

TALIESIN FELLOWS

®

NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 1, OCTOBER 5, 2000

Taliesin Fellows Present the Newsletter

With this, our inaugural issue, Taliesin Fellows begin a long-awaited publishing venture, the **Taliesin Fellows Newsletter**. Initial circulation will be subscribers of the **Journal of the Taliesin Fellows** as well as former apprentices. More than eight hundred copies will be distributed.

Bill Patrick, current president of Northern California Taliesin Fellows, will serve as editor for the project, which will be published quarterly by The Midglen Studio in Woodside, CA. Its endeavor is to serve the mission of the Fellows in furthering the philosophy and principles of Frank Lloyd Wright and present news of Fellows' activities as well as independent views on architecture with emphasis on the ongoing work of former Taliesin apprentices as well as views by the faculty and students at the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture.

Approved by the board of directors of the Taliesin Fellows at their June meeting in Los Angeles, the **Newsletter** will be an independent voice for organic architecture, and the views of the editor and writers will be those of the authors, not necessarily endorsed by the Fellows Board of Directors or the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation.

Taliesin Fellows Brad Storrer of Alta Loma, CA, Milton Stricker of Seattle and Frank Laraway of Silverhill, AL will serve as staff contributors for the Newsletter. Editor Patrick with Earl Nisbet of Aptos, CA and Richard Keding of Santa Rosa, CA, will represent the Northern California Taliesin Fellows. A student representative of the FLLW School of Architecture is yet to be named.



Tour of the Hanna House

Norcal Fellows visit to the Hanna House at Stanford is set for Sunday, November 5, 2000 at 11:00 a.m.

This tour will accommodate up to 28 participants and will be booked on a first-come basis until October 10. Call Midglen to reserve space at 650.369.0416

Cost will be \$10 per person plus a \$2 parking fee per car. Parking space is limited. Payments will be collected at the tour site. Carpooling is advised. An additional tour may be scheduled for Spring of 2001 if members desire.

Bookings require about six months notice.

See Hanna Story Page 9.

Submittal of materials for publication and contributions are sought not only from former apprentices but from members of allied organizations in the cause of organic architecture, from Kebyar Associates--followers of Bruce Goff; the Frank Lloyd Wright Conservancy--an association of owners and friends of buildings created by Frank Lloyd Wright; and Wrightians--an organization dedicated to the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. Commentary from the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation is also invited.

The Latest

Conservancy Meets in Minneapolis/St. Paul

The Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy held its Annual Conference in Minneapolis/St. Paul September 20-24, with over 240 in attendance. The theme for this year's meeting was "Broadacre City and Beyond: Frank Lloyd Wright's Vision for Usonia."

Afternoons were devoted to tours, which this year included buildings by Sullivan, Wright, Purcell and Elmslie, John Howe, and Tom Olsen, followed by receptions and dinners in the evenings.

The full schedule filled mornings with lectures on the conference theme and seminars on problems Wright homeowners face. The closing session on Saturday featured a panel discussion by Taliesin Fellows.

The tours, which were the highlight of the conference, will be covered more fully in our next issue. We will also report on the lectures and other events.

Tight scheduling made it difficult to attend all events to include the evening meetings according to our reporter.

The next annual conference will be held at Florida Southern College in Lakeland, Florida, November 1-4, 2001.



FURTHERING THE PRINCIPLES OF FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

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editor's corner . . .



Bill Patrick

The outline for our new publishing venture for the Taliesin Fellows appears on the cover page of this, our first issue.

We intend to present the activities and work of Taliesin Fellows and fellow travelers in future issues. Our editorial staff welcomes submittals from every corner, and if there be controversy, let it appear here. We are engaged in a quest to further the principles of Frank Lloyd Wright and provide clearer guidance to the 21st century milieu of "styles and fashions" in architecture.

Future articles will aim not only to report on the work and activities of the former apprentices at Taliesin but to stimulate leadership in the field of organic design.

Another approach, with an intriguing view of Frank Lloyd Wright's role in cyberspace and the emergence of a "style", begins on page 8 with an inquiry by Richard Keding.

We shall look for commentary and response from our readers.

Photo credits:

Page 1 WASTorrer: MindAlive from FLLW Companion
Page 3 Reza Javandel
Page 6-7 Eric Wright
Page 9 WA Storrer
Page 10-11 Milton Stricker

NorCal Fellows Celebrate FLLW Birthday

The annual meeting of Northern California Taliesin Fellows celebrating the birth of Frank Lloyd Wright was highlighted with a visit to the Frank residence in Hillsborough, Ca. on June 17th. This house was formerly owned by the Bazett family for whom Wright designed one of the early Usonian houses using a hexagon module in the 1940s.

