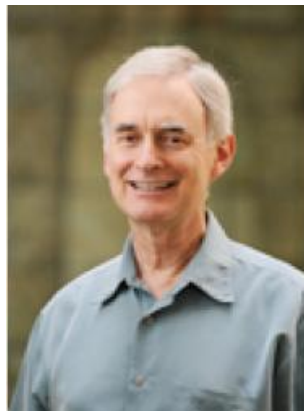


Peter Flachsbart, AICP, reflects on 30 years of service as Chapter Professional Development Officer



In 1983, Tom Dinell, FAICP, asked me if I would be willing to replace Jackie Parnell, FAICP, as Professional Development Officer of the APA Hawai'i Chapter. It seemed like a natural thing for me to do, given that one of my jobs would be to help planners prepare for the written AICP examination.

In this article I want to thank publicly everyone who took the time to support my nomination for the APA Chapter President's Council 2013 Leadership Award. I received the award in a special ceremony at APA's National Planning Conference in Chicago on April 16th. Our Chapter President, Paul Luersen, coordinated the nomination process; Leo Asuncion, Dolores Foley, Ralph Portmore, Kathy Sokugawa, and Kimi Yuen all wrote very supportive letters on my behalf. To my amazement they did all of this work shortly before Christmas. I also want to acknowledge my many colleagues on the UH Manoa campus and those off campus who extended congratulations to me when Paul Luersen announced that I had received the award in late February. Lastly, I want to thank 20 people who shared dinner with me at Filini's Italian Restaurant in Chicago, and wished me a "Happy Birthday" on April 15th.

I was particularly gratified to receive the Leadership Award in Chicago. Following graduation in civil engineering from Washington University in 1966, I went to Northwestern University to pursue a master's degree. Northwestern's main campus is on the shores of Lake Michigan in

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Evanston, one of Chicago's oldest suburbs and the home of Daniel Burnham. As you may know, Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett co-authored the famous 1909 Plan of Chicago. To support my graduate study, Northwestern offered me a scholarship from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to study structural engineering.

During the summer of 1966, I became very interested in cities after visiting friends in Chicago and reading a book titled, *The Exploding Metropolis*, edited by William H. Whyte, Jr. Fortunately, I was able to shift my program of graduate study from structural engineering to urban systems planning, which were both housed in the Department of Civil Engineering at Northwestern. This program shift required that I relinquish the NASA scholarship and accept a traineeship from the U.S. Public Health Service. It also required that I take four environmental courses (ecology, water resources, public health engineering, and community air pollution) and write a master's thesis related to public health. Ostensibly, my thesis explored the relationship between mental health and urban design; but in retrospect, I think it also identified a few design principles for livable cities.

I then entered the doctoral program in urban planning at Northwestern. The subject of my master's thesis motivated me to take a graduate course in abnormal psychology outside my department. My term paper in this course was subsequently published in the November 1969 issue of the *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*. The article titled, "Urban Territorial Behavior," explained how people cope with the stress of living in high-density in a big city. As my case study, I focused on Marina City, a set of two high-rise towers (in the shape of corncobs) on the Chicago River. I saw these two towers again a couple weeks ago, because they were within walking distance of the APA conference site at the Hyatt Hotel.

Northwestern offered me another scholarship, funded by the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), to support my doctoral studies in urban planning. Congress had enacted NDEA to educate the next generation of college professors, given that a generation of Baby Boomers began to enter college in large numbers starting in the mid-1960s. George Peterson was my principal adviser for my dissertation research. Professor Peterson often took me on fishing trips in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, a set of beautiful lakes on the border between Minnesota and Canada. It was there that the two of us encountered a brown bear while camping in the wilderness. The bear entered our campsite one evening and took my backpack, which had some candy bars in it. Six months later Professor Peterson went back to that same campsite without me and encountered another bear, which ran off with his backpack. Professor Peterson never found his backpack, but he did find my backpack. By then, of course, the bear had eaten my candy bars.

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Following graduation with my Ph.D. in 1971, I did one year of post-graduate research on residential environments in Los Angeles at the University of Southern California. At USC, I recall giving a lecture on urban systems planning to a class of unemployed aerospace engineers during the summer of 1972. The aerospace industry no longer needed these engineers, who had succeeded in putting Neil Armstrong on the Moon in July 1969. That brief teaching experience convinced me that I had made the right decision to decline the NASA scholarship at Northwestern six years earlier.

Later I taught a variety of courses in city planning in the Department of Public Administration at California State University- Dominguez Hills and in the Department of Civil Engineering at Stanford University. As most of you know, I still teach in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning on the Manoa campus of the University of Hawai'i. At UH, I still teach graduate-level courses in land use and transportation planning and in planning methods and models. Until 2005, I also taught courses in environmental policy and planning. I think it is this breadth of teaching experience during the past 40 years that has enabled me to help many of you prepare for an exam that is "a mile wide and an inch deep," as the late Mark Willey use to say.