind of a bait and switch. They weren't really going to do that. They were going to have those voids at ground level, like the way the fountains [waterfall pools of the 9/11 Memorial, *Reflecting Absence*] are now, but not preserve anything under it, not preserve anything that was actually physically part of the original Trade Center. So the family groups felt they had been betrayed, because they saw the significance of the authentic material of the final resting place of those lost. And Anthony was there in the paper saying, they promised they were going to preserve the tower footprints

and now they're not doing it. They lied to us.

Reading the description, I realized they had no idea what the actual physical remnants were. When the family groups were talking about the tower footprints, they were really talking about the human remains that had been identified there. They didn't know that there were all the column bases and what looked like a ruin. So I realized, I've got to contact this guy. They don't know about this. So I contacted Anthony and we talked. I showed him the photos of the tower footprints. He was like, "Bob, that's amazing!"

So that was kind of a partnership because he had access to the media that no one in preservation ever has. I remember him saying, "You know what, Bob, this is amazing. I'm going to call a press conference." I'm thinking, call a press conference? [Laughs] I could yell that and it would just be like, [yells out] "I am calling a press conference!" and no one would know, and no one would come. But he had, really, all the media access. So he would call a press conference for the next day and he'd say, FOX [News] is coming, I think CBS [News] Radio's there. How come they're not bringing their TV crew?" I thought wow. Preservationists just don't do that. Our ultimate thing was always pull out all the stops: protest on the steps of City Hall. Or getting a letter to the editor printed in the *Times*. But literally, Anthony knew how to summon the national media in twenty-four hours. And they needed preservationists to validate their ideas. A lot of people thought the families were just emotionally needy and had too much influence.

Q: Wow. I'm really interested in that transition, that spark of actually being able to see the footprint and what is there, compared to the site in abstract, which is maybe how the families

were thinking about it. I mean thinking about not just preservation but memorials, what else did that photo that you had bring to that movement, to that memorialization movement?

Kornfeld: That the tower footprints were a physical thing. You could see where the iron workers had cut off the columns and you could see the burnt steel. It was an artifact of the recovery, in addition to being the original tower footprints. So they had something to hold onto. They wanted a place that was physical as well as spiritual. That's what they saw as the final resting place of their family members and they felt it as a place. This made it something concrete that they could fight to preserve, rather than being something abstract. It was always one of the things about this, that the city and a lot of the developers knew they had to make a memorial but they were trying to make it in a way that was bland and abstract, so it wouldn't bother people to walk across the plaza, like eating a frozen yogurt during lunch or something. Rather than having it be a grim place where there were all the flowers and missing posters and everything. At that point, I referred to what they were trying to design as an oblivial rather than a memorial because they were trying to make it a place where you could forget what happened there.

A lot of what they were looking at was abstract memorials like Maya Lin's Vietnam [Veterans] Memorial, where they wanted to have it be a thing with the names but you really didn't have to notice it that much. It just sort of fit in and they could build their multi-billion-dollar stuff around it and it wouldn't bum people out. I always thought the Vietnam Memorial was completely the wrong model for the Trade Center because that was something that brilliantly summed up events that happened over a ten-year period, across the ocean. The WTC was the place <u>where</u> the events actually happened. This was the place where the remains had soaked into the ground along with

millions of gallons of fire-fighting water and everything. Really, most families never had any remains found of their loved ones.

So to me, that's very different from an abstract memorial. From early on, I had the feeling that it was fine to make it a two-level thing, where you would have the actual tower footprints down at the B-6 level that could be part of the museum or something like that, and it was fine to have a cover over it. A lot of the anti-preservation people thought that we really had an ulterior motive, that we didn't want anything built there. We just wanted sixteen wide-open acres of nothing, and that all this stuff that we were asking for was just like a subterfuge to stop any redevelopment.

So that created a danger for me in the sense that anti-preservationists were always trying to get me to say things, where they could point, oh, you see, he really just doesn't want anything built there, or he just doesn't like the design. All through the Section 106 process—which started a bit later—we were very focused on exactly what we thought was significant, and what we wanted preserved. I didn't care if there was a plaza that was built over it. There were really a lot of steps to how it all played out.

But anyway, Anthony and I started off that way. They had written a preliminary application for National Historic Landmark [NHL] status. I think that's something I didn't send to you. There's a zillion documents in this whole thing. So I saw that and it really talked about locations of human remains related to the locations of the towers. I realized they're thinking that it's being essentially a burial ground helps their case. I'm thinking, it doesn't, because it's an exception for National Register eligibility and you already have the fact that the Trade Center is less than fifty

years old, which is another exception.

So I rewrote a draft of the application for them where it was a physical description of what was there that we wanted to preserve, along with a statement of significance. That was in about late 2003 and really ended up being irrelevant. I had known Kathy Howe from the State Historic Preservation Office [SHPO] because I worked with her in writing the nomination for another property before that, and we were very friendly. So anyway, I emailed her the draft along with my photos of the footprints and expected that we would talk. Then I heard through other people that she had been told she wasn't allowed to talk to me, and that her boss, Robert Hume from SHPO was going to call me and I never heard from him either. So basically, the governor or commissioner Bernadette Castro had put the kibosh on this, because they had agreed with LMDC's [Lower Manhattan Development Corporation] bait and switch, defining "the footprints" as voids at ground level, and not anything physical down at bedrock. So what I sent to them was like a landmine. It could potentially blow up the whole process.

That's when we learned about Section 106 and then I worked on getting the Historic Districts Council [HDC] involved. I was on the board of HDC trying to get them to apply to be a Section 106 consulting party and to sponsor my doing it. And then Anthony did the same for his group. So that's how that whole federal process started.

Q: Before we get further into that, I wanted to ask about when you were going back and forth to the site in the early days of the recovery but before the footprint was revealed, what did you do to kind of transition to it or transition away? What was your commute like?

Kornfeld: It changed over time because initially there were just—I'd take the train to Grand Central, take the subway down to—I live in Westchester County. I would take the subway and you would start smelling the site from five subway stops away, this kind of acrid smell, sort of like burning metal, plastic and paper and a weird chemical odor. For people that lived in the city at the time, I'm sure they all remember that. It didn't smell like anything else. Then you get to the site. In the early days, there were people outside the entrances to the site sort of cheering for recovery workers. They were mainly looking for uniformed workers. I don't know how to define exactly what I was—an architect who's doing damage assessments is not a typical thing. But anyone wearing a hard hat and going into the site got cheered. And everything took so long. Every block there was another checkpoint where you had to show your ID to the police on one side and then go on the other side and show your IDs to the National Guard. Then go another block and do the same thing over again. There was a lot of logistical stuff. Going from building to building—you would have to go check into our office, which was in the city's emergency command center, then go to the office of the contractor that was running that sector of the site, Bovis [Lend Lease Corporation] or Tully [Construction Co. Inc.] or AMEC [Construction Management Inc] or whoever. There was a lot of walking from one trailer to another, before you even got to the forty-story building that you were going to climb all the way up.

Those are my memories from the early period—a lot of checking in and out of places, slogging through weird gray mud, a lot of climbing in dark, dusty stairwells. So later on, when it got to be more regularized, I really identified with some of the respite centers, like St. Paul's [Chapel], the church. It was a very interesting experience being there because that was one of the buildings

that had been saved in the Great Fire of 1776, during British occupation, when there were bucket brigades throwing water on the roof. George Washington's pew was there also. He had his own special pew, and that was where podiatrists were taking care of emergency workers' feet in 2001. St. Paul's was a good transition in and out of the site, to go there and sit and have a morning coffee or collect my thoughts or write field reports in the evening. Once the city had returned somewhat to normal, it was a rough gear shift psychologically to leave the site, where everyone was on the same wave length. You'd walk by someone and nod at each other. There was this feeling of camaraderie. And then to go out into the general public was kind of like, ugh, I don't want to be around all these people. They don't understand. I don't know if that's answering the question.

Q: Yes, yes, absolutely. On one hand, it feels like that first recovery process happened faster than you'd think, when you see the photos of what it looked like. But then on the other hand, it stayed in that process for much longer than the rest of the city, like you pointed out.

Kornfeld: I remember hearing people on TV, even in October 2001, saying we have to move on, it's time to move on. But for people who were working at the site, we were not moving on. At that point, there was still smoke coming out of the tower footprints.

Q: Can you talk about some of the other objects or artifacts that emerged during that recovery process?

Kornfeld: Yes, there were a number of objects from the site itself like the WTC Cross. In

technical terms, it's just the way that type of steel moment frame fails when it gets crushed under thousands of tons of debris. But for the emergency workers who went into the 6 World Trade Center ruin, the [Alexander Hamilton U.S.] Custom House building, they saw these crosses there, like Calvary. They took one and mounted it on top of an abutment from the collapsed north bridge on West Street near Vesey Street and that was initially done in probably October. It was by the main entrance to the site. I never thought of it as being a religious symbol in a divisive way and I know that my company, for example, has people from all around the world, representing pretty much every religion. I don't remember anyone looking at it and saying, this isn't a Christian site. It was just something positive, that you could take any artifact of wreckage, and have people see something positive about it—it was an early act of preservation and memorialization. But then I knew it was going to get moved over to Church Street when the contractors began repaving West Street a few months later to move towards reopening it for public traffic.

Someone from our office actually designed the pedestal that was going to be on it. I saw the drawings and was like, man, when this gets put over on Church Street [which was open to the public by then], there's going to be lawsuits that it's a Christian symbol and everything. The same thing happened in the [9/11 Memorial &] Museum, there was a lawsuit to prevent it from being displayed in a public building.

