

**Interview with Jeffrey Herr, curator of the Frank Lloyd Wright's Hollyhock House. Herr prepared the National Historic Landmark nomination that established the Aline Barnsdall Complex (and Hollyhock House) as the tenth NHL in Los Angeles City on March 29, 2007. This outstanding nomination was selected as a model by the National Park Service for its official NHL website.**

**In 2008, Hollyhock House received a \$1.9 million grant from the California Cultural and Historical Endowment. Dorothy Fue Wong conducted this interview on August 3, 2009.**

**Wong: What is the significance of Hollyhock House?**

**Jeffrey Herr:** The significance of Hollyhock house is two-fold, I mean as far as National Historic Landmark status is concerned. It is significant because of the architect who designed it. In going through the process of the landmark designation, it was interesting to me to realize that not any Frank Lloyd Wright structure qualifies for National Landmark status just because it was built by Frank Lloyd Wright.

The reason Hollyhock House or the Aline Barnsdall Complex – let's be clear we're talking about 11 acres with four different structures on it (the primary one, of course, Aline Barnsdall's residence – Hollyhock House) is important because it's the first house of Wright's second period. It's also the first residence that he built in Southern California. And because it's the first residence of his second period, there's a lot about it that is transitional. But it very much influenced Wright's later residential work. And he also brought in a young modernist architect named Rudolph Schindler to be the project manager. And in turn Schindler eventually brought in his friend, Richard Neutra. And so what you have here – because of the way Wright changed space planning within the structure – is the genesis of the ranch-style house in America, which definitely brings the criteria for being significant on a national level to a very sharp focus.

The other, I would hasten to add, is its owner although there hasn't been much attention paid to the person who commissioned Hollyhock House – Aline Barnsdall. She was a very interesting woman, and I think that Hollyhock House is important because of her. And I hope that in the future the significance of Barnsdall and her patronage are explored beyond just architecture. That's one of the things that we stress during the tours that visitors take of Hollyhock House.

**Wong:** How did the National Historic Landmark nomination come about?

**Jeffrey Herr:** It's interesting because at the time it came up everyone thought it was already a NHL. And it was hard to believe that it hadn't ever been – the nomination had never been written.

**Wong:** What year was this?

**Jeffrey Herr:** This would have been about 2005, very early 2005. The reason it came up is because the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy wanted to develop a serial

nomination for UNESCO's World Heritage List – a serial nomination being a group of Frank Lloyd Wright's sites that were representative of his total output, if you will. And Hollyhock House was naturally one that they wanted to include. In order to be eligible for consideration for the World Heritage List, you have to be a National Historic Landmark. So that's when it came to light that we had never applied. And we really wanted to pursue the World Heritage List. That's when I began the research for the nomination.

**Wong: Please tell us more about the Wright Conservancy**

**Jeffrey Herr:** Well, the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy was actually founded at Hollyhock House by the historic site curator, Virginia Kazor and this was back in the late 70's or very early 80's. Basically, it began as a very informal group of people who owned Wright buildings and they would get together once a year to discuss issues and problems and solutions. What happened is that it eventually developed into a larger organization that now plays a part in rescuing FLW buildings. So we're still very much involved with the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy because we think they perform a good service. We also feel a little proprietary about the organization.

**Wong:** Are the headquarters in Chicago?

**Jeffrey Herr:** Yes, they are. And I guess this fall the meeting will be in Buffalo, New York. They go to different areas where there are concentrations of Wright buildings that can be included as part of the conference agenda. There are about 100 members.

**Wong: Why is it important for the Conservancy to have these Wright buildings be part of the World Heritage?**

**Jeffrey Herr:** Well, as I understand the story Taliesin in Spring Green and Taliesin West in Scottsdale wanted to be a World Heritage site and so they submitted an application. It was sent back not because they weren't worthy but because the committee felt that the two sites didn't represent the totality of Wright's architectural output. And the World Heritage Committee actually suggested that they resubmit and include a broad selection. And that's where we are now. There are 10 sites, and the National Park Service has accepted the application, and we are on the tentative list for selection. So some time in the next nine years this serial nomination should be submitted. Mount Vernon was up this year and it's hard to compete against Mount Vernon.