Betty Frank, the present owner, entertained a group of more than twenty NorCal members and guests with an afternoon of stories about the early days of ownership, shared with her husband Louis, an importer. Though small — the kitchen design at the central core of the house was such that nearly everything could be reached within a step or two —



the house has a spacious living room and served as they raised a family of three children until teen-age when Wright designed an addition connected through the carport to the main entrance. Originally the two bedrooms each had screened sleeping porches, and later, enclosed, provided quarters for the growing family.

Mrs. Frank recalled one morning shock when they were awakened by the noise of someone walking about in the garden. Looking out they spied Mr. Wright making one of his famed unannounced visits



to a site. "Lou said OmyGod! It's Mr. Wright!" She never saw her husband get into his pants so fast in his whole life she said. Mrs. Frank was later presented with the plate and mug set based on a design for the 1950 David Wright house in Phoenix with compliments of the NorCal Fellows.

Following the tour of the Frank house, members and guests came together at a celebration party at Midglen/Westglen and enjoyed a sumptuous feast of fresh smoked salmon and barbecued flank steak with fixings and potables. Stories of Taliesin experiences were exchanged and the birthday celebration outdoors around the pool was complete.

Letters: *Nice Words*

Thank you so much for a wonderful day June 17. What an appropriate tribute to Frank Lloyd Wright that Betty Frank has tended her Bazett home and garden so beautifully, and that she was so warm and welcoming to the appreciative visit by the Northern California Taliesin Fellows.

Also I want to thank each of you and all those who helped in any way to the beauty and deliciousness of the dinner at your Midglen/Westglen. Everything from the fresh fruit to the perfectly cooked salmon and (med rare for me) flank steak, the crisp green beans, the great salad, the saffron rice, the hors d'oeuvres; the desserts were scrumptious and each an art piece.

Thank you for your humor, intellect, warmth, generosity, and friendship.

--Lois Lucking Barnes

A TALIESIN REFLECTION

Number three in a series by Earl Nisbet

In the summer of 1951 Mr. Wright decided the fellowship should have a picnic following the long hours we'd spent thrashing the sorghum crop by hand. If you have never done any sorghum thrashing, you haven't lived.

When the sorghum has grown to its fullest and the long leaves start to dry, you walk through the field with two sticks and flail away, knocking all the leaves to the ground until the field looks like a sea of poles. All the while you sweat and short fibers from the tall plants rain down as if blown by a fiberglass insulation machine. Wearing gloves, hat, long-sleeved shirts and at least a bandanna around the neck in an hour or so you start itching in places you thought were properly covered. You shower as often, but after two or three showers a day, you still itch. The crop has to be harvested in just a few days as huge trucks are scheduled to make a pickup at a given time. We worked about ten hours a day for three or four days to complete the harvest on time.

Mr. Wright had done sorghum thrashing for his uncle in his youth and he knew we would appreciate a picnic after it was over. Food was prepared and packed along with the rest of the items needed and we were lining up for our outing at one of Mr. Wright's favorite picnic spots, Brenmar Hill, which was just a few miles down the



road from Taliesin. Gene Masselink had Mr. and Mrs. Wright settled in the family's Riley, which was to be the lead car. The stake-bed truck with the food and several apprentices was next, and I quickly got behind the truck with my MG as I didn't want to be last and collect a lot of dust and dirt from the four other cars that would make up the convoy.

Gene started off and the rest of us fell into position behind him driving along the two lane highway single file. Bill and Barbara Morrison were squeezed in my little convertible. Up ahead, several apprentices were standing up in the back of the truck, including Sheng Pao. All of a sudden Sheng Pao's hat flew across the road into the oncoming lane. I had been looking in my rearview mirror often enough to know that no one was trying to pass us and I pulled out a bit to make sure that no one was coming towards us. The road was clear so I swerved out and was able to reach down and grab Sheng Pao's hat without a bit of slow-down. Everyone on the truck applauded my one-arm recovery; Bill and Barbara thought it was great.

At the picnic site the story of the hat recovery reached Mr. and Mrs. Wright. Mr. Wright called me over and said. "Well, Earl, I hear that you did some pretty fancy driving".

"It was nothing—just my California hat trick, Mr. Wright," I replied.

Do You Know the Answer?

According to a report in the Saint Paul (MN) Pioneer Press, the town of Richland Center, with a population of some 5000, is seeking its place in history (as well as future income) by connecting with FLLW to boost tourism.

The question is, where did Anna Lloyd Jones Wright give birth to young Frank?

Several possibilities exist, from a still standing house on Church Street to a demolished house where the post office now stands to a site in a little town called Bear Valley east of Richland.

Wright related tourism is proving a draw in many places, and the answer to this long-running debate could jingle up the local cash registers and breathe new life into the town's annual celebration of FLLW's birthday.

To establish a location, some backers aver, the town should take a guess and designate a birthplace; it could be the "supposed birthplace".