So the WTC Cross was a major artifact. Well, there were a number of things and there was an architect [Voorsanger Architects] who was actually appointed to go around the site and identify things that were significant. There were some things like crushed fire engines, a section of

antenna from the roof of One World Trade Center, some of the triads, the structural steel from the tower. Those things were taken to a hanger at [John F.] Kennedy Airport for safekeeping because the rest of the steel was all—I mean outside of what NIST [National Institute of Standards and Technology] took to do some scientific studies on, and some that was distributed for museums and memorials, it was all sold as scrap. I was kind of shocked because at the time, people had a sort of sentimental attachment to the steel in a symbolic way. They took some of the steel to include in the hull of a Navy ship that was under construction. Some of the steel was cut up to be like crosses, Greek crosses, and Stars of David and little skylines, which were distributed to different churches, firehouses and municipalities around the country.

In fact, when I first went to HDC to try to convince them that WTC preservation was something worth pursuing and to sponsor me as a Section 106 consulting party, I actually brought a piece of Trade Center column steel, a divot. It's the piece that you cut out to make a hole in a steel member so you can put a cable through and pick it up with a crane. The ironworkers used to leave these little circular pieces on the ground. So I brought in one to an HDC meeting and passed it around so everyone could touch it. I asked why is it that this steel seems so precious to people when it's an object, like a cross you would display in a park, or when it's put in the hull of a ship? But when it's the actual original columns in a foundation ruin at the site, everyone wants to demolish it and pave over it. So they bought that. [Laughs] Having HDC as my sponsor for that was really an incredible advantage.

Q: I wanted to ask before we get into that about a couple more of the elements—well, I guess we can talk about some of the elements that got preserved in the museum, after we talk about the

Section 106 process.

Kornfeld: There was *The Sphere*, the [Fritz] Koenig sculpture that had been damaged also but had survived. It was in the middle of the plaza between the towers originally. So that had been moved to Battery Park temporarily. There were sort of like two levels of things. For Anthony and me, we were very focused on trying to preserve the tower footprints, which was a huge issue because it potentially interfered with other things that were being developed. The artifacts were different. Some of the artifacts were columns in the garage that had been painted different colors and some of them had fire damage where the paint was sort of blistered. There were a lot of things like that that you could categorize as, oh, we're not going to preserve the whole garage but maybe some elements like that. There were some sections of wall that had the emergency graphics, like the spray-painted urban search and rescue markings. It would be a cross and what team was there, if they found survivors or bodies or whatever. Some were more ornamental. There were some things like that that were cut out from walls that were going to be preserved.

There were a number of different types of artifacts. That was an important question that came up later in Section 106—do those things that were removed still contribute to the significance if they're returned to the site, if they were taken away and then returned? As opposed to the site itself. The tower footprints weren't going anywhere. They were two hundred feet on a side and they're the foundation of the buildings.

Q: I'm thinking about, I guess, two other things too, the flag column [Last Column] and the Survivors' Staircase.

Kornfeld: Yes, the Survivors' Staircase was an interesting feature because it wasn't actually in a state of ruin due to the collapses. It was actually sheltered from debris before and after the collapses, which was why people could use it to evacuate. It was on Vesey Street, just kind of north of 5 World Trade Center, which sheltered it. Everything else around it was demolished but it was preserved because it was a staircase that could be used to provide access to the subway station.

Q: Oh, you mean during the recovery process.

Kornfeld: Yes, during the recovery—there was collapse damage in the subway. So the damage you see on the stair is the result of the recovery process itself, the demolition work, not the disaster. People got fixated on that as being historic, it was especially significant to survivors. To me, it was one of the resources that should be preserved. There's a big list of things but sometimes that was used as another one of those bait and switch kinds of things. LMDC, the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, sometimes tried to use tactics with the other preservationists to get them to abandon Anthony and me. From the very beginning, they tried to get them excited in their sponsoring the towers in light [*Tribute in Light*] thing that's done every year. They were going to put a few million dollars into doing that. They sort of tried to get the [Lower Manhattan] Emergency Preservation Fund [LMEPF] groups to sort of sign onto that and get them to be like their little friendly group and not listen to us ranting about the footprints.

Anthony and I were sort of trying to—not break that up but to really get people to understand

why we thought the tower footprints were significant. That happened later on with the thing for the Survivors' Staircase, trying to preserve that. They were saying, we can't really help you with the tower footprints but this is something where we can work with you. People started focusing their attention more on that.

I am referring to the Lower Manhattan Emergency Preservation Fund, which included the National Trust [for Historic Preservation, NTHP], World Monuments Fund, [New York] Landmarks Conservancy, Municipal Art Society [MAS], and the Preservation League of New York State. They were sort of a consortium that had been formed to look at other Lower Manhattan resources, like the cast iron buildings and so on. And HDC had decided not to become part of that from the beginning, so HDC was independent from that entity.

So I remember when LMDC called a meeting of the "preservation groups" to try and get the LMEPF people excited about the towers in light thing, there was a meeting and Anthony Gardner and I tried to go. We were held at LMDC's front desk and they said no, no, no, you're not from the preservation groups. I said that I was from HDC, which is recognized by the federal government as one of the three citywide groups in New York that they look to for opinions on landmark issues. So anyway, fortunately for us, Elizabeth [Betsy] Merritt, who was the counsel from the National Trust was right there at the same time and she objected and told them that HDC is one of the preservation groups. You can't just let a moment like that go. We just made sure to score points with the fact that we were being separated out by LMDC to shut us up.

So[2] Betsy Merritt got them to let us through at that point but when we passed by an LMDC official's office, and she saw Anthony and me going with the group, she said, "Oh, no!" She ran out and blocked us. We were not admitted to that meeting where they tried to buy off the LMEPF representatives with funding for the *Tribute in Light*. Anyhow, at that point we were being singled out as troublemakers. [Laughs]

Q: You had mentioned in our correspondence before the interview that you were worried—you didn't know how the preservationist community would respond to the physical asset that you were seeing, and that Anthony likewise saw when you shared a photo and agreed that this something worth saving. So how did that evolve into being something that got more support?

Kornfeld: Okay, so when we requested being consulting parties, then the state put together—or LMDC put together a Section 106 process, where they invited about one hundred consulting parties, most of whom didn't really know that much, to try to dilute us, really. So anyhow, the original draft Determination of Eligibility [DOE] did say that the site was of great national significance. But it didn't describe the tower footprints at all. It also just defined the period of significance as September 11th itself, not the recovery period.

So there were a couple of things that I thought were urgent to change. One was to have the description of the property include a description of all the column bases and everything that were there. Because the way they did it, it would mean that, yes, the overall site is significant, but there are no historic resources to preserve because the WTC was destroyed. It doesn't matter

[2] This paragraph contains substantial edits and/or additions made by Mr. Kornfeld during the transcript review process.

what you redevelop there because the site has the same significance regardless. So the way it was being set up, there would be no basis to find the footprints historic, or to protect them.

So anyway, no one involved in Section 106 at the start knew what was there because they hadn't seen the photographs that I took of the site on June 6, 2002. That was during that moment when it had been uncovered and the tower footprints were visible. Within a couple of weeks, it was all covered with fill again. It was only during that very short period around the closing ceremony that they were visible. Somehow it turned out that of the millions of photos taken of the site, no one else took a photo that showed the footprints that way. Some people talked about it like it was an urban myth, that there wasn't really anything there. It looked gray, like a flat gray place. So anyhow, I was passing around the picture. I almost felt like a character from *The Pentagon Papers*, in a trench coat, giving people envelopes with photos. I had no real legal right to distribute the photographs. At any earlier point in the emergency, there was an FBI order not to distribute photos of the site, for people who were working there. Even though that sort of wasn't in effect anymore, and was originally mainly to prevent lurid photos of a crime scene getting in the tabloids, if someone had gotten pissed off at me, I could have been shut down of the ability to get any images to anyone. So that was why I was sort of clandestine. I tried to make sure enough people had it before that first meeting when we were discussing the draft Determination of Eligibility.

But anyway, at that meeting, a lot of preservation people were there, like Ken [Lustbader], representing the World Monuments Fund and Preservation League of New York State and New York Landmarks Conservancy, Frank Sanchis from MAS, and other people, like—I don't

remember everyone—Eric Allison, who was a former HDC president. There were a lot of preservation people there and I didn't know how they were going to react. If they might look at it like, "That's nothing. It's just the basement of a building that was demolished. We're trying to preserve these beautiful cast iron facades." It was a real dry mouth situation, making that case and then seeing how the rest of the preservation community reacted. There were people from the New York SHPO and ACHP [Advisory Council on Historic Preservation], the federal agency that oversees Section 106. There was Betsy Merritt from the National Trust. It was stacked with senior people from the whole preservation world.

So anyhow, I ran around before the meeting started, distributed those images and gave a quick pitch for our case. When the meeting was underway, at one point they were going around and getting comments from around the room. Anthony and I spoke early on. One by one, everyone in the preservation world totally saw it. They totally agreed. I was like oh, my god, what a relief! I had been carrying this weight on my shoulders since June 6, 2002. And this was February 2004. This was the big moment. It was still the beginning but it answered the question: will my colleagues see it too or am I just nuts?

Q: So in that meeting, all the heads of the preservation organizations were there because there had been damage to Landmarks and National Register sites in the vicinity, is that right? And then they were like oh, there's this other site? Is that why they were there before they knew about—?

