

GUEST: FRANK HAINES

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Do you realize that our capitol is the only one in the United States where the legislators, in order to get from their offices to the meeting rooms, have to go by the public? And that was a conscious decision that we made, when we did the design, that we wanted to have a more open political system in Hawaii.

Every building in Hawaii has a story, and you'll be meeting a man who knows more of those stories than just about anyone. He fell in love with architecture at an early age, and it's been a lifelong romance. Meet one of Hawaii's most influential architects, Frank Haines, next on Long Story Short.

***Aloha mai kakou.* I'm Leslie Wilcox. Frank Haines' career in Hawaii architecture has spanned six decades. He was the president, and later chairman, of Hawaii's largest architectural firm, Architects Hawaii, a professor at the UH Manoa School of Architecture, and the author of two books on Hawaii architecture. At the time of our conversation, at age eighty-nine and a half, he was still conducting a two and a half hour Saturday walking tour, at a fast clip, called Exploring Downtown Honolulu. Architecture has been his passion ever since he was a young boy.**

We lived in Stamford, Connecticut, which is on Long Island Sound, and it's about, oh, maybe twenty-five miles out of New York City. And we lived in a very nice place, because there were three streets and medium-sized houses, and then we had a private beach and a tennis court. And so as kids, we augmented our allowance by clamming, fishing, stuff like that.

Now, did you have to be a good salesman to sell those fish?

No, we sold them around the neighborhood; no.

No problems, just—

Oh, no.

—went up to the door, and somebody would buy?

That's right. In fact [CHUCKLE], one time, we got so many clams, and we couldn't sell them all, this kid and I. So we sat on the beach, and each ate one dozen raw clams. And I got sick from that, and so did he. And psychosomatically, I've never been able to eat raw clams since. [CHUCKLE]

When did you know you wanted to be an architect?

Well, when I was a kid I was very lucky. Around the corner from me, and the father of one of my best friends, was an architect. And he was a very

charismatic guy. And I started out by going to New York, and so he would often take his son and me to his office. And he worked for one of those big firms, and one of the buildings they designed was the Empire State Building. And I was very much impressed with the drawings and the sketches, and so on. Then a few years after that, he retired from that company, and then he operated out of his house, right around the corner. And he did remodeling of houses and small stores, and so on. And he invited me to go with him. And then he'd say, Well, this is what I plan to do; make a sketch of it for me. And through this one guy, I was just hooked. And so I wanted to be an architect.

It sounds like you had a privileged childhood.

Well, my folks were people of significance, and they had even though it was the beginning of the Depression—I was born in 1921, and then the Depression hit. My father had a good job that was not in danger in any way. I lucked out in that respect.

He was an electrical engineer.

My father was an electrical engineer. He went to Columbia University, and got his degree in 1912, and then he was in the Navy in World War I. I was born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, because he briefly worked for the Bethlehem Ship Building Company. But after that, we moved to Stamford, Connecticut, and he was the chief engineer, and then the president of a small firm that made motors and generators, and things like that.

What'd your mother do?

My mother was a housewife. My mother went to Bryn Mawr College, Class of 1918, when it was quite unusual for women to go to college at that time. No, she was a good housewife, and she participated, she played Bridge, and she belonged to the historical society, and things like that.

And you went to two very good institutions of higher learning.

Well, I couldn't anymore get into Princeton now, than fly.

[CHUCKLE]

But in those days, it was apparently not difficult. The headmaster of the small country day school that I went to was a Princeton graduate, and so when it got time to make applications, he said, I think you should apply to Princeton. And my parents agreed, and so I only applied to Princeton.

And got in.

Got in. In those days, there were no Blacks, no women at all even heard of in Princeton. So it was very different.

So, once you graduated with your bachelor's in architecture, then, what happened?