No one has uncovered a birth record proving where Wright was born. Bruce Pfeiffer of the Taliesin Archives said they haven't been able to find anyone who has located it and Taliesin is not researching it.

Wright was on record during his "cape wearing descent on the town" from time to time by naming two separate places as the site; but nothing was pinned down with that. The locals are divided on the possibilities. Some even recall, generations later, that Wright left a history of unpaid bills and they're not too excited about establishing a recognized birthplace.

One historian's research made the answer more elusive, and though he pursued the hunt he died along with an unfinished three-volume biography he was writing in 1994 without reaching a conclusion.

Whatever makes the cash registers jingle! Wright?

More of the Querulous

Recently Grace Holly of the Marin Center Shop saved the circular checkout counter in the Marin County Civic Center Library when they were going to throw it out. Imagine that, throwing out furniture designed by the best American architect. I think they stored the piece in the basement somewhere.

My gawd. How could they? There is a Marin Conservancy group that must have gasped over that. Apparently, it is said, that one of the women supervisors wants her own version of conservancy, if any.

What is the story? -- Lois Barnes
What Wright had they?

Hollywood Bowl Shells

"Oh what do you do?" exclaimed the woman who works for the Hollywood Bowl. It turns out there are plans to tear down one of the existing Lloyd Wright bowl shells....something about Frank Gehry. Isn't this the perfect time to mount a campaign for rebuilding Lloyd Wright's second shell, having it made to be dismantled and re-erected and tuned every year?

Anyone up for an intense letter-Wrighting campaign?
-- Steve Lamb

Report from Southeastern Chapter

The Taliesin Fellows, Southeastern States Chapter, has not met in the past few years according to Patterson Fletcher, president. It was difficult to have a regular gathering due to distances. However, eight to ten fairly active members were Sanford Goldman, Firoz Mistry, Jose Marcial, Edgar Tafel, Ron Haynes, Robert Broward, Robert Green, Gordon Barber, Dudley Howe, Frank Laraway, and Fletcher.

Edgar Tafel and Fletcher presented a joint lecture at the Selby Library in Sarasota in April to more than 300 people on the topic "The Frank Lloyd Wright Century: From Oak Park to the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall and Beyond." Fletcher's office, in association with Taliesin Architects (Tony Putnam) of the Madison office, is at work on the reconstruction of the Van Wezel, designed by Wes Peters in 1967. It is currently under construction.

The Legacy Continues. . .

The Studio of Eric Lloyd Wright

Eric Lloyd Wright, grandson of Frank Lloyd Wright, Vice President of the Taliesin Fellows, with associates John Ulloth, Hannah Wear and Kevin Parkhurst, along with family members Mary, Devon and Cory Wright, are carrying on the legacy of Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright's staff is focused on new architectural work and organizing social and environmental education events with the non-profit group, **Wright Way Organic Resource Center** on the Wright family land in Malibu, CA



Shown here is one of Eric's recently completed projects, designed for Fred Newman in Malibu. This unique home settles into the surrounding landscape, stretching out horizontally to allow large areas of glazing along the Southwest facade, serving both for solar gain and ocean views. The distinct form of this building is created by the use of a sprayed-on lightweight concrete for the roof structure for fire resistance and aesthetics. Eric is now in the final phases of construction on the nearby Malibu home for George and Maria Thatcher. The copper roof is on and a finish date is set for the end this year. Maria and Fred are the children of the late composer Alfred Newman who was owner of a Lloyd Wright designed home.

The studio is currently working on Frank Lloyd Wright's "Millard Residence" in Pasadena, CA, doing a major seismic upgrade and badly needed renovation after the Northridge quake and years of water damage and settlement. This project also

includes the complete renovation and restoration, including a remodel of the kitchen/dining area of the Lloyd Wright designed "La Miniatura" studio at this site, as well as the design of a new lap pool and landscaping. New textile blocks are being cast to replace the many degraded blocks, which must be carefully removed. The studio is presently under construction and the renovation of the residence will be in progress by next year.

