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Fall 9-7-2013

# Remembering Paul Procopio - compendium

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Fábos, Julius Gy. and Dines, Nicholas T., "Remembering Paul Procopio - compendium" (2013). *Landscape Architecture & Regional Planning Studio and Student Research and Creative Activity*. 29.

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*Remembering*  
*Paul Procopio*

1919 - 2013

Professor Emeritus

University of Massachusetts Amherst, MA

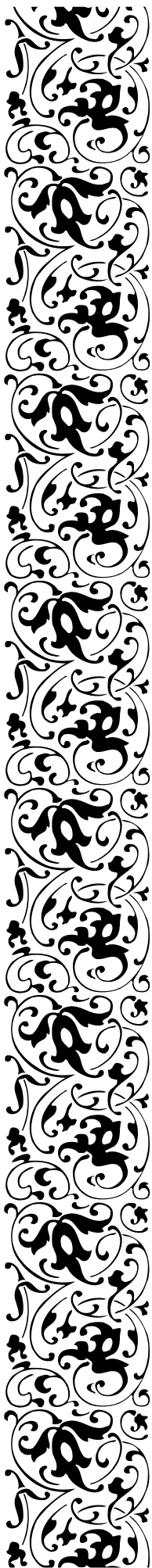


University of  
Massachusetts  
Amherst



This event was held:

On Saturday, September 7, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm at  
Procopio Room (105 Hills Center of UMass.)



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This tribute to Paul Procopio started after the visit of Nicholas Dines, Julius Fábos and Mark Lindhult after Paul's funeral ceremony with the aim of creating a more complete picture of Paul's important role in shaping the emerging Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning after the retirement of Ray Otto in 1965. The assembled reflections represent the comments of contemporaries, colleagues, former students, and current department faculty, as well as those from his daughters.

This compendium will be made available to the University of Massachusetts Library and will be added to Paul's papers, which will serve to inform our department community of Paul's significant role in altering the direction of the Department at a critical time during the early days of the Environmental movement which sought to combine design and science in a more rigorous academic inquiry to serve as an information and knowledge base for the design and planning professions.

This compendium will also be distributed to all contributors, who spoke on Saturday, September 7, 2013 and to other members of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning (LARP) including the retired Faculty of LARP.

Edited:

Julius Gy. Fábos Professor Emeritus

Nicholas Dines Professor Emeritus



**The Program on September 7, 2013 was as follows:**

- 10:00**      Arrival and Social
- 10:20**      Welcome by Elisabeth Hamin, Head of LARP
- 10:30**      Introduction by Nicholas Dines, Co-Organizer  
Reflection by Colleagues in order of chronology:  
Hal Mosher            Prof. Emeritus  
Julius Gy. Fábos      Prof. Emeritus  
Nicholas Dines        Prof. Emeritus  
John Mullin            Professor  
Mark Lindhult         Professor
- 11:25**      Short Break
- 11:30**      Reflection by Alumni/Alumnae  
James Fisk and Nancy Denig
- 11:50**      Conclusions by Julius Gy. Fábos, Co-Organizer
- 12:00**      Comments by Janet and Sara Procopio, Daughters
- 12:10**      Light Lunch and Conversations

LARP Staff: Terry Trudeau and Marny West



## **Comments by Elisabeth Hamin, Department Head, Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning**

Let me begin by welcoming you all back to Hills, and the department. I particularly want to thank Julius and Edith, as well as Nick Dines and Marny West, for organizing this lovely event. Some of you know that I worked in business before going back for my doctorate degree. Working in an office, it's basically just work. Certainly there are highs and lows, and one makes friends, but my experience was that these were fairly thin sorts of relationships and experiences, in large part because people moved on and were expected to move on - kind of like being roommates. Friendly, but that's all. As I said, at least that was my experience.

Academic life is very different, it seems to me. Rather than roommates, we enter into something like an arranged marriage. When a new faculty member comes, they really know very little about the department-and the department knows little about them. Both can only trust that the process of selection worked, that they will be lucky in the choice, and that they will work to make it a successful relationship. And then, 30 years later, there you are - often still together, having history with each other that spans our relative youth to our old age, having had so many chances for agreements and collaboration, fights and forgiving, realignments and changes in roles, all while accomplishing our main mission - educating our intellectual progeny, the students who will go out and create better, more beautiful cities and regions.