Well, in 1941, that was when I graduated. And then very soon after that, of course, Pearl Harbor Day. And then I enlisted in the Navy, and I wanted to be in what was called the CEC, which was the construction part of the Navy, 'cause of my experience. But they wouldn't give me that. I didn't have any experience, I only had the degree. So I was an enlisted man in the CEC for about a year, year and a half. And then, I got another letter saying that they

wished I would get a commission in what's the called the regular Navy. And I agreed to do that. And that's when I was trained to be on a small destroyer escort, small destroyer. And I was trained in Miami for that, as a gunnery officer on that kind of ship. And then, luck plays a lot of [CHUCKLE] ... there were about fifty of us in the class, and about twenty-five were assigned to ships in the Atlantic, and I was one of those that was assigned to a ship in the Pacific. I joined this ship in San Francisco, and that was my introduction to Hawaii. I came here, and saw what Hawaii was like. And then we were in the South Pacific, of course. We came back of couple of times for refitting, and so I saw quite a bit of Honolulu.

After leaving the service, Frank Haines attended the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he earned a master's degree in architecture. Connections he made while in the military would lead him back to Hawaii.

You went to MIT, and then you needed to find a job.

Well, I made some contacts when I was here before. And I was invited by Cy Lemmon, who you've probably heard of, who was the founder of our company, to come work for him. His office was on Saratoga Road in Waikiki. So I walked down, and there was a little old Hawaiian house right on the street with a little sign said, Lemmon Architect. He'd taken the garage behind his house and cut windows in it, and that's where the office was when I first reported for work. It's one of the properties the Trump Tower is built on now.

Did you have a lot of offers, or was work scarce? Because after all, this was just after wartime.

No, I was offered a job for an architect in Boston. When I was at MIT, I worked part-time for him, Sam Glazer. And he did offer me a job, but I'd seen what Hawaii was like. And also, by the way, what you may not realize is that many parts of the United States, they didn't accept modern architecture. For instance, in Boston, you could not build any subdivision, because there were deed restrictions, except a colonial house. You couldn't build a flat-roof house anywhere. And I didn't want to work in a place that was restrictive like that. And Hawaii had nothing, none of those. And I'd seen very nice architecture here, even before the ones built before the war.

Interesting.

[CHUCKLE]

So, your boss turns out to be operating out of a converted garage. Did that give you pause?

Well, it did, but we were there for less than maybe a year, year and a half, and then we moved to a building on Kapiolani Boulevard. And then, we designed the First Hawaiian Bank Building, which they tore down to build a new one, an eighteen-story building. We moved downtown there in 1960. So we weren't too long in the boondocks. [CHUCKLE]

And did you have any cultural adjustments to make when you got here? What was the hardest thing about moving to Hawaii in the 40s?

Not for me. I loved it. But I did have a childhood, as I said, of living right by the water, and swimming, and so forth. And so that was another thing that influenced me.

But you say you also went to a university that wasn't very diverse at all. And here, you moved to one of the most diverse state—

Yeah.

Well, it wasn't even a state then, in the nation.

Well, that was what was wonderful about it. [CHUCKLE] I said, life is full of luck. I couldn't have come to—number one, I couldn't have come to a better place to practice architecture, and I couldn't have come at a better time.

Nowadays, if you come here, the design profession is pretty full. And I've had a lot of applications from, children of friends of mine, and I tell them, Hawaii is not—the demand is not expanding a great deal, and therefore, they should think twice about coming here to look for a job.

But when you came here, the place was wide open.

Exactly; and they were looking for people. In fact, it was before there was any education of architecture at the University of Hawaii, and I went twice to the mainland, once in about 1959, to hire people, to bring them here. The AIA offices in San Francisco and Los Angeles arranged interviews for me. And I hired more people.

The firm eventually became known as Architects Hawaii, where Frank Haines would work for over forty years, and design many prominent buildings in Hawaii.

What was your favorite building to design?