Kornfeld: They were invited to the Section 106 meeting as consulting parties because of their standing. They didn't know yet what the resources were. The way Section 106 works is that if

historic resources may be adversely affected by a project requiring federal funding or permits, then there has to be a process to determine what the adverse effects would be and if they can they be eliminated or minimized, or if they can they be mitigated. So it's sort of like a buckshot kind of thing. These people all came in, there was this big, prestigious Section 106. It's for this massive site. There are historic buildings all around, like 90 West Street and 90 Church Street and St. Paul's Chapel. They have to be protected during construction. There was interest in the site itself, but people generally didn't know what resources might be significant there. In fact, some residents or other anti-preservation consulting parties thought I was nuts then, and I was very strongly making the case that they had to clean off the fill that was on the site, so people could see the column bases.

So after a while of people at Section 106 arguing about it, the Port Authority actually did that. I don't know if you saw some of the photos in my PowerPoint presentation but they show what the Port Authority did.[3] They cleaned the fill off the perimeter columns and put orange cones on them. I know when they agreed to do that and they were out there digging, I was thinking, I hope no one went and demolished the column bases at some time, like during the construction of the temporary PATH station, and there's actually nothing there. I really would really be nuts. [Laughs] Then I would just crawl away and shut my mouth.

But it was all there. Then, more people got the point. There was that long steel bridge ramp that went down from street level down into The Bathtub, and I remember going down the day they had the consulting parties visit, going down with some of the officials from SHPO. I can't remember who it was exactly but I could see they were really moved by the experience. There

were tears running down their cheeks. I always feel that way. Going into The Bathtub is sort of like going into a sacred precinct. And then going inside the footprint areas of the towers themselves is like an inner sanctum. So it was very nice to see the preservation realm all reacted the same way.

And then[4] there was a whole fight over exactly what was being preserved, and that was more detailed and technical than most people had the patience for. There was a portion of the One World Trade Center footprint where some of the column bases in the northeast corner went into where they were going to build the new PATH station, and we engaged the Port Authority on that and Calatrava's office offered an elegant solution, after much objection from anti-preservationists that we were just throwing up road blocks. So there were a bunch of these little issues that came up throughout Section 106.

Q: Let me also ask you about the Determination of Eligibility. So who prepared that and at what point in the process was it prepared?

Kornfeld: Well, it was prepared at the beginning of Section 106 by LMDC's consultants and submitted to SHPO, because the developers wanted to get that approved and blast ahead. I mean if Anthony and I hadn't spoken up, I don't think there would have been a big public Section 106. It would have been rubber stamped behind the scenes, and they just would have built whatever they wanted.

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[3] Referring to presentation file that was shared with the interviewer.
[4] This paragraph contains substantial edits and/or additions made by Mr. Kornfeld during the transcript review

Q: I'm trying to ask this in a way that doesn't sound scandalous, but was it written as it was in order to advance the development interests?

Kornfeld: Well, sure, but not necessarily in a dishonest way. It's pretty typical, that you have consultants that specialize in doing environmental impact statements, cultural resource assessments, and being the liaison for the public review process. So it was kind of dramatic at the meeting because the person who was presenting that was talking about the location of where the tower footprints were, saying how the voids were helping show you where the tower bases were. She said that people are always saying it was over here. No, it was over here. And the voids really show you where the towers were. I was saying well, if you clear the fill off the tower footprints, there wouldn't be any question. The historic physical resource is still there. They had described the floor of The Bathtub as having mainly a thirty foot by thirty-foot grid of columns, and didn't characterize the tower footprints. I was calling for a detailed inventory of resources.

The way the WTC was originally constructed, slurry walls were poured and they excavated the Bathtub. As it was excavated, temporary rock anchors were installed to hold up the walls. They were needed so the walls wouldn't collapse from the pressure of the water-saturated soil behind. When they built the steel frame of the garage structure, that supported the slurry walls and they cut the tie backs off. The towers were a completely different structural system built inside that area and basically independent from it. They had a perimeter tube of steel columns and a core with steel framing, and a donut of column-free spaces surrounding the core. So anyway, a thirty-by-thirty-foot grid didn't begin to describe the tower footprints.

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process.

The tower footprints[5] were added to the Determination of Eligibility and the Period of Significance was expanded to include the whole emergency operation. So the footprints were not necessarily saved but were identified as historic. The next fight was over what they called the footprint areas, which were the spaces inside the towers—the cores and the column free area. The cores had large rectangular box columns, like the Last Column. The Port Authority refused to locate those the way they had the perimeter columns. The whole footprint area inside had a lot of damaged concrete features that we thought should be preserved—at least properly documented. In a way, that was a tougher fight than the perimeter columns because they wanted to put program spaces there. It was close to two acres of space, whereas the perimeters were just a strip several feet wide. The wrangling over that went on for another couple of years.

Even once it was decided to have the museum at the B-6 level and to basically preserve the perimeter columns—I mean it's skipping ahead a bit but—once the Memorial Foundation took this over and had their designers working on it, they actually were very cooperative. The plan that they come up with would protect the footprint areas to the extent possible. Where they built the floor of the museum, where the displays are now, they would put insulation over the top of those historic damaged slabs and then pour the new slab over that. So it's preserved under there, with small selected areas exposed and interpreted. So it doesn't preclude its being opened up in the future, like one hundred years from now, if someone wants to expose more of the site and really see all those damaged slabs. We were not happy to have the footprint areas covered but this was a textbook solution and we thanked the museum's design team.

[5] This paragraph contains substantial edits and/or additions made by Mr. Kornfeld during the transcript review process.

The National Trust was helpful with that. They actually went on record in newspaper interviews saying the damaged slabs down there really have a lot of the character. They compared it to strafing marks on the ground in Pearl Harbor from the aerial attack.

Q: Preserving the footprint serves a lot of different purposes. It's significant for the families as a final resting place. It's architecturally significant, which lends a sense of place, as opposed to an abstract site. But you had also mentioned at some point that it lends a dimension of time, and I think, technically speaking, extends the period of significance in the Determination of Eligibility. So I guess what I want to ask is were those all kind of one and the same, or were you advocating in different arenas simultaneously?

Kornfeld: Yes, it was kind of simultaneous. Well, a certain number of things had to happen very quickly because if that original draft of the Determination of Eligibility had been adopted, it would have killed off any possibility of the things we wanted to preserve having a legal basis. People could have decided to preserve it but we wanted there to be a sound legal basis, like it was identified as a resource. And then if the developers proposed adverse effects, there was a process, a sequence: can you avoid it? If not, can you minimize the damage? Can you propose mitigation? Also, they would be required to develop alternatives.

So we had to work very quickly to try to change the Determination of Eligibility. And they did a draft that was revised that changed that. But one of the points that I made was that the period of significance should be extended to the end of the emergency operation because it was all one event, historically—the attack and the response. If you made the whole period of significance

just September 11th itself, it's nothing but an attack where we get devastated. A lot of what meant something to people was the response. The fact that people were coming from across the country to stand outside the site and cheer for emergency workers told you that part of the significance was the response. That's part of the paper that I sent, the report that I wrote for SHPO. They just asked for photos but I wrote this whole long report—just to get certain information officially on the record.

But the main focus was the evolution of the WTC as a ruin, the structural story of how it was dismantled and how it ended up with what was there at the end. How that related to the human drama of the recovery. How it came from the unique way that the towers were designed and constructed, which informed how you dismantle it. It had to do with the nature of the collapse. It had to do with the search and rescue and recovery operation also because a lot of what they were doing was dismantling things delicately to search for remains. Without including that in the period of significance, and understanding it in the design of the memorial and museum, a huge amount of what this event meant to Americans would be lost.

That's part of the significance of the Last Column. You asked about that before. It was one of the core columns, a gigantic rectangular core column. It was left standing late in the operation because of that earth ramp [known as the Tully Highway]. Before they built that steel bridge ramp, there were two roadways from the floor of the Bathtub up to street level that were made on compacted fill. They were basically piles of debris they would drive on (one went west over the One WTC footprint and the other east over the Two WTC footprint). They were supported by parts of the steel structure that they left there, like the Last Column.

So anyway, as they removed that earth ramp that went over the Two World Trade Center footprint, the South Tower, they left that final column as people began to decorate it as a tribute. When you build a new structure, when you top off the steel, ironworkers fly an American flag and have a topping off ceremony. This was like the opposite, for the ironworkers who were dismantling the towers. It was almost like a bottoming out ceremony. They left the final column with a flag mounted on it. And then at the closing construction ceremony, the flag was removed and folded and the Last Column was cut down, laid on a truck bed and covered with black cloth and a wreath of flowers. That was supposed to symbolically end the emergency operation for construction personnel. For the people working there for months, there was no way to end it in their minds that quickly.

In the daytime closing ceremony, they had like every possible closing theme. They had planes flying in the lost man configuration. A rider-less horse was led along West Street. They had the Last Column being driven out of the site in a procession with ambulances and other emergency vehicles from the operation, just as much as you could do. People didn't feel like they were done with it. But anyway, that was how the construction side tied together with the uniformed services and families as a ceremony.

So my case was that all of that was inherently part of what was significant about the site, about the history of the site. You couldn't preclude considering all of that and just make it September 11th itself. So that was accepted and it opened up the potential of seeing all the different artifacts that had been removed, like the Last Column, the WTC Cross, the Survivors' Stair and the tower

footprints, as all contributing to the significance of the site. All of those things could have been ineligible if they hadn't been within the period of significance. The footprints[6] were the product of the emergency operation, and might have been thought of as just an abandoned basement to demolish. There was one ill-fated document circulated in Section 106 that claimed that the footprint areas lacked integrity because they were just basements and everything was damaged beyond repair.