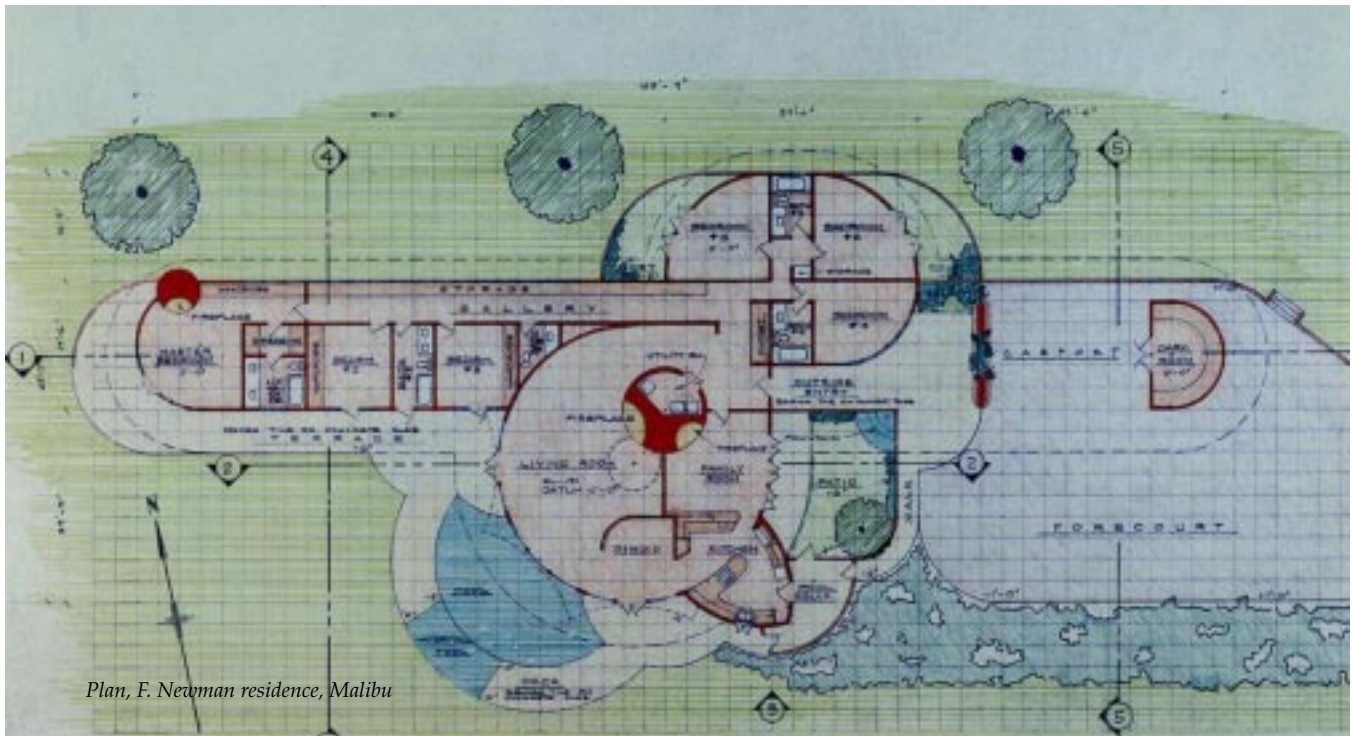


West view, F. Newman residence, Malibu

Another significant project currently underway is located at the former Arch Oboler Property in Malibu, California. This is the site of an unrealized 1940's Frank Lloyd Wright design for the residence called "Eaglefeather" and several other buildings designed by FLLW for this property that were constructed. Eric's studio is working on the master site plan and design of a new residence, including renovation and remodel of the existing buildings on the site.

Preliminary plans for a new residence and grounds near Escondido, CA have been completed, and Eric is serving as consulting architect for the new Visitors Center at Wayfarer's Chapel at Palo Verdes to complement the famous Lloyd Wright structure. Eric's office is also consulting on a small ranger station and visitor center at the Runyon Canyon Park in the Santa Monica Mountains. Another current project is the design of a cast bronze cauldron for the living room at Frank Lloyd Wright's Auldbrass Plantation in Yemassee, SC, now ready for installation.

In addition to the Studio work, Eric and his team have been busy establishing their non-profit group Wright Way Organic Resource Center as a source for people interested in social and environmental issues, the philosophy of organic architecture and environmentally responsible construction alternatives. The Organic Resource Center has held several workshops in the last year including a weekend workshop exploring various Earth Architecture and Construction techniques taught by Nader Khalili at his California



Institute for Earth Art and Architecture; Garden Raising and Permaculture workshop taught by gardening and Permaculture expert George Patton at the Wright's Land; and a recent Bamboo Construction workshop, led by San Francisco area architect Darrel DeBoer, which created a shade structure in the Wright Way garden. Scholarships are regularly provided for these events to young people from South Central Los

Angeles High Schools and to University art and architecture students. The Wright Way events consistently draw a diverse mix of people, from grade school age to 70 year olds, professional to working class, and a variety of races and nationalities.



Participants work on bamboo joint in Wright Way Bamboo Construction Workshop

for the end of August to be led by artist Mary Wright, Eric's wife, and local poet and dramatist Doraine Poretz.

Eric shares his experiences, his family land, and his work with those who are interested and he is taking steps to provide a valuable community forum in Wright Way, for discussion, learning, and promoting the values of organic architecture.