**Wong: What is the advantage of being a World Heritage site?**

**Jeffrey Herr:** I think that the obvious advantage is that being on the World Heritage List will immediately, by all accounts – and there was an article in the New York Times a couple of years ago about this – raise the number of visitors dramatically. It gives it a focus for people all over the world to make a point of coming, almost as a pilgrimage to visit these sites. So if one is smart about it, you can increase your revenues. Now there is

an offset because with more visitors you have more upkeep and more maintenance. But one of the things that we have to do as a historic site, if we're going to maintain any viability at all, is to maintain attendance. If people don't actually use the site, I think it's arguable that – on a very practical level – it becomes less valued.

**Wong: Was Hollyhock House the last of this group of ten?**

**Jeffrey Herr:** Well, I don't know that it was the last. It was just – there were actually 12 sites. Because of the criteria, two of them didn't make the final list. So there are 10, and I don't know how you would categorize them. In terms of chronology, for instance, of when they built – the Guggenheim would be at the very end – Hollyhock House would be at the beginning, but I don't know quite how that list was developed.

**Wong: Please tell us how you went about preparing the National Historic Landmark nomination. How long it took you and some of the things that you found that you had to do to complete it.**

**Jeffrey Herr:** I had the luxury of pretty much working full time 1 1/2 years on this once it was decided to do it. I didn't have too many other projects that got in the way. The first thing I did was try to learn everything about the process that I could. I downloaded reams of material from the Internet, from the NPS website. Then I started talking to the people that I knew I would need to be in touch with during the process. Basically, the key was those conversations because they're very good about getting one started on the right foot. It can be a difficult thing to just look at something that's printed, make certain assumptions to start, and then six months later or whenever find that you've omitted a key step that just wasn't there. For instance, one of the things that I was very fortunate to learn was that you have to be pre-qualified. They want to make sure that you don't go to all the trouble of filling out an application and then find out that you really don't, under their criteria, qualify. In this case, the American Institute of Architects (the AIA) had done a survey back in the 70's, I believe, and had done it for the National Park Service — Frank Lloyd Wright buildings that they felt would qualify as National Historic Landmarks. And lo and behold, Hollyhock House was on it. So that probably eliminated possibly a year's worth of work for me just to make sure we qualified before I even began doing any writing.

Once you get those preliminary ducks in a row, you just go about the business of filling out the application and that can be a daunting task especially if it's more than just a building. In this case we had 11 acres, but those preliminary discussions were very important to this because it took awhile — a bet it took three or four months of talking to figure out whether it was going to be just Hollyhock House or whether it was going to be something other than that, including the original gift from Aline Barnsdall which included Residence A, the Schindler Terrace and the Spring House and 11 acres of park. Then, of course, we had to choose a name. We did decide to include the entire footprint of the original gift, and that's when we decided that it should also be called the Aline Barnsdall Complex because it's much bigger than just Hollyhock House.

Then, of course, the writing begins and there's also the photography. There are very distinct guidelines regarding photography — what you need, how it needs to be presented. That was actually a fairly expensive process because just the paper alone, which I believe has to have a 75-year archive life was expensive. So that was a \$2,000 expense just to get the photographs ready.

What was really comforting to me was by that time I realized that I wasn't in this alone, that the National Park Service was going to be very helpful. I was fortunate enough to have Jaime Jacobs assigned to Hollyhock House, and he acted as an editor for the application and was instrumental in just pulling it together and tying up some loose ends and by the time we had gone back and forth with those edits, I began to feel very confident that it was a stellar application.

**Wong: Was this person located in Washington D.C.?**

**Jeffrey Herr:** Yes, we did most of this by e-mail, a couple telephone calls. And I didn't actually meet him until I went to Washington to present the application to the Landmarks committee.

**Wong:** You mentioned that you talked to several people at the beginning. Who were these people? Were they part of the National Park Service or were they other people that had completed nominations?

**Jeffrey Herr:** The principal person I spoke with was Elaine Jackson Retondo, and she's in Oakland. She is a National Park Service historian for the Western Region. But we had lots of chats about this and, as I recall now, eventually she put me through to someone in Washington and I don't remember who that person was – for direct talks. It sort of had its own flow.

