

La Guardia believe that it would be unwise to hire him—he wasn't going to be hired." La Guardia was asked: "With the shortage of good engineers, what's wrong with this guy?" The reply was: "I can't have him around as long as Bob is here."

There was a lot of Moses money. Bob got most but "their mother had intended that Paul get an annual income from the Trust Fund of several thousand dollars a year. But he wasn't getting a cent" since the finances were handled by the trustee, R. Moses.

In 1962, Paul Moses, at the age of 75, climbing the long flights of stairs to the top floor loft where he and his wife lived, collapsed. As Paul was rushed to the hospital and believed dying, Robert was called. He brought two gifts to the brother he had not seen for twenty years: "A recording of the opening ceremonies of the Robert Moses Power Dam on the St. Lawrence, and a copy of his memoirs."

Paul Moses did not die. When he left the hospital, he had \$200 in the world and a great fear that his wife would be left penniless. He wrote (one may imagine his feelings), asking Robert for a job. His brother got him one as "little more than an errand boy, at \$96.16 a week."

This was the man who got things done.

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Mary Perot Nichols

"Moses wanted to slum-clear places like SoHo, Little Italy, and Chinatown. These are now thriving while Midtown—with its highrises and windswept canyons — are dehumanized, crime-ridden, and dull. Ours is not a very grand vision, but a human one."

I was another New Yorker who received from Robert Moses "a crash course in the Dynamics of Power: what got built, and how, and for whose benefit, and what happened to the people who happened to be in the way." I was a mother sitting in Washington Square Park with my children when I first learned that Robert Moses was planning to run a four-lane highway through it.

My subsequent career at the *Village Voice* and my values as applied to urban planning have everything to do with Mr. Moses. My job at the *Voice* started because I was a member of an activist citizens' group fighting the Moses' highway through Washington Square. My daily visits to the *Voice* to tell the editor Dan Wolf what was happening finally resulted in his saying, "I can't stand listening to you any more. Why don't you write it."

Most of us who fought Moses on the Washington Square roadway had had some interest in city planning. We were part of an organization called the Greenwich Village Study, and we believed that in one form or another change was coming to our neighborhood and we'd better get ready for it with some ideas of our own on how to build while keeping the place human.

But when Mr. Moses arrogantly announced his plans for the Washington Square road, the fat was in the fire. We abandoned the drawing board forever, as it happened. There was never again a time for future planning because we were involved in one rearguard action after another. The fight to survive in the city was all we could handle.

Unlike those who were in the path of the Cross Bronx Expressway where Marshall Berman lived, we were not powerless. Many people in the press lived or had lived in Greenwich Village and we had access to them. We were middle-class, educated, and some of us, like Jane Jacobs, knew architects and city planners like Victor Gruen, Lewis Mumford, Charles Abrams, and Douglas Haskell, editor of the *Architectural Forum*.

History was on our side as well. Moses was already weakened by slum clearance scandals, not only in Greenwich Village but far worse ones, like Manhattantown in the Upper West Side as Bob Caro points out in his book. For years after the Moses take-

over nothing was built, while the poor tenants were systematically milked by Tammany-connected real estate operators. The whole mess was ably documented in 1954 by one of the city's leading do-good groups, The Women's City Club, so that the more enlightened elements of New York City's establishment were getting ready to turn against Moses.

Until I read Caro's book, I hadn't realized that even Moses had received a damaging blow to his image as a parks do-gooder before Washington Square by cutting down trees in the middle of the night to build a parking lot in Central Park. Caro calls it Robert Moses' "Black Tuesday." It was April 24, 1956. The television images of mothers weeping as they looked at tree stumps, says Caro, wiped out "The Moses Boom" which "had lasted for thirty years."

To us in Greenwich Village, however, one year later, Moses still seemed immensely powerful. It took four years to rout him and, with the experience we gained from that fight, we went on to demolish another Moses dream, The Lower Manhattan Expressway.

The political climate was ripe to win the Washington Square battle. A group of disgruntled politicians, called the Village Independent Democrats, had been unhappy because Carmine DeSapio, whose power base was in Greenwich Village, had not helped Adlai Stevenson to win the Presidency. And they were the pistol we held to DeSapio's head, which forced him to lean on city officials so that Washington Square Park would be closed to automobile traffic permanently.

[THINKING HUMAN]

I give this history to show what my experience has been. Marshall Berman identifies with the New Left, a much younger generation. While we stay-at-homes, because we were older and had children and jobs, were fighting the final fight on the Lower Manhattan Expressway (which lasted through four years of John Lindsay's administration), the younger New Left was, quite understandably, in Mississippi or marching against the Vietnam War. As far as I can recall, there was no New Left interest or participation

in the fight against Robert Moses and his bad works.