In the process of this, academic life brings a wide and deep range of emotions. I'll speak for myself, but I suspect these emotions are ones that Paul would have shared in his long and successful career. In this room and 301 upstairs, I've been part of great joy as students successfully defend the very personal, original thought and inquiry of their thesis or dissertation. Nothing is better than meeting a student's parents for the first time at graduation, and seeing their pride in the accomplishments of their child. Joyful also is the celebration of each other's success, when a faculty member becomes a Fellow of the ASLA, as Professor Procopio was, or gets promoted in rank. When students graduate, for the faculty it brings such feelings of success, relief, and accomplishment -- each and every year. But it is not all joy, of course; conflict is part of life, and particularly part of academic life, as I am sure Paul knew in his role as colleague and as Assistant Head. Not unrelatedly, pride is an emotion that we academics have a certain familiarity with, and rightful pride is what I am sure Paul felt at seeing his name on the door of the most important room



in our departmental life. And sorrow, of course, as we see today, as we mark the loss of one of our own.

This celebration shows that despite the passage of time since Paul was here, the arranged marriage of faculty from then was so strong, so successful, that many years later, his colleagues and former students care still deeply about him and remember him. Those of us joining the faculty now hear great tales of powerful conflicts and triumphs, intellectual leadership and professional accomplishments, among the faculty in Paul and Julius' day. These are stories of when there were giants. It is all of our good fortune to be here today to hear those stories again or for the first time, and I am very grateful to be here to share in this. I'd like to share a quote with you that has particular meaning for academics, I think, and hopefully will speak to your memory of Paul. It's from Kenneth Burke, the *Philosophy of Literary Form*. It's a bit long, so please bear with me:

“Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the arguments; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending on the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.”

Thank you all for coming. I'll now turn this back over to Nick.



## **The Early Years of Our Department - Hal Mosher, Professor Emeritus, Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning**

**September 3, 2013**

Paul Procopio was born 1919 in Brockton, Mass., attended schools and graduated from Brockton High School. He came to Mass. State College in the fall of 1937 and joined 270 other freshmen. Total enrollment was approximately 1,200 students. I can't put myself in Paul's shoes and mind, but I really don't know Paul's background before college. Judging from my own experience a year later, I'd like to tell you something of the education received here at Mass. State College.

I was born and raised in Sterling, Mass., a farm community midway between Worcester and Fitchburg in central Massachusetts. We lived in town, but I worked on various farms from the age of 10, so I learned a lot about growing plants. My father was a teamster, having grown up on a farm; he was experienced in the handling of teams of horses and mules. Most of his work was in the lumber business in the woods. This involved dragging or hauling logs to the portable mills and taking the sawn lumber from the mill and stacking it to dry. A year or two later (when the lumber had dried) he would haul the lumber to the closest railroad where it was carried by train to a railhead near a box shop to a not too distant town OJ: city. Box shops were fairly common in Massachusetts as most products and other goods were shipped in wooden boxes before the days of paper and cardboard. My father being blessed with a fair amount of what is known as Yankee Ingenuity started a trucking business to haul the lumber from the woods directly to the box shop, thus reducing the number of times the lumber was handled. So I became a truck driver at 18. My favorite truck was a 5-ton WHITE and carried up to 20-ton loads. It was governed at 32mph, which was enough speed over the roads of the day.

When I came to Amherst, I had never heard of Landscape Architecture. A cousin (actually my father's cousin) had attended the Stockbridge School and had established a Landscape Contracting business in Wellesley and I had thought that was what I wanted to study. Fortunately, the College was organized into Divisions. Landscape Architecture was a part of the Division of Horticulture. As freshmen we took courses with all students in the Division. In short we became Horticulturists - taking courses in General Horticulture, Plant Propagation, Soils, etc - a good base, along with Math, Chemistry, English Composition, History and Phys. Ed. We didn't get any course





in Landscape Architecture until the sophomore year, when we had Drawing, Sketching, Woody Plant Materials and Surveying within the Landscape Department. And we really concentrated on Design courses in the Junior & Senior Years.

The faculty of the department was composed of 5 full time members - all wonderful teachers.