**Wong: When you started writing the nomination you had a large collection of documentation. Is that correct?**

**Jeffrey Herr:** Well, I did have quite a bit to go on. Virginia Kazor, as historic site curator and manager since 1978, had collected many documents on Hollyhock House. I was really fortunate that the National Historic Building Survey had been done. It was on the National Register — I believe it was on the National Register of Historic places. But at any rate, I did have certain documents that had already been done that were very helpful. The one thing I did – I treated those documents as secondary source material, which means that I verified every bit of information that I pulled from them. In many cases, I enlarged on that information to make it work for the nomination.

Now that I'm thinking about it, I sent the nomination when I finished it to Elaine and said, "Will you look this over and let know what you think." I was a little bit disconcerted when her response came back merely saying it was too long. So I thought, that doesn't really tell me what I should be eliminating, but it was an interesting

comment, and I'm glad she wasn't more specific because suddenly — it's very difficult to edit your own work — I went back and looked at it — the distance between my sending it to her and getting this comment and everything — I actually eliminated 10 pages of text, and that seemed to work fine.

I sent it off and there wasn't anything more cut from it, just some explanations enlarged — just normal edits. So it's one thing to put in everything you know and all the information, but you have to remember that they're ordinary people who are going to be reading this. It's almost like a grant application. You want everything there to be essential and succinct.

**Wong: How long did it take you to do this? Did you work on it full time?**

**Jeffrey Herr:** Yes. I worked on it pretty much full time, and I would say I spent a year and a half in the process. There were other things and I did take time to reflect and think about what was going on. Just doing some of the research takes a lot of time. But then there's the process of the editing in Washington and then waiting for your appointment to come up before the National Park Service's Advisory Board. Sometimes that can take six to eight months just to get on their calendar.

**Wong: That's right! They have hearings like two times a year.**

**Jeffrey Herr:** And sometimes they cancel one of those. Then you're really stuck.

**Wong:** You mentioned also that you had ten months of corrections after one-half year's full time. You had ten months to do numerous corrections.

**Jeffrey Herr:** Probably exaggerated on that —let's say six months. I am thinking that I turned it in November and there was a spring hearing and so — somewhere four to six months those edits were done.

**Wong:** How many hours in total do you think for this nomination?

**Jeffrey Herr:** I'm going to take a long shot and say probably about 2,000 hours. I'm sort of a perfectionist and so I would go back and double check my sources and then I'd get into the writing part and I probably took longer than most people for that.

**Wong:** After reading your nomination, I was so impressed with how thorough your details are. It seemed like every detail was thought out.

**Jeffrey Herr:** Yes, they had to be. All the measurements and everything had to be checked and double checked.

**Wong:** How long have you been at Hollyhock House?

**Jeffrey Herr:** I've been here since 2004 as the curator. I worked here in the early 1990s as a curator for the Municipal Art Gallery. So I did have some prior experience at Hollyhock House, and it has never been far from my mind since those early 90s. In fact, when I went back to school to get my art history degree, I wrote a paper on Hollyhock House for one of the classes I took in modern architecture. So my first introduction to Hollyhock House was interviewing Virginia Kazor for that paper.

**Wong: Who actually made the decision to begin this project?**

**Jeffrey Herr:** Well, let's say it was the City Council because in order to do something like that, because we're a municipally owned site, the Department of Cultural Affairs needed a resolution from the City Council. At the time, we got a dual resolution, one to proceed with the National Historic Landmark, but also at the same time, to proceed with the World Heritage List nomination. So it was kind of like, let's just be efficient about this, because getting these resolutions is time consuming and who knows what the political atmosphere will be next year? So I think it was the City Council, and our City Council President, Eric Garcetti, whose district Hollyhock House is in that gave us the green light.

**Wong:** Did you realize during this process – that at the end you would be able to get almost \$2 million from the California Cultural and Historical Endowment, or did that come afterwards?

**Jeffrey Herr:** I think the short answer is “no.” We did know that if we were able to achieve this that we would be eligible to apply for certain funds that are only available to sites with National Historical Landmark status. They're competitive grants and so it's interesting because that California Cultural Historical Endowment was a very limited fund and it only had three cycles, and we were turned down the first two cycles. It was only with the third cycle that we got it, and I think we got it because we became a National Historical Landmark between the application for the second and third cycle. Of course, that is a matching grant so we really have \$4 million to work with, which is a very important amount of money, not that it will actually allow Hollyhock House to be fully restored or take care of all the restoration problems, and that's another problem because you get these grants and then people think, well, you just got a big grant. Why didn't you fix it all then? The very nature of these historic structures is the fact that there's this natural degradation of materials. There's always going to be this process of restoration that goes on. So we're only too happy to be able to put this money to work.