The Federal Building. The General Services Administration nationally is responsible for buildings, all federal buildings. So when we were—

[COUGHING]

—given the job, Mr. Boutin, who was head of the GSA, came down here, and we had several meetings with him. And then we went out for coffee or something, and he took a napkin like this, a paper napkin, and sketched what he thought it should be like. Which was a single tall building, about eighteen stories high, with the courts on the top, then all of the office and so forth down below. And that's exactly what we didn't want to do. It took years to manipulate. Fortunately, there was a head of the building service under him, who was an architect, and he was sympathetic. What we wanted to do was, first of all, we wanted to have it no taller than the Capitol. Because otherwise, it would dominate the Capitol. Second of all, we wanted to have it so that the court system, which is the most important part of the manifestation of the federal government, was a separate building. And that's what—we put that as a separate building, and then the rest of it, it's called a convoluted mass. We made it so that—

That's the term, convoluted—

That's it; yeah.

—mass?

So that it is not one big mass, but it's a series of different ones. And thirdly, most importantly, we wanted it so that every time they went from one part of the building to the other, they went outside. Which we can do in our climate, of course. We finally got our way, and that's what's there. Unfortunately, with the security, you used to be able to go through anytime you wanted. Now, it's blocked off, and you have to go through security. But still, that same feeling, once you get in the courtyard—have you been in the Federal Building?

I've covered many trials in the court building.

You have.

Yes.

So you know the interior. The whole idea was that—and we have some interesting artwork in there, too. And that people would go out there, and if you've ever been to the cafeteria, which is on the fifth floor—

Which is where juries used to eat—

Yeah.

—under guard.

That's right; yeah.

And anyone could—obviously, it was a public cafeteria, anyone could go in and—

Yeah, that's right.

—still can, but now, you go through security.

You know where that is? There's a nice view overlooking the courtyard.

Yes.

[CHUCKLE]

I remember when there was 9/11. There was a childcare center in the building.

Yeah.

And so there was a lot of fear about that. If 9/11 had happened before you built the building, you would probably have designed—

Oh.

—it differently.

Of course. Oh, definitely.

But were you flexible enough in your design that security is not an issue there?

We didn't really consider that. What it amounted to was when you went into different parts of the building, often you had to have a key or a pass, or something. We did not consider security at all. Not worried about it.

You were housing some heavyweights in the Federal Building. That's where Senator Inouye has his—

I know.

—office, Senator—

I know.

—Akaka. Did you get a lot of suggestions from federal officials?

No; we got a lot from the judges. Yes. Judge Pence, at that time, was the head—

Martin Pence?

Member of social science, too. And he was the one that we worked with on all the judiciary part of it, and he was very, very excellent. We couldn't have ever done a good job without his input.

In addition to the Prince Kuhio Federal Building in Honolulu, Frank Haines worked on Kaiser Permanente's Moanalua Medical Center and its Honolulu Clinic, the 1978 restoration of Aliiolani Hale, and of course, his own house in Kahala. Through the experience of working on these, and other projects, Frank Haines developed his own theories on Hawaii architecture.

What I did know was, that I wanted to produce a kind of architecture that spoke to the situation. In fact, I was asked whether there wasn't or shouldn't be a style of architecture. And I said, Like the Spanish Colonial or so. What I said was that I would much rather talk about attributes that good design in Hawaii relates to. Number one is our climate. Every building, and every part of a building, should speak to the climate, and access to the outside. In houses, that means open to *lanai*'s and outside spaces. Bishop Street, for instance. You go down Bishop Street, and you've seen Tamarind Park. We were responsible for redesigning that entire block. What we said was, we want to put the buildings back and have an open space where people can come out of their air conditioned offices and sit and eat their lunch, and hear concerts, and so forth. And if you go there now, you'll find many, many people, many people. And that is an example, again, of the use of our climate. So that's the first important thing, to be cognizant and utilize the climate. Now, very unfortunately, for instance, in Kahala now, almost all the new houses, most of them, they negate that entirely. Number one, they're centrally air conditioned. Once you central air condition now, you don't use the outside at all. And second of all, they are what I would call McMansions. They're much too big for the outside space that surrounds them. Okay; the next thing is that in nature, the colors, greens and blues, are spectacular. Therefore, when you do any buildings, all of the exterior colors should be neutral. You see? What you cannot do is put blue on a building, and have it competing with the sky. And there are a lot of buildings that are terrible like that. Many, some important buildings. And so that was my next philosophy. [CHUCKLE]

Okay; that's two.