But Marshall Berman got a bit carried away describing the swashbuckling Moses striding along the Long Island coast planning Jones Beach in his head. Yes, it was heroic and Jones Beach stands as a monument to the best in Moses. But Berman neglects to mention the ugly side of Jones Beach—that Moses deliberately designed the bridges too low for buses which made it difficult for blacks and other poor people to get there. Jones Beach was built for the white middle class.

Berman talks about “Thinking Big” and “the romance of construction,” how as a bourgeois manifestation, it was admired by Karl Marx. But who cares if Marx admired bourgeois construction? Thinking Small is just a pejorative used by a romantic. Thinking Human would be a better expression. There are places that Moses wanted to slum-clear that are now unslumming themselves. Take the South House Street artists loft section, known as SoHo. Or Little Italy or Chinatown. All these places are thriving while the East Side of Manhattan and Midtown, with their highrise buildings and wind-swept canyons, are dehumanized, crime-ridden, and just plain dull.

Instead of using Moses as a model, why not take a look at what is being done to preserve and enhance the human scale in Canadian cities? There is plenty of construction going on in Toronto, for example. But instead of mucking up the whole town with high-rises, entire blocks of two-family houses are being preserved. And the same density which highrises provide is being created by building low rise houses within the core of the blocks. (The need for population density downtown, to generate tax revenue and to support services like schools and subways is recognized but dealt with in ways that do not tear apart the fabric of the neighborhood.)

Berman seems to be preparing us for the public pressure for public works which is already occurring (10,000 New York construction workers demonstrated near City Hall recently and threatened to “tear this goddamn city down” if they didn’t get work—such as on a new West Side Highway). But is a “massive” public works program the answer? To me

“massive” anything is a totalitarian concept. I’ll take Jane Jacobs’ *Death and Life of Great American Cities* to Karl Marx anyday. The construction workers would not only “tear this goddamn city down” if they don’t get work, but they would even pave it over completely if they could.

Why not think about just what it is we need to save our cities and ourselves, instead of thinking about grandeur. There are lots of buildings that demand rehabilitation. Funded by a special federal works program, the construction workers could tear up the Long Island Expressway which they themselves built and then lay railroad tracks on it. Unions of painters could create huge public murals in a new program modelled after the old W.P.A. Arts Program.

Construction workers could even help erect gigantic outdoor sculptures and fix up our schools. No, this isn’t a very grand vision—just a human one.

[PEOPLE ARE JUDGMENT]

Berman is right that buildings are judgment. What is physically left standing is what historians note. During the Lindsay administration I worked in Moses’ old agency, the Parks Department, and I sadly watched Thomas P. F. Hoving turn from a Moses critic into another Moses. Yet the things we did then, which seemed to change the hearts of the people, were not construction projects. They were simple things like happenings in the parks in which thousands of people came together and participated. We closed Central and Prospect Parks to cars in favor of bicycles and it didn’t cost a cent. Nor did we create any monuments to ourselves or give one worker another job. Yet for many it made the city livable.

I no longer look back on the New Deal with nostalgia and see now that it was the beginning of the Imperial Presidency. The best bulwark we have against fascism in this country is in small, difficult-to-penetrate units—small businesses and low-rise neighborhoods where people know each other, where they experience family and close friends.

I look to Canada as a model because it never gave up its provinciality, and even managed to accommodate

British Columbia, a socialist province, capitalist provinces, as well as provinces with a mixed economy. And Canada lacks the immense federal power our government has. Jane Jacobs, when she recently became a naturalized Canadian citizen, was asked what she liked most about Canada. Her answer was that fortunately Canada had no melting pot theory—that ethnic diversity and ethnic enclaves are still encouraged.

I do not “see our society disintegrating into a multitude of guarded and embattled camps—ethnic, class, regional, religious, racial, sexual,” as Berman does. I see it trying to protect itself from Big Brother. There is a totalitarian spirit in all of us when we become frustrated by not seeing our own views imposed on the world around us. It should be kept in check. I opt for creative anarchy.

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John H. Schaar

“Robert Moses did not create the social forces he served; he did not invent the automobile. At most, he exposed our national traits in gigantic characters of stone and steel, thereby revealing us to ourselves. If we can learn to see, that will be his greatest public work.”

I think the greatest weakness of Caro’s book and Berman’s review is that neither sheds much light on the question of the precise relationship between Moses and the masses. Caro entitles his book *The Power Broker*. The title sufficiently indicates his understanding of Moses’ power. He subtitles his book *Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*. That formula contains Caro’s understanding of the