different slopes look like. "Everyone should have their own little acre, to be able to visualize what an acre looks like—a slope that you've seen somewhere. Because it is not always easy to visualize from a plan without drawing a section," he says.

To that end, preferring to conduct the first lesson in the field, Adleman—armed with a 10-foot piece of string tied to two dowels, a string level, two basic yardsticks, and a handful of chalk—takes his class outdoors. "It was incredibly helpful for him to take the entire class outside to illustrate what various slopes and percents look like," says Jessica Smith, a landscape designer with Peter Lindsay Schaudt Landscape Architecture in Chicago and a 2003 workshop participant. "Drawing slopes on a piece of paper can be so deceiving."

From the moment he steps out the door, Adleman is drawing contours and asking questions. He looks around at the class expectantly: searching out the students who seem lost or confused and bringing them up to speed, challenging those who already understand with questions of application, and focusing any wandering minds on the usefulness of each point in the process. "Grading is a mathematical process, and Marvin gave us that process step by step," says Valorie Hennigan, ASLA, a 2003 workshop participant. "After the first class, grading was no longer a mysterious intuitive process you either get or you don't."

"Every 'seasoned' landscape architect that I asked for help with grading could not explain the principles of grading," says Hennigan. "They would say, 'Just wing it in or sketch it in; it doesn't have to be exact.' But those of us struggling to pass this portion of the LARE know that winging it and sketching are sure ways to fail." Adleman stresses again and again that grading is a mathematical process. If you follow the process step by step, you won't go wrong.

Fortunately for Adleman, traffic is slow in Ithaca in the summer. He fixes an oncoming driver with one of his piercing stares as he stoops to put the finishing touches on chalked crown contours that straddle the street, pop up along the curb, and emerge on the sidewalk, farther down. With a piece of string, held level by student volunteers, Adleman asks for anyone's best guess as to the slope of the street. To those of us unused to the terrain of upstate New York, with its steep, rolling landscape, everything in Ithaca feels like 90 degrees uphill. We consistently overshoot when guessing the amount of gradient.

In the classroom, Adleman's energy is unflagging. Starting with the critical spot grades, he carefully figures the contours to move water safely across a multitude of sites. The first afternoon is spent tackling problems involving a simple slab, which is first parallel to the slope and then set at a 45 degree angle. Adleman presents the multiple ways to "fold" a surface, each time following the same steps and simple methodology: Find the critical spot grades, extrapolate the remaining contours from those spot grades with slopes that fall within the given limits, and fill in the new contour lines.

"It took me a long time to understand Marv's credo, 'Don't sketch in your contours,'" says Tim Kennedy, ASLA, a former graduate student of Adleman's, a professor at North Dakota State University, and a 2003 workshop participant. "When I realized that it was more about finding the spot elevations, the contours were just a matter of connecting the dots."

Not that the workshop is smooth sailing for all attendees. "By day three, I felt overwhelmed, discouraged, out of my depth, and ready to book out," says Janet Thomas, a 2003 workshop participant, who is exploring a second career in landscape architecture. "I spoke with Marv, who reminded me [that] everybody in the class is at a different level, and mostly, one begins wherever one is and goes on from there."

"The most wonderful thing about Marv Adleman is his ability to see you for what you are and to allow you to find yourself in your own level of expression," says James Doenges, a former student of Adleman's (class of 1977) and a 2003 workshop participant.

"I felt I had exhausted every other avenue for studying," says Smith, who had attempted the grading section of the LARE several times without success. "I had studied the CLARB material individually, participated in CLARB's redline review of practice vignettes, attended a state chapter review session, and studied with others who were preparing for the exam," she says. "I needed a class taught by someone with a good deal of experience to show me exactly what I was doing wrong."

Adleman's workshop, designed to help people pass the grading portion of the LARE, encapsulates a semester's worth of grading into a 10-day, total-immersion seminar, building from the simple concepts of slopes and ratios to the more difficult ideas behind how contours interact with steps, ramps, and retaining walls.

There is no shortage of problems. Adleman's been filing them away for years, for use in his classes and workshops. For eight hours a day, on one problem after another, his workshop students fight to beat the clock and strive for acceptable solutions. Adleman makes his way from desk to desk, hour after hour, sometimes late into the evening, patiently answering, guiding, and once in a while chiding, his hands full of a seemingly never-ending supply of problems that rarely prove easy.

Usually a one-on-one session with Adleman consists of his taking over a student's chair, spreading out a new sheet of trace, and methodically explaining where the solution has gone wrong—a benefit of this type of hands-on, focused study. Adleman's is one of the only workshops of this depth, geared toward working professionals who aren't able to drop everything and go back to school for a semester but who need that level of instruction.

With more than 35 years of experience as a practicing landscape architect and more than 25 years of teaching experience, Adleman fits that bill. A graduate of the Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD), Adleman went on to teach at the GSD and spent time as an associate at Sasaki Associates, in Watertown, Massachusetts. He then cofounded the Philadelphia-based firm of Adleman, Collins, and Dutot before opening a consulting practice in Ithaca and beginning his current career as professor of site engineering and design at Cornell University.

A straight man in terms of delivery, Adleman still manages to