**Wong:** Are you applying for other grants?

**Jeffrey Herr:** Yes, as a matter of fact we have applied for a Save America's Treasures grant under the Obama stimulus package. If we get that, we will just fold it into this project which will allow us to do more.

**Wong: When you applied for the grant, did you already have long-range preservation plans?**

Jeffrey Herr: Yes and no. Let's just say that what we have is what every historic structure, especially every National Historic Landmark should have, and that is a historic structure report. Those reports should be a detailed analysis that includes the history of the place, the chronology of what has been done, and an analysis of what needs to be done, and a plan for how it should be utilized. So we do have that. When you say a long-range plan, Dorothy, I like to think of something very specific in terms of at least five years. We don't have that kind of plan per se basically because we don't have the personnel to actually complete and implement that kind of plan. What happens typically is that we will get a certain amount of money like the CCHE grant, and then that becomes the priority. Then we try to fit into that the most pressing need. Or at other times quite happily someone will come and see a need or they'll be made aware of a need, and they'll say, "I'd like to fund that." And it may not be the highest priority, but when you have someone willing to pay for something — for instance, we've just installed a reproduction of Barnsdall's original dining room light fixture just about four month's ago and that was the result of someone saying, "I'm really interested in lighting and if you'll do the work, I'll pay for it." Otherwise, that wouldn't have happened simply because there are other things that would have been higher on a priority list if the money had been there. But in this case you have a designated gift for a low priority project.

So we do have these plans, and in fact we've just completed a historic structure report for Residence A, the guesthouse. It was the only structure we didn't have one for and, considering how thorough it is, it brings up the other issue and that is just because you have a historic structure report doesn't mean you're done. What I'm getting at is that for the California Cultural Historical Endowment Project — the first step is to update the historic structure report for Hollyhock House because it was done in the early 90s. It's not that it's obsolete; it's incomplete. So it's being updated so that we have all the information between 1992 and 2009, and that's an important thing. It's a little discouraging maybe. You think, well okay we got this document and then it's never going to be enough, but the fact is you do need to update them.

**Wong: I'm glad you said that because Pamela Seeger at Rancho Los Alamitos said that a master plan like that lasts about 15 to 20 years and then there's another cycle of planning. For next year, the Rancho will be on its third cycle.**

**Jeffrey Herr:** A master plan would be a little different from historic structure report. So, yes, I can see that. I would say that's fine unless you get ready to do some sort of major restoration work. For instance, let's just say that in the middle of a 15-year cycle that we have an earthquake and it requires restoration. You can't wait until the end of that cycle. You're going to need emergency updates.

**Wong: Who prepared your historic structure report?**

**Jeffrey Herr:** The originals were done by a firm called ArchiPlan who hired a preservation architect named Martin Weil to do those. ArchiPlan doesn't exist anymore

and Mr. Weil is deceased. But our most recent historic structure report was done by LSA Associates out of Riverside in conjunction with Chattel Architecture.

**Wong: Do you have a Cultural Landscape plan too, or does this site mostly focus on the buildings?**

**Jeffrey Herr:** No. As a matter of fact our cultural landscape is extremely important. The original landscape was designed by Lloyd Wright, the son. And when the park was refurbished between 2001 and 2004 several features that had disappeared during the last 90 years were replanted, and in fact, then there was a restoration of the west lawn which restored that planting. Landscapes have their own life. They start out as one thing but plants grow and mature and they die and sometimes they're replaced and sometimes they're not replaced and even if they are, it's not necessarily done with an eye for restoration — maybe it's just put there. So we do have this Cultural Landscape Plan, and we are in the process of putting back as much as we can. Of course, these are issues because we're not a private residence any longer. We're a public park, and we have a responsibility to the people who use the park and whose tax dollars maintain the park. The idea is to reach a compromise that allows both historic veracity and usability. We have so many issues to deal with that Aline Barnsdall didn't have in 1921.