I think a lot of the people that attended that first Section 106 meeting were just at the beginning of learning what was going on. So it was kind of an emergency for Anthony and me to try to get everyone up to speed and understand. You would read that draft DOE and not realize that if it got finalized like that, there wouldn't be any point to even being there. Anyway, everyone got caught up very quickly. In the end, the [Washington] D.C. crowd praised it as one of the more productive Section 106 processes. This is sort of spoiler alert, but after a lot of machinations of every kind, it ended up being an outcome that was much better than Anthony or I had dreamed possible. The museum was really designed beautifully around the tower footprints.

Q: It's fine to have given the spoiler alert, but I did want to ask about, I guess, you getting formally involved as a consulting party in the Section 106 process. How did you go from being *The Pentagon Papers* guy to [laughs]—?

Kornfeld: I thought[7] of a strategy to cement those photos in the public record and get past the

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[6] This paragraph contains substantial edits and/or additions made by Mr. Kornfeld during the transcript review process.
[7] This paragraph contains substantial edits and/or additions made by Mr. Kornfeld during the transcript review process.

issue. I talked to Ruth Pierpont at SHPO and mentioned that I had taken photos that would help their evaluation and she agreed to send a letter formally requesting them, which was when I wrote the fifty-page report that I mentioned. Then I stopped worrying about the issue and used the photos freely. LMDC always forbid us from releasing Section 106 documents, and yet they often sent them to *The New York Times* before even distributing them to us. But there was a whole process of publicizing our issues. The Historic Districts Council was one constituency, along with the other preservation groups. It was convincing them—because they weren't really interested initially. It was just like a random fact that I happened to be a recovery worker who had very deep convictions about what needed to be preserved there. But it wasn't an issue that anyone else outside of Anthony Gardner completely understood at the beginning. But it was a learning process all along. Anthony was a great public relations person. Another important constituency was the family members. So during that period, I went to the site with him on every September 11th, trying to make family members aware of the tower footprints.

We actually would go—because the observance used to be down on the floor of The Bathtub every year, the ceremony on September 11th. So we would go and take water and a cloth and go around cleaning off the steel box column bases, and then people started putting flowers in them. You didn't have the parapet then, where people could put flowers behind their family member's name. They actually built a small reflecting pool out of wood, just temporary reflecting pools, where people would throw the flowers in and sort of post photos of their family members and flags and floral wreaths. I wouldn't have done it if Anthony didn't—on my own, since I'm not a family member, I wouldn't have co-opted it for my own purposes. But we had a little team of people who were actively helping make that a custom as part of decorating the site, which

otherwise was pretty bleak and dusty, objectively speaking. There were a number of different family organizations that had different purposes, causes and protests.

There were the Jersey Girls, who helped convince the government to form the 9/11 Commission, which the government didn't really want to do. There were the people I worked with, who were involved in preserving the WTC site. There were some other people who were lobbying against the way that names would be displayed and the original memorial design. If you remember that design, that parapet with the names was going to be a story down in an underground gallery—really more of a cavern. You'd go downstairs and then you would walk around the perimeter. And at the grade level would be sort of a nice-looking decorative wall. It was part of the oblivial thing, of wanting to keep all of the unhappy stuff out of sight so the grade level memorial would just be a pleasant urban space. The subgrade gallery seemed like a terrible idea. It seemed like such an obvious safety problem, having people down there where you needed to take stairs and access it, and then there were no exits for hundreds of feet. Just picture a car making a backfiring noise and people like stampeding each other.

So anyway, there were family members who were against that—like Rosaleen Tallon, who had vigils camping out on the sidewalk. She insisted[8] that she would not go underground to mourn her brother. In the end, our ideas were compatible, because moving the parapet and fountains up a story opened up the B-6 level for the footprints to be accessible instead of being partly covered with pumps and mechanical equipment. She told me that it could work that way and we were really allies, and she was right. There was a lot of PR against us too, and an effort to distort our

[8] This paragraph contains substantial edits and/or additions made by Mr. Kornfeld during the transcript review process.

position, accusing us of not wanting anything built.

Q: Do you want to talk about multiple hats that you were wearing that you mentioned, with regard to some of the corporations that were involved in redevelopment and then also advocating for preservation, to illustrate what you're saying about this?

Kornfeld: Well, of course, there were only a few people involved in Section 106 who had worked at the site during the emergency operation. One was, early on, Lee Ielpi, a retired firefighter, whose firefighter son died on 9/11, and he became less active with us when he helped open the 9/11 Tribute Center near the site. But early on, he was one of the main advocates and a co-author of the original NHL application.

And also Peter Rinaldi, an engineer who was a representative for the Port Authority at Section 106. Of course, the Port Authority owns the property. So he understood what I was saying. Even if he was on the other side[9] of the table, I felt that we were sort of bros, and he knew TT and knew that I was just there because I believed in what I was doing. I felt all along that the Port Authority representatives saw preservation as a somewhat annoying hoop to jump through, but trusted us as sincere and focused. They handled the process by trying to comply with things that were readily achievable and really digging in their heels with other things. As opposed to LMDC, who just tried to blast ahead, promise to make you happy in the long run, and not give an inch anywhere.

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I was there with the background of someone who had spent a lot of time at the site and had a personal mission. I was there officially representing HDC as a preservationist. But I was inherently representing my company, TT, so I had to maintain a professional decorum, representing HDC as I might represent a client as an expert witness. My company had been hired by the DDC, the city agency, and our company also worked for the Port Authority. I think TT also may have done some consulting for the LMDC on the exposed slurry wall problem, the issue of how to expose a section of slurry wall in the museum—whether to build a counterfort wall, liner wall, or some other system. So I was always trying to avoid creating a conflict of interest, where someone would be mad at my company. [Shouting accusatorily] “We’re paying you hundreds of thousands of dollars to study this. Why is your guy, Kornfeld, out there screwing up everything for us?” My whole career I’ve sort of waited for that moment.

But fortunately, Dan [Daniel A.] Cuoco was the person in charge of my division of the company, which did a fair amount of expert witness and forensic work. His position was always—I remember going to his office on a few occasions with preservation issues opposing other agencies that we were working for and he would say, “Okay, so who are you representing?” I’d say, “I’m representing the Historic Districts Council.” Are you going out there to rabble rouse things, yelling and screaming? No. Are you saying professional things? I’d say yes. He’d say, “I don’t see that as a problem because we get hired all the time to represent a party in a litigation.” There’s always other parties. If you’re being professional, no one can really hold that against you. If you’re effective, they want to hire you first next time. So I was very fortunate that I didn’t have to worry so much about that. And if it really came down to a confrontation, I would have to quit my job rather than abandon my allies—but that would complicate using the photos.

My greatest fear, initially, was worrying about being shut down as far as being able to use any of the images, because that tells the whole story. If there's nothing but a gray dust bowl out there, if you don't see the column bases, and you can't use the photo of it, it's hard to sell—that photograph really sold the thing.

Q: In retrospect, do you think that it's—I was thinking about the role you had advocating for the families too, which was another kind of informal role. I—

Kornfeld: That's true. In the early documents that I sent, before HDC was on board, I actually signed as preservation consultant for the Coalition of 9/11 Families. They actually hired someone to be a professional consultant, Anthony Gardner's group, somebody you probably know. I saw his photo on your guide—Joel Klein—the thing that you sent, that has the instructions [for being interviewed]?

Q: Oh! Yes.

Kornfeld: His picture is on there. Joel is the one who really told us what Section 106 was. The WTC is controlled by the Port Authority, which is a bi-state agency created by Congress, and is not under the jurisdiction of LPC. It is New York and New Jersey but the New York SHPO took the lead. I'm a New York City preservationist, everything is the Landmarks Commission. But the Landmarks Commission almost doesn't seem to know that it's really a Certified Local Government agency, CLG, certified by the state. They think that they rule the world. And really,

SHPO typically defers to the Landmarks Commission in the city. They don't overrule them on things. When it's a private dwelling or something like that, the National Register status doesn't preclude the owner from even demolishing the house unless he's getting federal grants or needs federal permits or something like that. When it's a government agency, it does have teeth. That's why this was kind of exciting for us. It's not just an honorary title like it is for a private home. It's not just honorary—it can help you get grants or tax credits—but it doesn't have the teeth of stopping something private from being demolished.

Q: Yes, which is especially significant in New York City where [snaps fingers] it could happen overnight to multiple buildings.

Kornfeld: There's one thing I'd like to add just as far as the world of responders and everything. I don't mean to put myself in the category of the people who responded on 9/11 or the engineers who went the morning of the 12th and all that. If there are circles of amazing stuff people did, I'm way out from the center of that. But I definitely was there after the first two weeks. I was there for most of the operation. But I'm just saying, my goal was to be another hard hat working at the site, just to go do my part.

Q: Thanks for clarifying that.

Kornfeld: And someone like Lee Ielpi, a firefighter. He was one of the firefighters who lost his son on 9/11 and he was at the site all the time. He was sort of like a different class of human being, as were the engineers from my office who went on day one, who were going through

collapsed structures that no one else had been through before. I went through a lot of insane things looking at it in retrospect. But they were all things where a structural engineer could tell me what was safe to do and what was not safe to do. I just want to clarify that I'm not looking for too much glory.

Q: I do want to ask about the outcome of all these processes, meaning the [National] September 11 Memorial & Museum, but I first want to ask if there's any part of the process that you either did through Thornton Tomasetti or as an advocate for preservation that we should touch on?