Frank A. Waugh, a graduate of Kansas State with a BS in 1891 and an MS in 1903 was accepted to the faculty in 1903. He had retired in 1938 but continued to have an office in Wilder Hall and came through the studios giving informal advice and comments. He was still part of the Land. Arch. Dept.

Raymond H. Otto was a graduate of Mass. State College with a BS in 1926 and MLA from Harvard University in 1929 and was accepted to the faculty as Head of the Land. Arch. Dept. in 1938, after working in the Descrad Land. Arch. Studio in Simsbury, Ct. He taught most of the Landscape Architecture Design courses.

Lyle L. Blundell, a graduate of Iowa State College with a BS in 1924. He had worked with the Merrill Land. Arch. Office in Boston and was accepted to the faculty in 1931. He had worked in a large Nursery in Iowa and was the expert on Ornamental Plants. He taught plant identification, Planting Design and assisted in all Design courses giving desk crits and advice.

Arthur K. Harrison was born in 1872 and was accepted to the Faculty in 1911. He gave us his Life History at one time. He showed us a photo of his Alma Mater - a one-room country school. He left school in the third grade when his father died. He was the oldest son so it fell to him to run the family farm, He stayed on the farm until his brothers and sisters graduated from the little country school. After leaving the farm he had various jobs and eventually took a job on a survey party working in the upper peninsula of Michigan, where they were logging the Virgin Forest Timber. He started as water boy and "go for" and after 2 years he was "chief of party" - according to his statement. He was a "self-made man". He was (in my estimation) the best teacher in the Department. I feel that I actually learned more from him than any of the others.

James Robertson Jr. had a BArch degree from Carnegie Inst. of Technology in 1939 and was accepted to the faculty that same year. He was a true artist. He not only taught the Architecture Courses in the Dept. but he taught artistic presentation in all the design courses. He was a major part of the team-teaching that occurred throughout the Dept.



Eugene R. Martin, a graduate of the University of Illinois in 1939, was accepted to the faculty in 1939. He taught the Drawing and Sketching courses and again helped in other studios with presentations.

You will note that Ray Otto was the only one with an advanced degree but each of the faculty members brought different expertise and very practical parts of a whole education in Landscape Architecture.

A quick look at Paul's classmates is in order now. There were 10 students in his class, 9 men and 1 lady. Probably the lady, Betty Desmond, was the only class member who came with a real understanding of what Landscape Architecture was all about. Her father had a very successful Landscape Office in Simsbury, CT. She probably knew Ray Otto who had worked in her father's office. The other members of the class were George Feiker from Washington DC; he was a transfer from Michigan State. Clinton Goodman from Haverhill, and Richard Hayward from Taunton, Mass. Applied for the teaching position at the Univ. of Missouri that I was offered in 1950. Richard Leonard from Raynham. I knew him in the Outing Club or camps and later I found him as Landscape Designer at Cape Cod Nursery when I was doing Extension Work for the Dept. Howard McCallum from Northampton. Umberto Motroni from Boston along with Paul were the "Italian Mafia". Tracy Sleek came from North Amherst; he was very sick during his senior year and did not graduate with the class. He finished the next year and actually graduated with my class in 1942. Raymond Thayer came from Duluth, Minn.

Paul himself worked for Abington Nursery where he met his wife, Adeline. And after the war he worked for the US Army as a civilian designing camouflage. He worked for Clark & Clark & Rapuano, a Landscape Architecture Firm in New York City and joined the Department in 1947, replacing A.K. Harrison who had actually retired in 1945, but was kept on during the war. Paul originally taught Surveying and Landscape Construction and was always interested in curriculum. I recall I had many discussions regarding the place of the Stockbridge Program in the Department. He was always easy to talk with and always a congenial colleague. The Dept. has undergone many changes since then - most of them for the better.



## **Remembering Paul Procopio - Julius Gy. Fábos, Professor Emeritus, Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning**

*Working with Paul from 1964 and on.*

In looking back on our department's history, it is safe to say that the 20th century activities of our department and especially the program of landscape architecture were dominated by two views.

The first fifty years were dominated by the vision of Frank Waugh, the founder of our department, and the second half was dominated by the actions and views of Paul Procopio. Not only what Paul did, but also what Paul did not do.