The annual celebration of Frank Lloyd Wright's birthday was presented in conjunction with the Taliesin Fellows. At this year's birthday party in June, Wright Way sponsored a panel suggested by the Taliesin Fellows on the interrelationship of Architecture and Landscape with Fellow Paul Bogart acting as moderator and local panelists joining Fellows Eric Wright and Bob Clark. The first Painting and Poetry Workshop was scheduled



Eric Wright looks on as Earth Construction Workshop participants work on brick dome.

For more information on the activities of Wright Way call 818.591.8992, FAX at 818.591.0116, or mail to 24680 Piuma Road, Malibu, CA 90265-3033 e-mail: elwright@earthlink.net

FLLW and Cyberspace

by Fellow Richard Keding

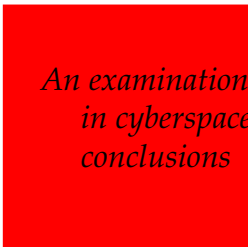
Cyberspace exerts a compelling and inescapable force these days. Recent events in that world have forced me to think through my position with respect to matters of creativity and high art. I am there fore coming out of the closet at last.

At this time, two major Wright sites are to be found in the cyberworld. These are:
The All-Wright Site (Maintained by Mr Chris Miller) <http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/1469/flw.html>
The Prairie School Resource Page (Maintained by Mr Jerry Krull) <http://www.twne.com/gmkrull/flw.html>

While I do not concur with every word of text to be found on these sites they are, nevertheless, estimable resources. Chris Miller and Jerry Krull apparently produced their sites solely because of their own interest and by their individual efforts. Neither charges for listings on his site. I think they deserve considerable applause. It should be further noted that these are independent productions generated outside the sphere of the anointed - either the anointed-in-residence or the anointed-at-large.

Both sites provide direct access to the websites of various architects, designers, craftspeople, et al who would otherwise be difficult to find. The sites provide only listings and links, not endorsements. By following the links, one can acquire an overview of our fellow travelers in architecture and design, and this is good.

However, dismay sets in solidly while reading the statements of those representing themselves as working in the Prairie Style, the Usonian Style, or even the *Franklloydwright Style*. Another historical style has emerged, and everyone seems to recognize it. Architects are the most egregious, and not surprisingly, their work produced under this banner is without much vitality. A nice example of such work is at the website of Genesis Architecture, a Wisconsin firm: <http://www.genesisarchitecture.com/pgs/indexframe.html>



*An examination of architecture
in cyberspace poses provocative
conclusions*

Clearly, Mr Wright's fears concerning styles were well founded and have now become an unfortunate reality. No wonder he was so guarded concerning his own work and reputation, and so derisive of those who - how's it go? "Take a shovel full of coals to start a little hell of their own."

This inquiry does not, however, end here. We must now ask how this state of affairs came to be? Where is the Real Thing to be found, and of what is it made? For centuries in western society derivative work has been universally seen as inferior and is never ranked with the highest art. Accepting this assessment one must inescapably conclude that the Real Thing, in the case of organic architecture, is not to be found in the work of any living architect. In his last years, Frank Laraway recalls, when asked about architects then living whose work he considered worthy, Mr. Wright was likely to reply with the names of Nervi, Torroja, or Maillart, but never the names of former apprentices. It is a revealing observation. Those who were once pencils in the master's hand - contrary to the master's expectation - failed to achieve creative mastery themselves.

Mr Wright's passing left an empty universe which his close associates and apprentices were not able to replenish. Reasons may be found for their artistic indigence. Personally, I have come to feel that the experience at Taliesin, while based on the best of intentions, was quite inimical to individual creative growth.

It's a done deal now and until a genuinely creative spirit revives somewhere in the practice of architecture we will have to live with it - not liking it at all. But the new historical style should have a name of its own, should it not?. Labels are all important these days. What to call it? Prairie? Usonian? Arts and Crafts II?

Why not the Wrightlite Style?

The Hanna Restoration

We have received an account of the rehabilitation of the Hanna House at Stanford as reported in **Wood Design & Building** magazine. NorCal Fellows are scheduled to make a tour of the property November 5.