Kornfeld: Well, it was really all representing HDC as a consulting party. It wasn't a smooth beginning to end process. One thing I wanted to mention about that with the Survivors' Stair. There was a point where the Survivors' Stair was going to be listed as one of the 11 Most Endangered [Historic Places] by the National Trust. And Anthony and I were horrified when we heard that because really, the tower footprints are the main thing. It's not that hard to work out something to do with the Stair, like how they installed it in the museum. The tower footprints are the thing. We said that you either have to make it just the tower footprints or else all the historic things at the site. If you make it the Survivors' Stair and not the tower footprints, you're putting all the attention on that and maybe dooming the footprints.

What we were told was that LMDC had contacted the LMEPF people, including Ken Lustbader. They basically told them that the parts of the tower footprints were going to be demolished, it's too late to do anything about it. There's no point in even trying to put those be on the 11 Most Endangered list. And maybe they can work out something to preserve the Survivors' Stair. My

reaction was, you're saying the footprints are too endangered to go on the 11 Most Endangered list?! How endangered is that? Like endangered squared. LMDC always had a scheme to try to break off the LMEPF people from Anthony and me and neutralize them with regard to the footprints. The situation was building to a head in early 2006 and the way LMDC was approaching the project, Section 106 was not protecting the resource.

There was a lawsuit also because LMDC under Stefan Pryor always had this idea, go out there and do it—forget about process, just get it done. They can all come cry and protest and whatever but we're going to demolish what we need to now and argue about it later. So anyhow, they actually did start doing work at the site. They had this plan—they referred to it as minor site preparation. Even though the final Section 106 hadn't been resolved, they just needed to do some preliminary site preparation work. And I took a look at that plan. It's not that easy for everyone to read. It was hundreds of pages of stuff that they send you all the time. So anyway, I realized they wanted to take what they wanted to demolish in the tower footprints and just go demolish it right away before Section 106 was even resolved. This wasn't just site preparation work. This was going to preclude resolving it properly. The rest of Section 106[10] would just be an academic exercise. There was a PBS documentary in 2006 where Anthony and I were interviewed, and it ended with Stefan Pryor on the site, saying that there had been enough talk and it was time to rebuild, and pointing to bulldozers that were starting demo in what looked to be near one of the footprints (years later, the museum's Chief Curator, Jan Ramirez, asked me why some of the column bases were missing and I speculated that this was why, as well as a few from the earlier construction of a fire stair in a temporary PATH station in The Bathtub).

[10] This paragraph contains substantial edits and/or additions made by Mr. Kornfeld during the transcript review process.

So anyhow, that's when this lawsuit began. It was the family members and a couple of the other consulting parties that were plaintiffs. They were suing New York State and the Port Authority and the LMDC and so on. Anthony said—and this is a thing that came up a number of times—he really wanted me to get HDC to join the lawsuit. Of course, none of the other preservation groups could do that because they would go to their boards and they'd say no, we're trying to work with the developer. We're not going to sue them. They couldn't even really get their boards to write affidavits in support of the suit.

Q: Can you explain that a little bit more? Why HDC was able to consider that?

Kornfeld: Ok, I'll get to that. I just wanted to say that what we were looking for was a technical restraining order [TRO] to prevent the demolition from going ahead until Section 106 was finalized, and they really wanted a preservation group to validate their position. I went to the HDC board with that and described the situation. The board needed to really understand and we discussed it at board meeting but in the end was very supportive. And I really kind of did the whole effort myself. I wasn't using the staff there to do anything—I distributed all of my comments to the board by email. The developers would send something you needed to respond to like once a week. I spent probably twenty hours a week on this for years. They try to bury you in paper, especially those of us who were volunteers. But we couldn't be worn down. I watched thousands of people die before my eyes and put my blood, sweat and tears into that site and I was damned if I was going to give up. We were trying to protect a national shrine.

So when the suit came up, I went to the board and after some careful thought, the board voted to support me. And they actually applauded. I was like wow, this is the best board in the world! One of the people that really spoke up for me was former LPC Chair, Beverly Moss Spatt. Part of it is that the HDC is mainly financed by donations from hardcore preservationists. Some of the groups that are better financed have board members who are big in construction and development, the management world, and they just don't want to be too controversial. Sometimes being poor as an organization is a tactical advantage. But they were helping in their own way.

Betsy Merritt from the National Trust helped in the lawsuit by writing letters to LMDC and including HDC in the cc [carbon copy] list. I would attach her letter to my affidavit. It couldn't be written directly as an affidavit from NTHP in support of the suit but it was the equivalent. For example, explaining how things that the developers were doing were improper, like not doing a proper cumulative effects analysis. In a complex project like this, with multiple developers building different structures, you need a cumulative effects analysis to understand the net effect of all the projects combined. If there are multiple developers on a site, one of them is saying it's okay for me to do this because I only need to demolish the west wall of this historic building but the other walls can stay intact. Then another developer says it's okay because I just need to demolish the north wall and so forth for the east and south, and each project leaves three quarters of the building unaffected. But if you do a cumulative effects analysis, the whole thing is being destroyed. And that was never done by LMDC or the Port Authority in a way that wasn't total obfuscation, like saying that it couldn't be done until the design had progressed further, even though they planned to start demolition of portions of the resource.

So anyway, what happened with the lawsuit was that the defendants agreed to voluntarily suspend the demolition pending the outcome of the lawsuit. Ultimately, our suit was thrown out but it didn't matter anymore because a different solution had already been found. That happens a lot in preservation, right? If you keep the balls in the air long enough, something gets worked out. (The judge's ruling[11] is a lesson for preservationists in Section 106 proceedings. Early on, Anthony and I had started to formally object but LMDC begged us not to and committed to produce a design with preservation input that would satisfy the families' interests, and said that it was too preliminary to see what the design was going to be like, so there was nothing specific to protest anyway. So we went along with that. Then later on, in the lawsuit, they maintained that we had the opportunity to object earlier on in the process and had neglected to do so, and so we had forfeited our right to object. The judge agreed—we got snookered. So we lost that battle but in the end, we won the war.)

If it's okay, maybe I'll say how the final resolution happened.

Q: Go ahead.

Kornfeld: The museum design was ultimately done by the Memorial Foundation, where the president was Joe Daniels, who's a family member who knows Anthony Gardner well. They chose Alice Greenwald to be the director of the museum. It was just a very good team. When Anthony and I first met with the people from the Memorial Foundation, it was a whole different

[11] This paragraph contains substantial edits and/or additions made by Mr. Kornfeld during the transcript review process.

world. They totally understood everything we were saying. We were saying, you need to look at this like you're not just designing a museum but you're the stewards of a historic site. They totally got it, they were our friends from the first minute. It was like wow, [laughs] are we in the right place?

Going into LMDC, I always felt like they were going to call security and have me thrown out, and the foundation offices were constructed right down the hall on the same floor of One Liberty.

So anyhow, you remember the Sciame redesign? A thing you would have heard as a member of the public was that the project was way over budget and they hired Frank Sciame, who's a well-known construction figure and construction manager in New York, a leading citizen kind of person, to come in and look at the plans and develop a redesign. I don't know exactly what went into that but at the end, they came out with a package that made essentially all the changes that we wanted.

It was sort of unbelievable. It was done under the guise of making the project more affordable but at the same time, there was a lot of horse trading going on and I know that Anthony had some pull with Joe Daniels in terms of talking about priorities. And the foundation had to raise money, which would be harder with a public war against family groups. It turned out what we wanted really made sense in terms of structure and economy. So I'd like to say that Section 106 was successful in resolving everything but if it wasn't for the lawsuit stopping the demolition and the Memorial Foundation listening to us, I don't know what would have happened.

Q: Was there a moment where you realized that the footprints were going to be preserved and preserved in line with how you'd had in mind for so long at that point?

Kornfeld: Yes, well, it happened in a funny order. There were commitments and part of it was, when they did the big demolition and construction project—commitments to protect things. So they were protected for a long time with wooden covers over them. If you look at the PowerPoint, there are areas, it's something where you can see it at the beginning. But the construction project gets more and more complex all around it until it sort of disappears from view. At that point, it's sort of like radio silence, like when a spaceship is returning to Earth, it goes through that phase where there's no contact. So we just had our fingers crossed that what was going to come out the other end was going to be good. The consulting parties received updates on the protection commitments as the project went on, but I just felt like I'll believe it when I see it.

I should mention also that the architectural firm, Davis Brody Bond, that did the design of the museum, really got the idea. Once their drawings started getting pumped into Section 106, showing how different things would be handled, that was also a breath of fresh air. And the way they interpreted the tower footprints in their final design, they used foam aluminum panels, if you're been in the museum, there are these volumes directly over the footprints that show you where the towers were. They even have down lights illuminating the column bases.

It really brilliantly interprets what's there and recalls where the towers were. And the column

bases are really treated like something sacred, where the slab stops and then you see that area with the damaged concrete and the steel was cut off. Where you enter those displays that are inside the tower areas, the footprint areas, you go across a little bridge, over the line of column bases. Whether they were listening to us or they just understood what it was, they really got it right. I couldn't believe how well it turned out.

They had a limited area for the museum, so they needed to use the footprint areas for the displays. But there's a certain area that's exposed, with a railing around it, where you can see the damaged concrete beneath. Outside of that, the damaged slabs are protected with the insulation and the new slabs poured on top of that. They really have couldn't done it better. In an ideal world, I would have loved to see the whole footprints exposed. There's the issue with the PATH station also because the South Tower always had the tracks going across half of it. It was always clear that we wouldn't get all of the Two WTC footprint, which is why we fought so hard to protect all of One WTC, which was essentially 100% there. So all of those bases aren't visible in the North Tower [One WTC], because at the northeast corner, it goes into the PATH station where they built an additional platform in the PATH system because they were going to expand to ten-car trains. I wasn't anxious in having that fight, about saying that they shouldn't have the additional infrastructure.