Okay. Another, of course, and this is obvious, and maybe not being unique to Hawaii, that every single new building built relates to all of the buildings that are already there around it. And you just cannot do your own statement, and neglect to consider what the others, the way they're located, and even their design. In other words, you want to be sure that when your project is finished,

people will say, Gee, well, that fits in. And a lot of times, it doesn't. There are even a lot of houses which somehow or other, you've seen them, I'm sure, just don't fit into the environment. My design philosophy, especially of a private house, is that when it's completed, it will be felt to be the effort of the architect and the client. So that this is not something that I cooked up for them. They can feel—and by the way, again, this is maybe is not for on the screen. But Ossipoff and Frank Lloyd Wright were very different. They said, This is what you're gonna have, because this is what most attractive looking. And the client didn't really have any say in it.

Oh, it was a take it or leave design.

But my philosophy always was—that occurred in other kinds of buildings too, that the client should feel proud that this is his product, as well as mine. End of sermon.

Throughout his career, Frank Haines was fiercely committed to his clients, and his work. Many aspects of his life had to take a back seat to his profession. And in hindsight, he would not have had it any other way.

So it sounds like it could be an extremely exasperating career.

It's a wonderful career. I enjoyed every minute of it. When I taught at the University, I told them that to really have a good life, they should every single morning want to get to work. Not say, Oh, god, I've got another day. You see? And that's what I tried to impress upon them. And I feel that architects, in general, have more of that feeling of that, than even a dentist or a doctor, or somebody selling clothing, or something like that. Now, again, that maybe ... self aggrandizement. I don't know. [CHUCKLE]

But you always loved going to work?

Yes, I did. I was unhappy when I really retired. Well, I didn't retire until I was about seventy-five, so ...

And you're still on the board, and—

I'm still involved.

—you're still involved in—

Still involved to a certain extent; yeah.

—in trade work.

Yeah. [CHUCKLE]

Oh. So as a kid, you identified the job that you would have, and you loved it ever since—

Yeah.

—you started doing it.

Now, that doesn't occur with everybody. But a lot of people, yes.

Was it hard to work with people who didn't feel the same way about their job?

Maybe they were good, but they wanted to clock out at a certain time.

Well, you're talking about staff members?

M-hm.

Well, staff members in general, well, before we hire them, we're interested in their capability, but also their personality. How they will fit in with the rest of the office, and also, how they will appear. Because many times, they participate with the client too.

Well, because you loved your work so much, were you a workaholic?

I don't know; I don't think so. I still spent a lot of time with my three children, and Peg, my wife. Yeah.

No problem there, setting the balance.

Well, I came home late almost every night, but [CHUCKLE] ...

Late, how? Well, how late?

Well, seven, seven o'clock, seven-thirty or so.

You know, I notice you tend to stick with things. Your family didn't move much when you were a child.

Never did once, no.

And you stayed with the same career, and the same—

Same firm.

—firm. You've had a long marriage.

Yeah; fifty-seven years, Peg and I had.

You stayed in the same house throughout your career here, and only moved when it was time to go to a retirement home.

That's right; yeah. [CHUCKLE]

What does that say about you?

I'm too conservative, maybe. Actually, even after we built the house in Kahala, there were several other places where the Bishop Estate opened up new areas up Waialae Iki. And a couple of times, I did buy a lot, and was going to design a house. And the kids said, Dad, we don't want to live up there. They had all their friends. See, in those days, Waialae Kahala was full of kids, and so they didn't want to move, so we never did. Sometimes, I did build a house on spec, and then sold it.