I was hired by UMass. LA department in the spring of 1964. I had my interview with Ray Otto and Paul. During my interview it was clear to me that Paul was the key decision maker in hiring me. But even more important that Paul decided not to seek the position of the Head of our department in 1965, when Ray Otto stepped down. It was clear to me that in those days Paul could have been easily appointed to replace Ray Otto, but he did not choose to do so for one simple reason. Paul believed in 1964 that the department should find a young talented person who could lead the department towards the FUTURE. With his decision the search for a new head was opened up.

There were three finalists. Two of them had tired, old views, but one young man, Erv Zube, emerged as the one who was selected with great optimism and great excitement. Not surprisingly, I became a great supporter of this decision.

As Erv brought with him huge energy, it also helped Paul to re-invent himself. A couple of his actions may explain the renewed Paul during the early years of the Zube administration. First, Paul enrolled in a course offered by Harvard University to learn about a digital mapping program. Second, he joined the new leader in establishing a new firm, called RPD, it meant Resources. Planning and Design Associates. I was also one of the founding partners of RPD, and discovered Paul's total enthusiasm.

During 1966-1970, our firm was fortunate to get a contract to assess the visual qualities of the North Atlantic Region (NAR). We received plenty of money to travel and to photograph this huge regional landscape of around 18,000 square miles from the roads and from the air. Paul was so fascinated-like a young boy taken to a huge candy store. He was truly a changed landscape



architect and as a result he became a better teacher, for sure. During our NAR study, we discovered another talent of Paul's. It was his ability to do carpentry. As we moved into a larger office and as we hired several of our students to work for us, we needed drafting tables. Paul rose to the occasion and built several drafting tables and cabinets to hold office supplies for RPD.

My parents were visiting us from Hungary during that time. My father visited Paul's workshop in his basement. My father was equally skillful with carpentry. When he saw Paul's workshop he offered himself to help build our office furnishings. My father had a great time with assisting Paul. They understood each other perfectly through carpentry, as my father's English knowledge was nil.

Paul was also the first colleague whom I took to Hungary, to express my thanks to him for all his help he gave me for decades. Paul had a grand time in Budapest and at my parents' summerhouse in Keszthely. I perceived them as good friends, through carpentry.

During the late 1980's, our department recommended Paul to become a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects. Our recommendation resulted in his selection. It was truly a highlight of Paul's achievement.

Perhaps Paul's greatest talent as a teacher/advisor was his warm, friendly manners and his dedication to help every one of our students reach their best potentials. I believe strongly that these attributes of Paul made him the best, the most helpful advisor. He enjoyed advising, and he was very helpful for many of our students.

Paul suffered one setback in 1975, when at the age of 56 he suffered a heart attack. He took this scary incident as a new challenge. Paul changed his diet; his healthy diet made him thin and surely it was one of reasons that he had increased longevity.

Paul was also active during his retirement years. Luckily he spent several years at nearby Southbridge. Edith and I visited Paul during his retirement a couple, three times each year until his health declined and he moved to New Jersey to live with his daughter Sara. In Southbridge we always took Paul to a local restaurant for a lunch. We enjoyed those visits, sharing departmental stories with him. He always ordered a chicken sandwich and French fries.



*Paul became Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1983. Colleagues, his students and family sharing the celebration with him at his investment. Front Row: Joe Volpe, Bruce MacDougall, Paul with his wife Elva, Helen and Tom Murriak. Back row: Ervin Zube, Nick Dines, Julius Fábos and David Young.*



*Paul was visited by Julius and Edith during the summer of 2012 in Southbridge, MA. He spent several years there in a nice apartment.*





**Remembering Paul Procopio - Nicholas T. Dines, FASLA and, Professor Emeritus,  
Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning**

*September 7, 2013*

Paul was dedicated to the profession of Landscape Architecture and to the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at the University of Massachusetts. He demonstrated his dedication through advocacy for the public landscape based upon his early employment at Clark and Rapuano in New York City, his devotion to his students, his respect for colleagues, and his efforts to seek a new direction for the Department at a critical time in the history of both the Landscape Architecture profession and the Department during the mid-1960's.

Paul's significant contribution to the Department was his decision to recommend an outside search for a new Department Head at the retirement of Professor and Department Head, Ray Otto. This search resulted in the hiring of Erv Zube and a new era began at the newly reconstituted Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning.