Joel Klein[12] wanted to have a major fight over Section 4(f) of the federal [U.S. Department of] Transportation Act to challenge the new platform, but I thought that we would lose and make our cause look questionable, because it was being portrayed as preservation versus safety. I thought

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it was a better idea to fight for preserving those column bases and making them visible through the floor, like the way you see Roman foundations under glass in European buildings.

We went through that process. The illustrations are in the PowerPoint that I gave you, where first the Port Authority—there's a discussion that there's a fire stair, exit stair at that end of the platform. They can't really eliminate that. If you keep that area open, there isn't room enough for people to walk by it to get to an exit stair. I wasn't anxious to have that fight either, but the Port Authority's first suggestion was why don't you paint the columns on the floor of the platform? I was like no, the point is to preserve the actual thing. I'd prefer to preserve it even if you can't see it. But the ideal thing would be preserving it under the floor and making it visible and illuminated.

This is in the PATH station, which was designed by [Santiago] Calatrava's office. Of course, being European, that didn't seem like that unusual a thing to them. The Port Authority did their usual thing where they say, we'll go back, consult with our designers, and then we'll come back and tell you what their reaction is at the next meeting. They came back at the next meeting with three alternatives for doing just that. They had the things with illumination and glass floor panels over them on the train platform, even ventilation to protect the resource. They said, do you like any of these? I said, they're all great. Thank you, thank you. This is all we were asking for! People didn't understand how focused we were. This was all we're asking for. And they did it. It's really kind of amazing to see on the farthest west PATH platform. And someday, maybe it will be reunited with the rest of the footprint when the PATH trains are replaced with flying buses or something.

Q: Were you visiting the museum while it was under construction? Or was there a moment where you saw everything come together?

Kornfeld: I went on one visit to the construction site. You could go to parts of it while other things were under construction, like the heavy construction of the fountains and the plaza and everything, yes, I went once. You still couldn't quite see everything that was being protected. I always had a very cordial relationship with the museum staff and the curatorial staff there. So they contacted me on occasion with some fact-checking things or asking if I knew where something is in the site. But it was great to see the whole thing. I could give you a list of things that didn't turn out exactly the way I would have hoped but the main thing, they just got it—it was incredibly well done. I always had perches to view from—the Amex Tower and 90 Church Street, but once the plaza structure covered the footprints, you needed a guided tour.

One of the lead designers, a partner from Davis Brody Bond was actually one of my graduate school classmates, Carl Krebs. I was at a few Section 106 meetings that he attended. We were on the opposite side of the table. I don't know if we actually spoke then but it was nice to see people from the past popping up here and there. They were really the perfect design team to work on this project.

Q: This whole process is at least a decade, right, of time?

Kornfeld: Well, the main decisions were made by the end of 2006. So it was four years after the

emergency operation ended. Then there was a whole third phase where the museum had what they called a conversation series. It was part of the museum planning, where they had people, different stakeholders and people with different points of view come talk about the design of the museum, because there were a lot of problems with a museum like this. So there were family members, clergy, child psychologists, different people. Because, one thing, you're saying—a lot of the things that you would see in this exhibit are maybe things that are shocking or maybe some family members wouldn't be able to see them or you wouldn't want a child to see, like film of people jumping out of the towers. So they designed a cove with a warning. They did some other displays that were specifically for children. There issues of how to house the unidentified remains—behind the blue wall with the quote from Virgil.

So I went to all those meetings and always reminded everyone of the museum's responsibility for stewardship of a national shrine. That actually went from something like 2006 to 2013. I think 2013 was finally the end, when the museum opened—so twelve years total.

The most recent thing really was a presentation that I was invited to make to museum docents in 2018 about the preservation campaign. I never said no to anything, but part of that is just, psychologically speaking, when you're working on something like that and you sort of don't want it to end, don't want all the people that you've been working with to just disperse and then be alone with your thoughts. I just sort of kept extending my involvement. March 30, 2002 was a rough day because that was announced as the final day. Places like St. Paul's closed their doors as respite centers. That was where I went and just sat for a while at the beginning and end of every day.

But working with the family members was a great thing also. Where LMDC's office was in One Liberty Plaza, there was a family room on the same floor. When we would go to Section 106 meetings at LMDC, I would go with Anthony to the family room afterwards. The family members became my colleagues, and while I wasn't one of them, they knew that I was fighting for them. I felt at home there but had to respect certain boundaries. It was kind of the same thing for the whole museum planning conversation series.

I have continued to go to the site every year on September 11th and to go to a conference the day before and sort of stay up with the museum people.

Q: I'm due for another visit, I think. It's been a long time since I've been there. I wanted to ask about how this whole experience impacted your thoughts about preservation, how you go about preservation projects, all that goes into making them successful.

Kornfeld: Well, I've always gotten involved with preservation projects for things that are sort of unusual, like civil engineering structures or things that are not your typical thing. The New York [City] Water Supply System, I'm the historian for the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct and ended up writing the National Register nomination for the Jerome Park Reservoir, which is a historic part of the old water supply.

Even with the things I do professionally, I've been involved with many buildings, but some of my favorite projects have been things like the Harlem Fire Watchtower in Marcus Garvey Park.

That was our project. That's an amazing thing because it's this small element almost like a garden folly that's not even a building but it's so important to the community. It's just great that the Harlem community identifies with the history of this structure. It's fascinating itself, this sort of early cast iron technology and detailing. It's an iron frame but the iron forms things that look like masonry pockets for a wooden beam. They hadn't developed the technology of modern steel connections. It was the grandparent of the skyscrapers.

But I guess I've always been at the intersection of building science and design and history and maybe half community rabble rouser.

Q: Well, it sounds like some of the things that you've been involved with, they all require someone to say hey, you might not know it but this is really interesting and important. Either you need to be up close with a microscope or having some aerial view to be able to see it, really.

Kornfeld: Yes, very often it's a matter of finding a couple of photographs or drawings that really tell the story in a way where people can feel what's important about something. Even if it's something that they wouldn't normally look at and think about.

Q: Even more important than a narrative or an explanation.

Kornfeld: Yes, maybe people read less and less than they used to. So a good photograph with a punchy caption will do more than ten really well thought out pages of text.

Q: Was there something from your professional background that helped kind of stabilize you or that you were able to draw from as you moved forward through the recovery project?

Kornfeld: Well, I've done some emergency response work on earlier things at my company. One of the interesting things working with the engineers there is that, unlike most architects' offices, you'd occasionally get called out to put on a safety vest and a hard hat and go to a scene of a collapse or where a crane fell over and landed on a building, something like that, and figure out how to repair it. There's a little bit of an adrenaline rush going up to where the police are not letting anyone into a site and saying, "I'm from TT. We're the engineers for the investigation." And then sort of having the VIP entrée, even if you're going someplace ridiculous. So I have a little bit of that adrenaline junkie background with that kind of thing. I think that's part of it.

I remember talking to, when I was sitting in the Taj Mahal—the big tent where everyone would have lunch—they had volunteers who would sort of come over and talk to you. There was a guy, Gary Dill, who was a fire marshal from Oklahoma City, who had been one of the [Alfred P.] Murrah [Federal] Building first responders, and he came over and sort of meekly said, "Is it okay if I sit over here?" Then we started talking. When I realized who he was, I told him how impressed I was, and how I wasn't doing anything like he did. He was very good—he must have been trained and knew that everyone he talked to would have massive survivor guilt. I unloaded with some of the things I felt bad about. I was saying I feel sort of guilty getting an adrenaline rush from going through all these devastated buildings. I obviously recognized that there are all these ruined lives and people's family photos lying in piles of debris and everything. I feel it's unfair to have a thrill for going through these spaces. He was saying, "Well, if you didn't feel

that way, you couldn't do your job. There were plenty of days when I was sitting around the firehouse wishing there was a good fire to respond to. If this is what you do, you have to feel that way."

Another thing that actually made me feel good, I was saying I feel bad doing what I'm doing, where these people have done all this amazing stuff, like helping to carry people down the stairs while the buildings were collapsing and everything. I feel like a kind of a zero. He was saying, yes, but I'm actually impressed by you guys—you are going through all these buildings alone with basically nothing but a hard hat and a camera and a pair of binoculars, right? I was like well, yeah. You have to understand, we have equipment and guys and ladders, ropes and radios and oxygen tanks and all this stuff, and we're trained as responders. You're like middle-aged guys [laughs] who left your office to do this. So that actually made me feel better about the role that I had. He had the exact answer for everything.

People who wanted to work at the site always did whatever they could. I remember talking to a woman who I think was from Colorado and she was someone who did helicopter mountain rescue and stuff like that. And she was saying she just really wanted to go to New York and work at the site. And she couldn't find a way to do it but she had to come to New York. She volunteered through her mother's Christian group to come just unload supplies at the respite center at St. Paul's Chapel. All she was doing was unloading boxes of food and setting it out on a table. So in that sense, I felt like I actually had a pretty good role. I was lucky to work for my company. If it were a regular architectural firm, it would never have been involved until the buildings were all turned over to their owners to restore, like a year later.

Q: I think that's helpful information to hear. Maybe it explains why reading through your report was really devastating for me, just to see those images, I think, for the first time. To see this would have been hard for me in ways that you excelled at, for example. I think your answer there explains a lot of how your job kind of primed you for that kind of response. basically. If not extra walkie-talkies and stuff then different kinds of tools.