**Wong: Who prepared your cultural landscape plan?**

**Jeffrey Herr:** The cultural landscape plan was done by a man named Peter Walker. In fact, there's a master plan for Barnsdall. So in a sense we're kind of like Ms. Seeger in that we do have this master plan for the entire park, and sometimes I don't think so much about that because I'm so focused on the historic structures. The nice thing about having a cultural master plan for the park is that it's already been approved by the commission that has oversight so we don't need to go through that process over again for individual projects. All we have to do is make sure the master plan says: "yes" and we can take off.

**Wong: So the City commission, I guess it's the Landmark Commission.**

**Jeffrey Herr:** No, in this case, it would be the Department of Recreation and Parks. This is a complex site in that three city departments actually have jurisdiction. The Department of Recreation and Parks owns and maintains the park. The Cultural Affairs Department programs the sites – Hollyhock House, the Municipal Art Gallery, Jr. Arts Center – and takes care of restoration and interpretation of Hollyhock House. Our General Services Department does all the maintenance on the buildings. So it can be a challenge.

**Wong: Other sites have something called Marketing of Funding Strategy report. Do you have that?**

**Jeffrey Herr:** I wish we did.

**Wong: Well, I think for a \$4 million endowment that you have, you're doing very well.**

**Jeffrey Herr:** Yes, we are doing very well. It's fortunate to be a Frank Lloyd Wright building. There's name recognition there that a lot of sites don't have. We're fortunate to be in a major tourist city. We're easily accessible. We are on the way to Grauman's Chinese Theatre. We're central and it's easy to get to. We have some support groups that are doing some really good work. But we don't have personnel. Anytime you have something as handy as a marketing and strategy report, if you don't have personnel to implement it, you might as well not waste your money on it. You've got to be able to implement and if you're not going to be able to implement it, then don't bother. The only exception to that is the historic structure report. We don't have the money to implement the restoration of Residence A yet, but now that we have the historic structure report we can apply for grants. We have our "ducks" in a row, because anyone who does consider giving us money knows that we've done the pre-planning.

**Wong: If you had a Wish List, what would be the three major things you would ask for?**

**Jeffrey Herr:** Number 1 would be restoration of the forecourt and the auto court for Hollyhock House. I'm convinced that not only would this raise the quality of the restoration of Hollyhock House to an extremely high level, but it would also provide a very versatile space for events that would bring more of the community and more of Los Angeles here. The more people in Los Angeles that use Barnsdall Park and Hollyhock House, the better it is for our continued survival, especially in economic times like this when budgets are being slashed and funds are very tight. My point is that if the newspaper headline says, "Barnsdall Park To Close," anyone who just knows about it is going to say, "Oh, that's too bad." But anyone who's use to coming here and enjoys it is not only say, "Oh no, that's too bad." They're going to get on the phone and they're going to say something to their council person, and that's the only way we really can maintain our presence. So that would be the Number 1.

I would like to see the rest of the landscaping on the interior courtyards restored. We have some work to do there. That would be Number 2.

Number 3 is the rehabilitation of the garage and chauffeurs quarters.

Now, I am going to add Number 4 because you said Hollyhock House. I'm going to say that there's a huge Number 4 because (actually I'm going to do two — Number 5). This is the Aline Barnsdall Complex and we have Residence A which needs restoration. We also have the Schindler Terrace which needs restoration. So if you don't mind indulging me. That would be number 5.

**Wong: Thank you for correcting me. In fact, I should say Aline Barnsdall Complex.**

**Jeffrey Herr:** That's ok. You're in great company, so don't worry about it.

**Wong:** You mentioned about staff here, that you would like to see more staff. Could you comment on that? You mentioned your four wishes, but you did not mention staff.

**Jeffrey Herr:** That's a really good point. You're sharp. I probably should have said more staff, but the thing about the maintenance of any kind of building and now we are not just talking maintenance but interpretation too. We are also talking public access. There's less viability in maintaining and keeping these buildings in good condition if they're unavailable. But one person answering the telephone, responding to e-mails, requests for information, interviews, and media access is difficult to handle. I spend time just turning down wedding requests. Without adequate staff the ability to provide service is severely curtailed. Even the slightest increase of staff and our ability to provide service would exponentially increase.