Paul is remembered for his kindness to others, his ironic sense of humor, and his reflective nature. He exhibited a temper at times, but he was not intemperate. He was angered by the intemperance of others.

Paul was my office neighbor in Hills North and I noted how he kept his workspace so neat and organized and how many students would come to him for "private" tutorials on technical drawing or design exercises. He nurtured an environment of calmness, patience and warmth in his counseling and advising encounters with his students.

Paul showed courage at a midpoint in his career by embracing change and joining in efforts to re-conceptualize the study of Landscape Architecture as a profession and more importantly, as an intellectual discipline.

He lived a full life and this reflective moment provides an opportunity to reflect upon how his efforts contributed to the evolution of our academic mission at LARP, and the constellation of Design and Planning faculty and students who have passed through these portals in the ensuing years.



## **A Tribute to Paul Procopio - John Mullin**

It is indeed an honor to be here to pay tribute to the life of Paul Procopio. When I took pen to page to write my thoughts it was with a degree of sadness for he is no longer with us. But it was also with warmth, respect, appreciation and gratitude. Above all, it was with the thought that Paul Procopio was, in short, a good man. While there are many vignettes that I could comment on, I have selected six to present to you.

### *Paul Procopio as Humanist*

In the fall of 1966, I was a senior at UMass and taking all of Ted Bacon's planning classes and regularly saw Paul walking through Wilder always smiling and walking at a rapid clip. His warmth and energy were infectious! At that time I was appointed as the student member of the Campus Master Planning Committee (my first professional planning assignment). At the first meeting of about 20 faculty members both Ted and Paul were leading a discussion of future projects. I might as well have been among giants. For a while, I was ignored. I think Ted thought I should learn by observation. But then Paul came over to me, explained what was going on and, asked for my input. He made me part of the group and, to this scared student, made me welcome. To some it would be a small gesture. To me it made such a difference that I remember it to this day.

### *Paul Procopio as Mentor*

Not long after I came to LARP, there was a meeting to discuss the future of the department. Where would we put our resources? Choices focused on planning versus landscape architecture, graduate versus undergraduate programs, and research versus applied education. I proposed, with little knowledge behind me, to cut Stockbridge from the program. Little did I know of the intensity of feeling that existed in Paul's mind until, after the meeting, I visited the equivalent of the Procopio wood shed. In one endless hour I was properly informed of the importance of Stockbridge, the role of the land grant mission, the need to respect those who work with their hands, that proper discussion required preparation and that saying nothing can be a virtue. I have





never forgotten that conservation and, with the exception of "saying nothing", embraced all his positions: Procopio's counsel was truly wise.

### *Paul's Perceptions*

One day when Paul was acting department head, he was working out of Bruce McDougal's office and called me in for a short meeting. I was still a very junior assistant professor. As I walked in, in a jocular manner, I turned to Paul and cockily pronounced "Ah, my future office". Paul, with a twinkle as well as meaning in his eye, kindly and quietly stated "Maybe". I still hadn't learned the art of quiet contemplation!

### *Paul as Peace Maker*

We frequently had stormy, angry faculty meetings. Bruce was in charge but had to face a group of professors who were quite firm in their beliefs. Indeed, if there was an ego register, the majority would be the very top. Imagine trying to gain consensus with Gordon King, Bill Randall, Barry Greenbie, Julius Fábos, Andy Scheffey, Hugh Davis, Nick Dines, Meir Gross, as well as myself, in one room. Bruce enjoyed the chaos. Paul wanted peace. His kind, quiet wisdom cooled the passions, calmed the anger and brought us to consensus. His service was for the good of the order.

### *Paul and His Willingness to Help Me*

I often wondered why Paul was so helpful to me. As I prepared this tribute, I wondered what was the common link? I first thought of the following:

We shared the common experience of growing up in mill communities

We both grew up in immigrant enclaves

We both worked with the Corps of Engineers

We both went to UMass and were grateful for the opportunity

We both were committed to public service



Not a bad list! But then, it occurred to me, that none of this had anything to do with his willingness to help me. It was simply what Paul did for anyone in need. He had a basic goodness about him.