Kornfeld: I remember when I first saw the towers burning on September 11th, my first thought was that it wasn't as bad as it ended up being. And I was picturing, once the sprinklers put the fire out, how are you going to repair this. I thought there was a pretty good chance that I would be one of the people tasked to go investigate the damage and figure out how to repair it because we've done work like that for the Port Authority before. I've done a lot of that kind of work over the years. So I was sort of picturing who's going to hang in the swing scaffold that goes down in front of that hole to look at the condition of the columns. So I was probably in a pretty small percentage of people who were looking at it that way.

Q: Yes, you were already thinking about the recovery, I suppose.

Kornfeld: We were one of the teams that went and looked at the damage from the 1993 [World Trade Center] bombing down in the garage and I actually did a project—that bombing destroyed the river water lines that brought Hudson River water, which was the coolant for the air conditioning system. So they temporarily had this thing that they called Chiller City, all these trucks with air conditioning equipment parked south of the towers, [laughs] like every portable

chiller unit that you could find in the universe. When there was a new river water lines project to add additional coolant, I was a fairly junior person then, I was sort of one off the field people that go out.

And the Port Authority hired us to do a pre-construction damage survey where, you know how people are always seeing a crack and they sue because they think the crack was caused by the neighbor's construction? So you do a survey before the project to look for damage so you identify what damage was already there. So anyway, we did that all the way from the Hudson River, up Liberty Street, and then up West Street, sort of looking at every little crack in facades or the sidewalk. I remember, in 2001, looking back at the photos from that and it would be a photo of a crack in the sidewalk and in the background, you see One World Trade Center. It was like wow, you look at a photograph so differently ten years later. Actually, it was less—five years later.

Q: Yes. I wanted to ask also about the people that you worked with. Maybe there's some other people that haven't come up yet or you can talk a little bit more about your interactions with Ken. Some other people that come to mind as being really integral to either complementing your work or supporting your work or working in tandem.

Kornfeld: If you're interested in collecting some documents related to this, I have sort of all the emails from that era. There was a group that included Frank Sanchis and Betsy Merritt, and Ken Lustbader and Anthony Gardner. I'm trying to think who else. When we would react to something, we would all send our comments around to each other before submitting them to the

developers. Ken was certainly part of that group. As I said, I was so nervous about how people would react to this thing and then, when everyone totally saw it the same way, it was the biggest relief. So I would say we were a very tight group. When there was a pause in the meeting, we would go caucus. For the hard core of the preservation team, I think that was the main people. (From preservation groups,[13] Joel Klein was a great resource, as were Charlene [Yu] Vaughn from ACHP and Alex Herrera from New York Landmarks Conservancy and Eric Allison. There were other solid supporters on the family/preservation side like Louise Lo Presti, Bruce De Cell, Jack Lynch, Patricia Reilly and Mary Fetchet.)

There was a certain period when all of a sudden, everyone started talking about the Survivors' Stair. I think that was probably maybe 2005 or 2006. Richard Zimbler started coming to Section 106 and he brought a woman with him to the meetings—Tania Head. I don't know if that rings a bell. But she was someone who "had been in the South Tower on 9/11 and got out." She became a big media celebrity and she was going to visit family members. "I saw your husband and he was really saving people" and everything and then she turned out to be a complete fraud who hadn't been in the U.S. at all on 9/11. Anyway, she came to a bunch of the Section 106 meetings and contributed zero. She and Richard represented the survivor network group. He would make a comment when they were going around the room and when it was her turn, she would just say, "Well, like he said." [Laughs] And they would go to the next person. Something about 9/11, it was one of those events in New York, it sort of brings every nut out of the woodwork.

Q: Yes. It seems like such a unique experience but I'm wondering if there's anything from this

[13] This paragraph contains substantial edits and/or additions made by Mr. Kornfeld during the transcript review process.

experience that you think is applicable to other preservation-related issues or sites.

Kornfeld: The main thing that comes to mind is the process itself. I know people have complained about Section 106 in other ways before, and this one has been cited as a very effective Section 106 because the outcome was so good. But as I've said, while it at least provided a forum for the issues to be reviewed, I don't really think the outcome was good because of Section 106. This was something hard to define—I've referred to it as being a historic ruin, but instead of being covered buried for a thousand years, it was unearthed in like six months. People still hadn't had time to process their feelings about it. So there were some immediate feelings that people had that were going to affect their decisions to do something rash.

One of the things that I thought was very striking from the site was the way that last corner of One World Trade Center looked before it was demolished, those sort of Gothic-looking tendrils standing up. I would love to have seen something that looked like that reassembled. People were just like, no one wants to see all of this horrible debris that will just remind them of the feelings they had on 9/11 and everything. My thought was always, fifty years from now, it's not going to look like that. It definitely did change. You know the way the visitors building, the entrance that you take, now has those triads, the original tower steel that goes up above the grade of the plaza. If anyone recommended anything like that in 2003, it would have been rejected out of hand, that's not happening. A lot of the people looked at the museum almost like those garbage cans where you step on a pedal and it opens. You want the Cross? Okay, [makes quick open and close sound] in the garbage can. Put it underground with all the other stuff you guys love, down in the museum and you can worship your dirt and debris.

Looking at it in retrospect, it looks very different. I've talked to one of the archaeologists who was on the developer's side of the team. She was saying, it's not a ruin. It's not an archaeological site. Technically speaking, you don't know what you're talking about. This was after the fact, sort of sour grapes for the fact that we steamrolled them, two of us against all the money in Lower Manhattan. Again, it's not that we were that brilliant. Sometimes being right about something helps convince people, and finally, if a few influential people see that you're right, good things can happen.

This was a very strange thing. I don't know what lessons to draw from it because we didn't have any superpowers. I don't feel like we were smarter or more strategic or anything else than someone else. It just all fell into place somehow. All I can say is at the beginning it seemed hopeless and somehow worked out better than we expected.

Oh, I was saying about the way Section 106 is set up, the structural problem of that is the site was being redeveloped under the authority of Governor Pataki of New York State, and the State Historic Preservation Office, which oversees the Section 106 process is under him. There's the governor, then there's the state parks commissioner Castro, then there's SHPO under her. So they can't go against the governor in a politically charged project like this. I was saying that first day I sent information about the resources that were there at the site, Kathy Howe, the officer for that area was told not to talk to me because this obviously was a problem for them—that is what I heard. It was a hiccup in their plans. And I think maybe the governor felt like he had overstepped himself by going and promising all this stuff to the family members. And then the

local real estate people came to him and said, “Look, George! This isn’t Peekskill! This is the most valuable real estate on the planet. You are not just leaving sixteen acres open so a bunch of widows and orphans can come weep here!”

You know, one of the strangest things—you know the design that won? Libeskind, Daniel Libeskind’s plan. Do you remember the name of his plan for the site redevelopment?

Q: Was it *Memory*—

Kornfeld: It was *Memory Foundations*.

Q: Right, right.

Kornfeld: But what happened was they accepted his plan. If you look at his plan, which I put in the [presentation], that’s from his book. That was never shown to the public. That was his original sketch, where it showed the footprints. I don’t know what he meant by showing the footprints but maybe he saw the foundations there. But the whole thing was saying, it sort of showed the footprints and it said “Deep.” His case was, his little written blurb, that when you got to the bottom of all of this, you saw the bedrock foundations of democracy there. That’s what was left when you dug to the bottom of this whole thing. That’s why it was called *Memory Foundations*. Having the footprints there was the basis of the scheme. So LMDC had this idea that you were just going to mark those areas with voids up at ground level, which ended up being the pools in the memorial scheme. The memorial scheme was—it was almost a foregone

conclusion what it would be. That's what the final scheme was, it was just the holes that were part of one of the requirements of the design competition. That was a fixed thing, having the voids. That was the bait and switch. The original *Memory Foundations* scheme was we have to go down seventy-two feet, down into it to see the foundations of democracy down at the bedrock level.

So anyway, they took Libeskind into a room—I'm presuming this had to have happened—and they said look, we like your scheme. This is the right type of scheme. What it's doing is, where the towers were, it was these super tall buildings surrounded by low plaza buildings. This scheme is like the inverse of that where it's open in the middle and then you develop the tall buildings around the perimeter. But they were saying look, you can't have that because we need to put stuff down there. You need some place to park all the tour buses. They're not just going to sit on the street idling in front of people's apartment buildings. We need to have the museum down there. There's the PATH station and everything. So they basically said, if you want this scheme to win, if you want us to announce that your scheme won, the foundations are like—you're not going down to that level. It's going to be voids with a fountain at grade level. I just always thought it was the strangest thing. I always felt like if I talked to someone from the developer about this I would ask, what are the *Memory Foundations*? Can you show me where they are in the scheme? [Laughs]

Q: It's the tour buses, right? [Laughs]

Kornfeld: I always thought it was strange to pave over the actual historic site, the actual

footprints, to park tour buses for people to go up and see this ersatz memorial. It seemed like the ultimate irony.

Q: Yes, I'll admit, it's strange being at that place with tourists. That part of it doesn't feel right to me.