**Wong:** You mentioned that you have a volunteers. Can they do something like this, perform some of these duties?

**Jeffrey Herr:** That's a complicated question, Dorothy. They do a lot of things, but for instance, I couldn't have a volunteer in Hollyhock House answering the telephone unless there is a staff person on site. That has to do with liability and responsibility and a whole list of risk management-type things. There has to be a staff person on site in order to have the House open at all.

**Wong:** You have to have professionals.

**Jeffrey Herr:** You have to have somebody on the City payroll, and that would be a professional in this case. Now we have volunteers who give tours and then we have our support groups but they're a little different in that their basic function is to support the projects of the park. Whereas our volunteer docent's primary purpose is giving tours.

**Wong:** Going back to the funding that you received. As you developed plans to restore a certain portion of the Aline Barnsdall Complex, I'd like to know about the monitoring and compliance issues to see that everything is done correctly. People who are in construction, their standards may not be acceptable in restoring a treasure like this.

**Jeffrey Herr:** I think I understand where you're going with that question, and you're right. There does need to be some sort of professional oversight to make sure that the Secretary of the Interior's standards are followed. In fact, one would hope not just followed, but a better attempt — in other words, attempt to not only just follow them but to implement a stricter standard. When we did the 1994 earthquake repairs there were preservation architects subcontracted to monitor work and to be consulted for solutions.

But for the CCHE grant (I wasn't on site for the 1994 work which was actually done in 2001 to 2004) I will perform part of that function. Some of that function will be done by the Office for Historic Preservation in Sacramento. They will have an oversight function for that and we haven't yet started work so I don't know if we will be subcontracting another preservation consultant, but we also utilize the Preservation Department for the City which is under the aegis of the Planning Department, and there's a preservation architect there whom we have consulted on a number of issues just in the pre-planning phase.

I have to also say that the people who are already on the team, for instance our structural engineer, Melvin Green who works for us at Watts Towers, is no stranger to preservation architecture. So we've got a sensitive team, and so when we bring our General Services people in they have someone watching over them so that they know that they can't cut corners.

The other thing about the team though, Virginia Kazor has trained a lot of our General Services guys very well. They come here to fix a broken lock and they know they can't just replace the old lock with a new one. And sometimes they tell me exactly what they can do and what they can't do. And they're right. It's very nice not to have to be the one to say, no you have to do it the hard way.

**Wong: what is the most important aspect of your program here?**

**Jeffrey Herr:** I'm going to just say that if you'd asked me this question five or six years, I would have said, "Oh it's to educate the visitor who comes here." And that certainly is our primary mission. But is it the most important aspect of the program? I think that's changed. At least I think it has changed for Hollyhock House and the Aline Barnsdall Complex.

I think the most important aspect of our program is to bring people to this park to utilize it so that it becomes an important part of their life or at least plays a significant role in their life. The reason for that is that for a publicly funded National Historic Landmark – if we don't have significant use, we're not going to matter to anyone if we're here or not. And I think it's so important that it really matters in some way. I mean, attendance at house museums all over the U.S. is dropping. What are you going to do about that? And we've seen house museums close. We've also seen them being turned into adaptive reuse projects that aren't necessarily sensitive to or compatible with preservation.

So how are you going to combat that? I think you have to find a way to make your site significant to other people and here's a very quick sort of plug for something that one of our support groups started just a couple months ago. We have a wonderful hilltop here and it's a fabulous place. It's a really nice place to have drink, and they implemented a Friday evening wine tasting. And they've done it solely by social networking. It started out with about 80 people. They need 25 to break even, and two weeks ago there were 500 people. For the most part these people had never been to Barnsdall Park or Hollyhock House. After two weeks requests for tours of the house were so insistent that

we developed a mini-tour for a very limited number of people. Again, the people who came in were thrilled and none of them had ever been to Hollyhock House.

So it made me feel like this was extremely important. Is it educational? No, I don't think its so educational. Yes, they're learning about certain types of wine and they're learning about the park and so on and so forth. It's not the way I would have defined education five or six years ago. But what's really important to me is that people are coming here because they're enjoying themselves. And if they're enjoying something they won't want it taken away from them. And we will exist on the goodwill of the hundreds and thousands of people that will come to the park via this particular event. We need more of these events.