*Paul and the Greatest Generation*

Finally, as I wrote this my mind kept returning to Tom Brokaw's *The Greatest Generation*. When I came here, a good number of the faculty had served as soldiers in World War II, worked as civilians on military projects or became involved in reconstruction across the globe. They may have worked on camouflage protection (as Paul did), served in Europe, the Pacific, China, Burma or India. But in all cases, they endeavored with great purpose to build a better nation, and community. Paul, through his experiences with the Corps of Engineers, instruction on landscape design, voluntary work on the future of Amherst and the University, skills in guiding the evolution of the department and, above all, commitment to the land grant tradition exemplifies all that came out of that generation. It was my privilege to know him.

John R. Mullin, Ph.D .. FAICP  
Professor of Urban Planning  
Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning  
University of Massachusetts, Amherst  
September 7, 2013



## **Remembering Paul Procopio - James Fisk, MLA 83'**

Paul Procopio became my advisor in the fall of 1980. We met for about twenty minutes in his office across the hall from the main office to organize and chart out the next two years of my life. I asked for a TA, teacher's assistant position in plant materials, to cover tuition, and he told me it would be available next semester. Without any further effort on my part, it came through in Hal Mosher's plant materials lab. I didn't realize how choice the TA's were. Or how difficult it was for others to land one. During our first meeting Professor Procopio asked if I had any particular focus or interest and I related that I did, it was historic landscapes or period design. He put me in touch with John Martin, who would later chair my terminal project, "The Amherst Downtown Design Guide". It was a great introduction that dovetailed nicely with the Assistant Town Planner job that Professor Procopio was instrumental in moving along. I didn't realize how effective that meeting was until other classmates bemoaned that their program was being pushed and pulled in different directions, and causing relentless stress.

I didn't really see Professor Procopio much during the hectic grad school life. Occasionally I would see him in the halls or walking through the studios, he was always pleasant, open, and friendly. We would run into each other or I would pop my head into his office to say hello. He'd ask how the TA was going and I would say "OK", and he'd say, "Hal says it was going OK, too." And, that was it. Everything was OK.

I soon learned about another characteristic of his which was his wry Yankee wit. One time he came into a graphics studio, and stopped at my drafting table. He engaged me in some friendly talk then pointed to my notes and said, "Your lettering looks like a drunken sailor strolling down an Italian country lane." I was speechless. He slid over to the drafting table, took the T-square in hand, picked up a small triangle and drafting pencil and showed me how to strike the verticals in letters that have a vertical line. It was the only way to correct my lettering until I could become consistent after hours of practice.

The assistant planner job came up in Amherst, and I asked Paul if he would provide a reference, he acquiesced, I went to town hall, and applied. I hit it off with the planner who had already heard from Paul and asked how the LARP program was going and we talked about a project that he was interested in, Downtown Design Review, and would I be interested? I got the job, which concentrated on development review, where I had to apply core skills in reviewing



plans, reading application materials, understanding and applying the code, and meeting with engineers, owners, and developers. I appreciated the confidence Paul had in my ability to take that on. It cemented the understanding that I needed to pursue professional practice in landscape architecture if I ever wanted to be an effective land use planner. One of the first tasks I had was to file away all the applications for the position. There was a box full of applications and résumés from lawyers, PhD's, civil engineers, and architects. I didn't realize, then, how instrumental Paul had been in landing the position, because I did not know then about his involvement and contribution to the Planning Board and community for so many years and how respected he was by the Town.

The last time I was in the Procopio room was to defend my thesis, terminal project. The Friday before my scheduled Monday defense, Paul asked me if I was ready for my "talk". I took calling it a "talk" with some umbrage, and handed him my outline "The Bridge, by Martin Heidegger, and Design as the connection between the ideal desire, and the built world", then headed home to Easton, New Hampshire. There was an ice storm that fall Monday morning and I hit a tree in the driveway at five in the morning, breaking the bumper in two, piercing the radiator, ruining the hood, and altogether, putting a wrench in the cog. I crimped the severed tubes of the radiator, tied down the hood, stopped at roadside springs for water, and limped over to Haverill, NH where there was an early morning garage to weld my radiator enough to get me to Amherst. I showed up just minutes before my "talk" and pulled up at Paul's office, raced in to find him pacing about looking for me, saying it was almost time for my talk. I showed him the car from his office window, and he said, "I hope your talk goes better." Well, it didn't.