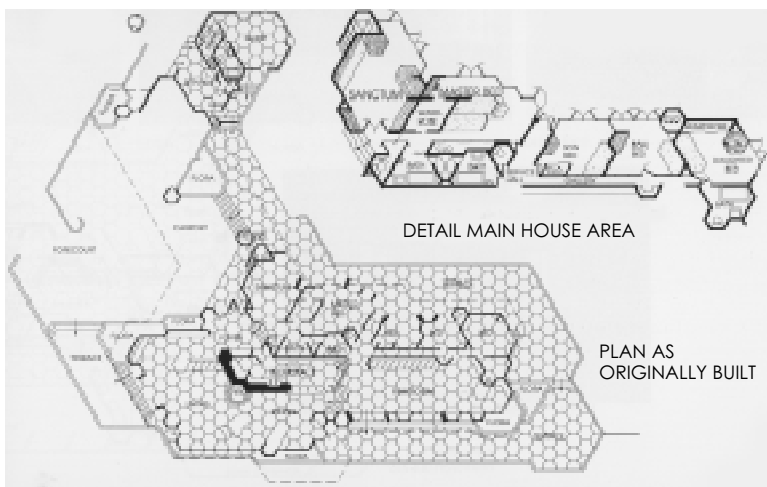
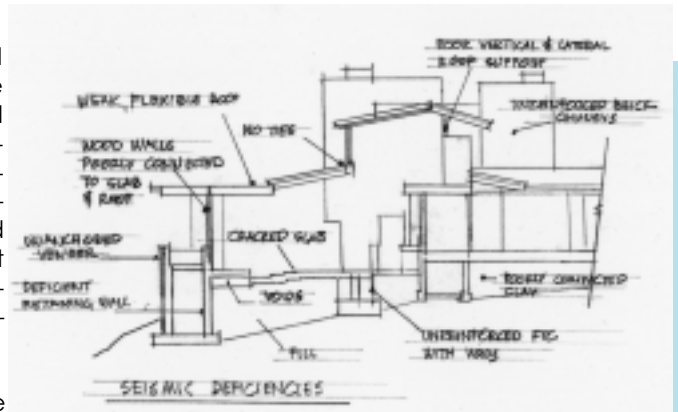
As a result of the Loma Prieta earthquake in October, 1989, Wright's famous Hanna House at Stanford sustained serious damage and required seismic updating to forestall future destruction of this landmark design. The brick fireplace developed serious crushing, and terraces and slabs were partially collapsed. The roof had begun to pull away from the supporting walls and forced closure of the residence. The house was built in 1937 and has been designated by the AIA as one of 17 buildings designed by Wright to be retained as contributions to American architecture.

The building was designed on a hexagon module which Wright said "was more suited to human 'to and fro' than the right angle." The walls were of redwood both interior and exterior with 1x6 studs placed flat providing a total wall thickness of 2 3/4". The roof was supported on the exterior walls and spanned to the interior masonry walls following the 30-60 pattern of the module.

The chimneys were only lightly reinforced and lacked adequate ties (by contemporary standards) to the roof. The perimeter supporting walls lacked positive ties to the roof and rigidity was achieved only with a single screw at each horizontal batten of the wall. During the earthquake, the walls deformed in a parallelogram pattern sideways much like a lattice. The engineers proposed inserting 1/2" marine plywood between the flat 1x studs of the redwood horizontal boards at special shear walls. This scheme underwent a full scale mock-up and was subjected to testing at the Plywood Research Center in Tacoma, WA.

The concrete floor slabs were originally placed on the sloping site using cut and fill, which provided primarily clay and in time settled as much as six inches below the slabs. It was also discovered that brick veneer on retaining walls was unanchored and the walls were inadequately tied into the slabs.

With the premise that rehabilitation of the structure would allow the building to look untouched, The Architectural Resources Group of San Francisco and Martin Eli Weil of Los Angeles were engaged to meet this challenge. Rutherford & Chekene, consulting structural and geotechnical engineers of San Francisco were chosen to provide life safety retrofitting. The goals included allowing for preservation of existing chimneys, limit work that would affect the historic fabric of damaged elements, conceal all new strengthening elements, preserve the use of interior spaces including closets, and maintain Wright's hexagonal grammar wherever possible when new elements were added.



A new plywood diaphragm replaced the existing roof sheathing boards which allowed the delicate fabric-covered ceiling to remain intact during construction. The brick chimneys were strengthened by center core drilling of 4 inch diameter holes from top to foundation. Brick dust and rubble were vacuumed out and a reinforcing bar was grouted into each bored hole, increasing the ductility of the brickwork and providing resistance to shear forces. The damaged slab-on-grade was replaced with a new foundation system of grade beams connected to the base of the chimney and support a new suspended structural slab, eliminating the need to replace or compact the existing fill. The grade beams were extended to brace the top of the retaining walls. A finish slab over the structural slab restored the original colored and scored floor.

Wright's masterpiece was re-opened for public tours in April 1999 upon completion of the work. Total cost for the rehabilitation was approximately two million dollars. Funding was from private contributions, the Nissan Corporation, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

THE SOURCE OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE

ORGANIC DESIGN THROUGH THE ABSTRACTION OF NATURE

by Milton Stricker

This article is third of a series by Milton Stricker, Architect, Taliesin Fellow, on his search for organic architecture through abstraction of nature. For parts one and two, see NC Fellows newsletters at www.midglen.com/NCfellows

PART III. THE SEARCH - CARNEGIE TECH - 1947

□ My search for the source of architecture began at Carnegie Institute of Technology. Our first freshman design problem was to design a living room and I did not know what a living room was. I could not ask my professor—he would have thrown me out of the class. I could not ask my classmates—they would have laughed me out of the class.