Kornfeld: It was a strange thing when, during the emergency operation, when they kept moving the boundaries in to make different buildings accessible as they were repaired. Just kind of a weird thing because it was like our turf, looking at it as a recovery worker. I remember the Amex building was so devastated early on. Part of it was collapsed, the semi-octagon wing next to the Winter Garden, and we constructed all of that, the steel, pouring new slabs, having a giant crane there to put new panels onto that part of the building. When Amex was going to move back in, it was kind of like a reality shock. All of a sudden, there's a guy there in a chef's hat. He was going to put together the kitchen where they made special meals for the top executives, the twenty million dollar a year executives, who had their own private dining room. All of a sudden, there's people moving in, the pastry chef, the executive chef. I've got to get used to a different world. I was used to stone derrickmen with giant wrenches. We had been the WTC hardhats and now we were just grunts fixing the building. I was told to use the service entrance and I refused because I was the project manager of the restoration and I had a desk in the city's emergency command center.

But I had to be careful also because—when they moved the perimeter in, the public had this tremendous built-up desire to see something, to see what was there. So people would rush up to

the edge to look down and see what they could see. I remember some guy with his son on his shoulders. The kid's legs were over his shoulders. He was rushing up so his son could look down in the pit. I was thinking, wouldn't you want to see what the deal is there before having a three-year-old see it?

There was another time where I'm standing on West Street near Liberty Street and this woman came up and she was sort of asking very timidly a few questions. I was feeling like a big shot responder guy, who's this annoying person? They're letting all the public in now. Anyway, then she told me that the last time she had been there was on 9/11 and she had been coming out of the building where she worked. There was a police woman who told people to run. Don't turn back. Don't look. Just keep running. And she did that and then the collapse happened. She knows that that officer was Moira Smith, who died in the collapse, and she hadn't been able to come to Lower Manhattan since that day. I was standing there and thinking wow, this is someone who really had a traumatic experience. I'm glad I didn't say something condescending to her. I tried to comfort her by saying how hard we had worked to repair everything and make it safe for people to come back, and that she was welcome, and I pointed out where she could go.

You sort of had to be careful, right? I remember going out the exit of the site one day early on and there was a bunch of people lined up against the fence. Someone was taking their photo and said smile. They're all smiling. I was thinking, if you're taking a picture of someone—and this was pretty early during the emergency operation, with smoke coming out of the holes and everything—I was thinking, if you're taking a picture of your family in front of this, why would you say smile?

So it was a big range of different encounters. So I don't mean to go on and on. I forgot what your question was.

Q: It's interesting to hear you say that because it sort of reminds me a lot of what's happening now where a lot of people who are coming out of this enclosed living situation [pandemic lockdowns and quarantines], either physically or socially and coming together in these new ways, again with the people who we spent our whole lives with up until last year, friends and family. Everybody is coming to that space of togetherness with a different need for access to one another and a different set of griefs, sadness and reasons and everything. It's sort of so much different energy going on at the same time.

Kornfeld: I know what you mean. There's a big range from people who have lost family members to people who are just annoyed because they can't go to the gym.

Q: Yes and that's kind of the tourist element I was talking about. People are like "I'm at the famous place in New York City!" Others of us lost people there or have lost people who were first responders or just remember that terrible energy before there was this narrative about patriotism attached to it and everything. I want to be part of some of those things but not others. It's a lot of different things going on at the same place. But at the same time, the footprints feel like an appropriate vessel for all of those different things.

Kornfeld: They've really been interpreted in a way that works. I think it was very skillfully done.

The circulation sequence leads you into the day the way the general public experienced it, what were the first things people heard, where were different people when they heard about it. Then you sort of go step by step to where you're really getting a deep dive into the experience of different people—people trapped, 9/11 responders, family members not knowing what is going on, then the collapses, the aftermath, the response, the different uniformed services and construction workers. The aspect I was involved with is maybe the least covered: the technical engineering issues. It's not as popular—it's not as media-friendly a topic as things like firefighters and police officers.

I've certainly been involved in a lot of different ways for a long time. I have memories of the Trade Center from before. As I was saying, during that river water lines project, I actually did investigations of a couple of things. I remember doing an assessment report on one of the roof setbacks in the South Tower. If you remember, when you look at the building, there were two sort of darker-looking stripes on the towers, those were places where there was no glass. There was actually a little setback roof. It was maybe less than ten feet wide, which is where there were louvers for fan exhaust and intakes, because they didn't want that on the face of the building. It's set back a few feet, just in the shadows. But that was a little roof you could walk on and you could stick your head through between the columns and look down. Anyway, I remember walking around in the setbacks, taking pictures of sagging flashing, base flashing and that kind of thing. It was so mundane. I recall walking around on the roof of Four WTC, one of the low plaza buildings, with my old boss, Ted Sherman, putting together a proposal to replace the roof – we didn't get the project. I had a lot of connections.

In fact, I knew a lot of the Port Authority architects because we all studied for the RA [registered architect] exam at the same time. I used to go there and they would make copies of chapters from some of the study books so I didn't have to buy them. They had a great library and archives on the 73rd floor of One WTC, where the architects were. So I remember being up there. And the towers both moved a fair amount in the wind. I think the maximum was something like three feet in each direction. So each tower could move six feet total, and when they moved in opposite directions, it was a big differential. Sometimes when you would stand a distance away and look at the wall, you could see the other tower moving because the windows were less than two feet wide. You could actually sort of tick off the windows. Three windows would go by this way and stop and swing back the other way. It's an unusual thing to be able to see one building moving relative to another one.

Q: Yes, absolutely and at such a height also. Well, thanks for illuminating so much about this part of the 9/11 preservation history that really, like you said, hasn't been documented. Like I said at the beginning, and like you brought up too, we'll figure out how to involve the images that you took in some aspect of how we share your interview because I think they also tell a big story on their own as well. And illuminate what you've described very well.

Kornfeld: If you're interested, I could send over some sections of the journal that I wrote about the first couple of weeks I was working at the site.

Q: Yes, absolutely. I'd love to see that.

Kornfeld: It’s a little different perspective. I was going to and then I thought I’m deluging you with stuff.

Q: [Laughs] No, it’s really good to have the things that constitute your time there. It’s really helpful to see those and to have copies for any researchers who access your interview. I think anyone who would have questions, they’d want to see these things too because they hopefully all would do complementary work together.

Kornfeld: The one thing I would say about that is that I included a number of images that I didn’t arrange the rights for. I’ll just say this about my involvement there. Since my company was the chief engineering consultant, we actually had a field office in the city’s command center and then, as time went on, that kind of wound down and I was still there working on the restoration of the Amex Tower, the one that had the spears sticking in, 3 World Financial Center. So I was there after the emergency operation officially ended. So as things shrunk down, I ended up with the computer that was our company’s main computer. It sort of has everything on it, all the photographs that everyone took on the site from day one, and a lot of documents. So it’s been very helpful through this whole process. That has been reincarnated in my office laptops since then.

So that’s been very helpful for me to be able to find images that illustrate pretty much everything that could be illustrated, photos of those different artifacts at all different points during the recovery operation. I could sort of dig back through it and find things. But also there were things like, one time someone came with all the aerial photos that were taken from the police

helicopters or something like that, which the guy that was working for me as the field engineer there, he just made copies for DDC, put it on a disk so that guy could keep it. Then he made his own copy of it. Some of those things could have copyright issues. I'm fine sending it to you because it's a journal. It's a personal journal. It's almost stuff that's like clipped and glued except it's electronic. But as far as it being published, beyond that, maybe that shouldn't be accessible on a website. I don't know if your collection can be done in a way that's divided into things that are public and those not for release. I can clarify and authorize most of it myself.

Q: Yes, I can check with Brad. Sometimes there's things that can be made available upon request that would involve checking with the person who is the author. I'm not sure if NYPAP has part of their archives that operates that way. But anything that you send me, I would definitely check with you before it goes any further. I would be happy to do that.

Kornfeld: So I'll just put the appropriate thing on the cover, like something to the effect of "For Archival Use, Not for Release" and a copyright symbol or something. Then if anyone who opens it, it says "Not for Release," can take that how they want.

Q: Yes, I can likewise save it in a folder that's adequately labeled too.

Kornfeld: But you seem interested in that side of it.

Q: Yes, absolutely. Well, thanks, Bob. I really appreciate all the details you've shared and the research materials that you've shared as well.

Kornfeld: I appreciate your interest and the Archive's interest. When things are a little more back to normal, if you want to go to the museum sometime, I'd be happy to go together. I would say, I don't normally go at times when it's sort of open to the general public. I've typically gone on September 10th and September 11th when it's restricted to—well, on the 10th, it's restricted to sort of 9/11 community in general. On the 11th, at least for the morning part, it's really for families and first responders, but I can generally bring a guest. On the 10th, there's always a conference at the Marriott at 85 West Street. Then after that, they give away tickets to people at the conference. So if you're interested, it would probably be in the afternoon on September 10th, around five or something.

Q: Yes, probably the furthest date I have scheduled in my calendar. [Laughs]

Kornfeld: It's one of those things where you know when it's going to be.

Q: Yearly. Yes, that would be great.

Kornfeld: But I like going on those occasions rather than when the general public is there.

Q: Yes, yes, the only time I've ever been there actually was during an invitation event for people who had some input in that review process that you mentioned, about content, through my relationship with Columbia's oral history office. So it was closed but it wasn't just family. It was other cultural workers, I think.

Kornfeld: That sounds good. Not that I have disdain for the general public, but I like to go when there's not that many people and it's more a sort of contemplative atmosphere.

Q: Yes, yes, agreed. Well, thank you again, Bob, and I'll be in touch with your transcript sometime in the next few weeks. Those will be the next steps.

Kornfeld: Okay, great.

Q: Okay, thank you so much.

Kornfeld: Okay, thank you.

Q: Have a good night.

[END OF INTERVIEW]