The "talk" turned out to be an incoherent mess of existential philosophy, methodology (at least, thank you John Martin), and presentation of many drawings from the "Guide". At the conclusion of the "talk" the faculty jury offered rather patronizing comments, such as, "so much work went into it", or "interesting". They all left for lunch and I started packing up, thinking that they just didn't get how brilliant the thesis is, much like Heidegger not being understood, that design is the connection between the ideal desire and the built world. Paul came in the room and asked if I were going back to New Hampshire with the car in the condition it was and I shrugged him off, of course, it's New Hampshire. Then, in his direct way he said while I was trying to compare the "Bridge" to the "Design Guide", and he said, "You didn't make the connection." I packed up and headed back north, with a sinking feeling during the three hour plus trip that I would



have to do more, write an explanation, or something to get approved. This was particularly troubling because I had quit my job to take a trip to Russia which involved a ridiculous amount of organization, coordination, and dealing with the particulars of Inturist and travelling in a communist country in 1983, and could not change that schedule to accommodate the jury.

When I returned to the USA, I picked up the mail, that included a packet from the UMASS Registrar's Office, and the Town of Amherst with a few copies of the "Guide" they had renamed the "Study". I opened the Registrar's packet to find my diploma, and inside was a small cream colored envelope having "James" on the outside, with an embossed card inside with "congratulations" P. Procopio. I noticed that the "P" was a big cursive "P", almost puffy, not at all a landscape architect's lettering "P". I began to think about the man that Paul was, began to realize how much he had done for me, and thought, in the UMASS diploma mill, about a card in the diploma. How did he do that?

Then, I realized that he had built a lifetime of accomplishments by his genuine good character, direct talk, and open mind. His commitment to the profession and its standards, building lasting relationships based on hard work and integrity were tangible and lasting. He was respected because of all that and more. I benefited much from that and enjoyed his wry Yankee wit.



**Paul Procopio's Celebration of Life – Jack Ahern, Vice Provost, International Programs and Professor, Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning**

I remember Paul Procopio as a wise, gentle and caring professor and advisor. At our first meeting, he allowed me to drop a “required” sociology course that was not of any interest to me. At other times he advised me towards some memorable elective courses with Professors McConnell, Richard Costley and Hugh Davis. I still remember these classes. Fondly. Paul seemed to understand each student's needs and preferences – and balanced these with the program requirements and important electives. As an undergraduate student I was quite naïve about department leadership, but certainly benefitted from the “tight ship” that he ran at LARP.

On my return as a Professor, I remember the honor and pride Paul expressed on the dedication of our presentation and gallery room in his name. God bless you Paul Procopio. You were a great and honorable man who helped countless students to discover the special field of landscape architecture.

Jack Ahern  
Environmental Design 1974



## **Old School – Dean Cardasis, FASLA**

When I arrived at UMass to study landscape architecture in 1977, I was not quite sure what I was getting myself into; soon I became totally confused. The profession was so broad it seemed almost incomprehensible. It was the last year of classes in historic Wilder Hall and the department was preparing to be uprooted into the much larger and more serviceable Hills House. Julius Fábos was on leave and new faculty had arrived, including his “twin brother from a different mother,” Joe Volpe. It was a time of upheaval, but I didn’t know it, having just arrived from New Jersey, innocent and eager to find if landscape architecture could be right for me. I recall the atmosphere was electric, if, at times, intimidating, as diverse faculty members’ ideas about landscape architecture and the teaching of it often clashed.

In those days Paul Procopio stood out. With an ever-present smile, Paul made difficult things, like grading, easier for us... and more. Somehow, drawing “pleasing curves” on our grading assignments communicated more than a way to align roads and walkways, it reassured us in a larger sense that, even when things appeared tumultuous, they could be resolved gracefully. Just in his presence Paul communicated that grace and ease. He was old school, even way back then, not only in the link to the traditions of the profession he represented as a senior faculty member---traditions I have come to cherish even more over the years--- but in his gentlemanly way, his unassuming manner, his commitment to teaching and his genuine concern for the welfare of his students, as people, as well as aspiring landscape architects.

Paul helped many of us make it through in more ways than one. Thinking about him today, I wonder if he knew how much just being himself taught us.