**Wong: It's rather difficult in Los Angeles City because there are so many competing venues.**

**Jeffrey Herr:** You're right! There are competing venues. In fact, there's competition right on top of this hill for use of the site. And so you have to — I don't know what you have to do actually. But you do have to sort of find a niche.

**Wong: Well, I would say that you're in a better position than many of the National Historic Landmarks because you have a wide variety of activities. You have the wonderful museum, and then you also have a really very impressive art center for children, and you have the Hollyhock House, and you have a gorgeous view of the city.**

**Jeffrey Herr:** Got a great view. We have a great park. So we have all of these advantages, and what we need to do here is learn how to utilize them more effectively. So we're far ahead of other sites that maybe have to begin to even create these advantages so that they can then move on to the next step.

**Wong: Well, perhaps you need on your Wish List a developmental person, one who develops activities.**

**Jeffrey Herr:** We need that, but we also need the people to implement it. I find, for instance, that I work an extra long day most Fridays. I'm supposed to come in at noon and stay until 9:30 pm because there's no overtime, but that rarely happens, and although I'm not organizing the event, there are a number of things that I have to be on site to oversee simply because you can't expect volunteers to understand all the nuances. But somebody has to take responsibility and that is the function of staff.

**Wong: Now, my final question, Jeffrey, is about earthquake, this being a Frank Lloyd Wright building. There's always the thought that in an earthquake situation, a disaster situation. It's quite fragile compared to other sites or am I wrong?**

**Jeffrey Herr:** No, you're not wrong at all. This site is actually excessively fragile because it's constructed of hollow clay tile covered with stucco, and that is what

architects call a friable material. It just shatters. Our seismic strategy is not to prevent damage, but to prevent collapse. We will have damage with any major earthquake and, in fact, the 1994 Northridge earthquake caused considerable damage. It wasn't catastrophic but it caused significant damage. As a result, more seismic strengthening has been done and more will be done with CCHE money that is coming.

**Wong: But you have a disaster plan that's pretty well worked out?**

**Jeffrey Herr:** Oh, I wish I could say "yes" to that. I'm embarrassed to say, "no." We have an evacuation plan, we have certain things that we do, but again if I had someone I could assign this to, I would I want a model disaster plan. I want to know what number you call when you have a gas problem. I mean all of these things, if there's water leaking where's the turnoff valve? I know these things but when a disaster occurs the odds are high that I'm not going to be here.

**Wong: But you probably also know that in a case of disaster, National Historic Landmarks have first priority with Federal funding. So that means someone has to be responsible?**

**Jeffrey Herr:** Only that I'm the person, and I fortunately live within a couple of miles of here, so I could actually walk if I had to. But the type of plan that you're talking about is the type of plan that I would really like to have in place and it doesn't exist.

**Wong: Jeffrey, this is a wonderful conversation we've had. Do you have anything else you would like to add particularly for the Stein Communities or just novice at historic preservation?**

**Jeffrey Herr:** You know, I think in terms of, and this is an interesting differential here – our function, which is to be a house museum. That means that we don't have to deal with the more practical issues of historic preservation that people who are actually living in houses or domiciles do. But I think there is a common thread that should be running through everyone's dialogue about preservation, and it is this idea that we're all starting from the same point. We are stewards of something important, something that has historic value — something that has cultural value. So as a steward we're in the challenging position of preserving a resource. It's not a renewable resource. Once it's gone, it's gone. How best do we do that? This is a bigger challenge, I think, for the person who's living in a private residence that's a historic-cultural monument or a National Historic Landmark. It's probably exponentially significant when it comes to a group of people living in a small community because we're individuals and we see things with a just a slightly different point of view. We may all agree that it's historically and culturally important and that we're stewards and that it's a non-renewable resource. But even those terms are terms that we probably tend to individualize when we define them.

So my thought is that at least if everyone is willing to agree on a certain set of broad definitions, then the details that fall under them are better understood in discussion and implementation. One can refer to them and say, "Does this fit our definition of

preservation? Does this fit our definition of a good steward? Does this fit our definition of preserving a non-renewable resource?" And sometimes you can get a fairly clear-cut answer, and even the person who may not like that answer can perhaps find a way to accept it and to work with it.

**Wong: Thank you very much, Jeffrey, that was just excellent.**

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