□ By the end of the Freshman year I had determined:

- **Art is an abstraction.**
- **Architecture is an art.**
- **Architecture is an abstraction.**



Milton



Carnegie Tech

□ The source for architectural abstraction mystified me and my remaining college years were spent searching. All Universities taught architecture from *The International Style*, 1932, by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson. The style stressed technological standardization based on pure non-objective geometric abstraction. Professors used this codified approach of manipulated geometric forms and elitist appeal to promote this version of modern architecture. By teaching Le Corbusier's philosophy of abstract pieces, they tried to explain to their students how to produce modern architecture.

□ Le Corbusier's purist philosophy rejected nature...*the natural ground...the dispenser of rheumatism and tuberculosis...for it is the enemy of man.* We followed his direction by manipulating white cardboard shapes into white cardboard buildings, on pipe columns, and whatever else it took to acquire that plastic sheepskin.

□ After geometric purity - sloping roofs, overhangs, color, and texture were rejected as traditions from the past, not a means to the future. Flat roofs with stained stucco walls soon became the trademark of modern architecture. Everything was done in the name of "functionalism" and our designs became nonfunctional. The white cardboard box homes that occasionally appear in architectural schools, *Architectural Digest*, and *Taliesin Fellows Journal* continue to remain visual symbols rather than places to live.

□ The uniformity of our student projects was astonishing; gradually everything we designed looked the same. The same black and white boxes of glass, steel, and concrete. We were counseled building corners cost \$7.50 each and a floor plan with more than four corners would have to be explained to the faculty jury. Soon the International Style became known as "Box Architecture."

•...but the white men have put us in these square boxes. It is a bad way to live, for there can't be no power in a square...

Black Elk - Oglala Sioux Holy Man

□ Next came the theory on color: exterior and interior colors were to be white and black with primary color accents. Carnegie Tech allowed the use of color, but during my two summer sessions at the Univer-

sity of Minnesota student projects were presented in white, black, and tiny accents of yellow, red, or blue. Art students painted enormous abstracted concrete grain silos in white, black, and large accents of yellow, red, and blue.

□ Next came the everlasting minimalism and reductionism of the box, forcing us into a diminishing cubicle. As the walls of the box shrank I saw the box disappearing within its own walls, emerging as a tiny black and white square. As I stared at my drawing board I began to see tiny black and white spots milling around tiny black and white squares. Was this the future of architecture? Was this sanitized version of architecture the launch pad for manipulated, digitized, faceless architecture?

□ If a student early on contemplated to become a success in the architectural world he must join the establishment and become part of the fashionable box. We must subscribe to the codes and theories, or give up any hope of a professional career. We dressed in a fashion to look as neat as our professors: precise and anonymous as possible (black-knit ties), to be the perfect mass-produced black and white spots for the coming electronic age.

- ***Beginning with school, if not before, an individual is systematically stripped of his imagination, his creativity, his heritage, his dreams and his personal uniqueness, in order to fit him to be a productive unit in a mass technological society.***
Charles Reich - The Greening of America - 1972

□ The final blow came during my senior year: the theory of "team design." The International byword became team design and universities nationwide adopted team effort to replace individual design. I considered the senior thesis the summation of a graduate's design knowledge and this could not be expressed working with a random design team of six students. The head of our department told us if we did not like it we could leave school. Anyone who wished to graduate needed to come inside the box and accept the terms of the box. With this threat to my perception of free choice a turning point was reached in my search for the source of architecture. The regimentation of the architectural profession had begun and the academics had exclusive control of modern architecture. Well almost.

□ By the end of my senior year the search for the truths of architecture had reached a dead end. A future in architecture meant remaining within the Box, while the search for architecture meant leaving the Box. I still did not comprehend the source of architectural abstraction. I understood architecture as an art and abstraction, but an abstraction of what? If I did not understand what architecture is, how could I be an architect? It wasn't just the fear of turning into a black and white spot that finally turned me away from academic architecture,



*AUTHOR'S STUDENT PROJECT (Model)
University of Minnesota - Summer 1948.*



but also for disregarding the natural and human considerations of architecture. Without these two factors Bauhaus/ International produced nothing but empty non-objective white and black forms.

□ Architecture had lost its roots and passion; there was little purpose in transferring to another school. It was time to find an alternative route to the source and force of Architecture. I left Carnegie on the eve of graduation, without the plastic sheepskin. I came that close to ruining my life.

- ***Change your life today.*** Simone De Beauvoir
- ***Destiny is not a matter of chance; it is a matter of choice.*** William Jennings Bryan
- ***Whosoever would be a man must be a nonconformist...Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.*** Ralph Waldo Emerson
- ***What a waste it is to lose one's mind. Or not to have a mind is being very wasteful.*** Former Vice President Dan Quayle

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT IN THE VALLEY OF THE SUN

by Karen Holden

I.