Dean Cardasis, FASLA, MLA 1981  
Professor and Graduate Program Director,  
Rutgers University



## **And Then There Were the Students - Janet Oberti (Procopio)**

My Dad enjoyed teaching and his students. He kept in contact with them for many years. In fact my mother used to send out many Christmas cards. I think at least 1/3 of those cards must have been going to my Dad's former students.

Occasionally we would go visit former students. On one of our family trips to an ASLA meeting, we stopped in Albuquerque NM to visit Ivan Fish. We also had former students stopping at our house at various times of the year. One student brought his rather large family in a renovated school bus to our house. I remember my sister and I having a great time with his children. My dad also hired students to do things around our yard. At Alpine Drive we had students paint the house, put in the stone wall and other manual labor jobs. He knew that students always needed money so if he needed help outside he would hire them.

When he had his heart attack, the hospital room was filled with students. Shortly after that on Halloween, many students came dressed up to visit him. Our living room was filled with college students.

The department was in many ways an extension of our family. As Paul's daughters we knew most of the faculty. We spent time in Wilder Hall sliding down the bannisters and looking out the windows. At Hills North we chained his paper clips together and did homework there when we were older. My parents would host dinner parties with colleagues. As a family we would go to the Fábos' for dinner, the Greenbie's to pick apples and to the King's house for Christmas trees. In closing, we truly appreciate this commemoration and the wonderful memories we have heard today. My Dad was certainly inspirational and was respected by his colleagues and students.





## **Celebration of Paul Procopio's life – Sarah Davis**

Thank you to Julius and Nick for organizing this Celebration of my father's life. Thank you to Elisabeth and the Department for hosting it. Thank you also to all the speakers. My father would have been greatly honored to know that so many of his colleagues and students took the time to remember him today. I am honored to be here and commemorate his life and work also.

I recall very well when the Procopio room was dedicated to my dad. He said that he felt the name of the room should be changed every few years to honor all the faculty. He had great respect for all his colleagues and wanted the honor of a dedicated room to be shared amongst everyone who contributed to the success of the department. That was the kind of person he was.



## **Remembering Paul Procopio – Mark Lindhult, Professor, Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning**

Unlike my other colleagues, I didn't work with Paul at UMass.

The first time I met Paul was in 1982, a year before he retired, while at a CELA conference in Blacksburg, VA. Paul and Julius Fábos joined me for lunch and told me that there would be a position opening up at UMass in the coming year and worked hard to convince me to apply for the position. At the time, they didn't say that it was Paul's position that was opening up. As Julius mentioned, I am the one who was hired, not to replace, but to fill the position Paul left vacant when he retired and I've been here ever since – over 30 years.

After being offered the position, my wife Polly and I came to Amherst and Paul very graciously took us for a tour of Amherst and the surrounding communities explaining the pros and cons of living in various neighborhoods. Polly's characterization was that it was like driving around with your grandfather. Paul was very intent on giving a full tour, but we mentioned that we needed to get back to our car to catch our plane. He said "I know a shortcut" and we drove through what is now Amherst Woods, then a large undeveloped parcel memorialized in Barry Greenbie's play. There was just one beat up dirt road Paul's car kept bottoming out and we almost got stuck in a big puddle – we believe that there is still part of Paul's muffler still out in Amherst Woods – but Paul got us back to our destination.

This summer my family and I toured Greece with a former graduate student, Alex Kantartsis, who is now a professor there and had Paul as a Professor while an undergraduate. He remembered Paul with great fondness as someone who was immensely dedicated to his students and truly cared about the progress that they made in class. He still had several drawings that he did for Paul's graphics class that he proudly pulled out for me to look at. I have pictures. It says something about the impact Paul had on him that he saved these drawings for 33 years.

Paul told me about how he helped site the Morrill Science Center. He found the key view point from Stockbridge Road – which looked out over the pond and toward the library and went out with the architect, drove a stake in the ground and said that this is where the corner of the building should be to preserve the view. That gap between the several Morrill buildings is still there.



I had the opportunity to visit with Paul and Elva several times over the following decades and enjoyed their company immensely. Paul had such a wry sense of humor and delivered each line in his characteristically wispy and gravelly voice.

There's a reason that this room is named for Paul. It reflects his openness and willingness to share with others, which is what we do in this room – share design ideas with the rest of the department. His presence is still felt here and he is greatly missed.