After retiring, Frank Haines channeled his love for architecture into leading a walking tour of historic Downtown Honolulu.

Now, you've remained healthy. You're eighty-nine and a half, as we speak in—
[CHUCKLE]

—2010. And you're still working, in a sense. I mean, every Saturday that you have people ready to take a tour of Downtown, there you are. How long have you been doing tours of the design of Downtown buildings?

About ten years; ten years ago. It started, actually, that many people, local people who should know things about these buildings. I studied them, by the way, when I did one of my essays for social science, I did an essay on architecture. And that got to be pretty well known around town. And as a

result of that, I made a lot of contacts, and I've shown that slide show to Rotary Clubs, and so forth. Which makes me feel good about that.

Very much so.

The building we're going to talk about is called Aliiolani Hale. And the translation from Hawaiian means, the home of the heavenly chiefs. It is the most photographed building in Hawaii. Not on account of the building, but on account of the statue of Kamehameha I. Every single tour group—there's one right there, they all gather here to take a picture of the statue. And in so doing, they also take a picture of the building.

Well, tell me what it's like to do that walk. I mean, you cover ... it's—

Twenty-seven buildings. We go from Downtown by Merchant Street, all the way down King Street. We go by, of course, the Federal Building, the old Federal Building, Aliiolani Hale, and then we end up at Kawaiahao, and then behind Kawaiahao, the mission houses. And then we come back on Beretania Street. We go by the City Hall, the library, and then the Palace. At the Palace, we don't go in, we talk a great deal about the design of the Palace. And then we go to the barracks, where the barracks is.

M-hm.

You know where the—

On the grounds of Iolani Palace.

But that was not where it was built.

Oh, it wasn't?

No; it was built where the State Capitol is now.

Oh.

So before we could start the building of the Capitol, that building was moved, coral block by coral block, from across the street, and then rebuilt where it is now.

While Frank Haines is passionate about fine architecture, he's equally passionate about what he doesn't like.

What do you think of the University of Hawaii Manoa campus, which so many people say, you know, it looks like a crazy quilt of architectural styles?

Well, I agree completely. There never was a master plan, either physically, you know, for the location of buildings, but also for design. Each architect did his own thing there, and as a result, it's a chaos of different kinds of styles. And also, there's no real master plan physically to combine, you know, landscaping and—well, the only major open space is that long space between Hawaii Hall and the Architecture Building at the other end.

Can anything be done about that now?

Not really. Not really; unless you blow up the buildings.

Hm. [CHUCKLE]

You've read *The Fountainhead*, of course, right? [CHUCKLE] The architect blew up the building, because it was inappropriate. Yeah. [CHUCKLE]

So, any advice to new architects coming up?

Like I said before, you need to be dedicated, and not just relating to your client. But everything you do, you must feel that it's appropriate for the community. And that is the one thing that I would—and when I taught at the University, I used to mention that to them. Because it's not just a single project at all. Everything that's done contributes to the overall environment, for everybody.

Even though that may not be in the client's interest, as far as maximizing money. Exactly; exactly.

Hard to talk them out of it, isn't it?

You can talk them out of it, yeah. I make them feel that they'll be good citizens. That actually is often quite important. They want to be felt to be good citizens.

If architecture is the art of designing how people live, work, and interact, then Frank Haines has played a profound role in the lives of Hawaii's people. Mahalo, Frank, for sharing your philosophy on, and knowledge of, Hawaii architecture. And thank you for listening on Long Story Short. For PBS Hawaii, I'm Leslie Wilcox. A hui hou kakou.

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The Palace, Iolani Palace. As you look at the steps, there are steps going up to the half level. And those are iron risers. And they're all the same, except down on the bottom, they have bigger *puka*'s. And I didn't know. One time, a guy said, did I realize what those were for. He said, remember that there's an area way all around, and under the steps, he said, that's where the soldiers could be, and they could point their guns out of those *puka*'s.