Boulders, embraced by mountains for millennium, resist
the arc and curl of that rounder european life, chink
of chisel, the hammer and wedge; they do not fracture true
along the line devised for building, but shatter into dusk
stained shards from a crystalline heart, fragments
grown sharp in endless sun, relentless sun, and the aching
pressure of a million years, set askew in earth
dark mountains above such vast grey sea of stubborn clinging life,
memory of ocean and what came before still etched in stone,
the many colors of Joseph's coat bleached subtle by light and air.
This is God's room, laid out for endless miles, Joseph's God, and Jacob's
relentless, hard handed and unyielding, the stricken
God of infinite time.

II.

What does a man do when he can't crack stone?

What does he do faced with the mineral heart of a desert sea, red
rock hard as iron and heavy as love? What does he
do with a landscape alien to Wisconsin verdant hills, that yellow
limestone split straight along the grain?

What does he do so late in life feeling birth in his gut again?
How does he fathom this brittle place, land stunning in its subtle beauty,
without mercy or regard, what does he do with miles as long and tall
as the universe, space beyond imagination, the graceful profile of saguaro,
the recalcitrance of stone?

What does a man do who has been knocked down by misfortune, bad
judgment, through arrogance and will, events beyond his genius hand and hungry
heart? He stands up, lifts his head, looks into the eyes of such relentless terrain;

he bows.

What does he do but haul those stones down the mountain, remembering
Jacob's angel, the 40 years, place them in the forms he envisions, canted
against the line of sky, embrace them with sand sifted from desert
wash and within those battered walls build a life

What can a man do but gather his tribes, huddle for years in a place not made
for building, face the intemperate and by yielding, prevail.



Poetic Justice

Karen Holden's poignant tribute to Frank Lloyd Wright is reprinted above in the author's exact format to correct our "bastardized" version published in the NorCal Newsletter of June 2000. We apologize for our inadvertency. -Editor

Karen has been on the teaching staff at Taliesin. She now lives in Willits, CA.

To the Loyal Defenders of FLLW & Organic Architecture

An up-date on Ken Burns by Frank Laraway

After my second viewing of the Ken Burns video essay on Frank Lloyd Wright, a year after the first, my reaction to it was even more negative than the first. But I must have it all wrong. Few others, especially those still at Taliesin seem to have few, if any reservations about it.



Of course the publicity and the exposure to a broader public has been mostly positive for The FLW Foundation for it has brought in the much needed income to keep the school/fellowship/business going. There has been a marked increase in visitors, purchases of books and artifacts and interest in Organic Architecture. Undoubtedly, architectural commissions for the architectural division have increased also. All of these positive results of the video exposure should not go unnoted. We can all be thankful that this puts the movement on a more secure foundation financially. Financial viability and sound income producing programs are most important for a private educational institution that has no tax support.

Yet this is similar to the several times in Mr. Wright's personal life when tragedy or scandal brought him notoriety that in turn, brought him new commissions, supporters and friends. He made the best of it as he could but he could have well done without it. He never deliberately got involved in such things to further his fame or practice - as implied in the essay.

Of the various commentators who appeared on the essay, only one was from the staff at Taliesin. All the others were taken from the traditional ranks of those who are advocates or supporters of modernism. These are the Internationalists whose post Bauhaus mechanistic reductionism was and is diametrically opposed to Organic Architecture. Why would a producer pick his worst enemies to portray his life, idea and work? While they all praised him to admit his genius or better yet, merely one of the geniuses of modern architecture, they reiterated his unorthodox style of living, dress, personal morality, mistakes, catastrophes, et cetera as if these somehow detracted from his productions of life and architecture. His integrity was so often demeaned by assuming that his various ways of dress, his dealings with his clients, his unorthodox ideas were merely for show. This really means that he was a dishonest showman, a womanizer, a manipulator, a liar and that it was all a charade to get himself fame and commissions. But how could they question the examples of his architecture? They were forced by their substance to give his work lip-service. His works speak too loudly for themselves.

Frank Lloyd Wright's son John seemed to sum up Mr. Wright's positive side when in his biography, he notes, ". . . His mental and moral character was of the highest quality. . . he was loyal and devoted; never scolded, never criticized, never nagged or punished. He did not smoke or drink. He neither swore nor gambled. He loved life, loved his work, loved people, loved flowers, loved trees loved the beautiful." And for those who would put him down, "But could it be other than a greater weakness that would choose a man's weakness to characterize his whole personality? Do we measure a garden by its weeds? . . . a tree by a broken limb?" This is not only wisdom but an accurate portrayal of Frank Lloyd Wright.

How can a man of American history, so talented, so dedicated toward a worthy idea, so hard working, so honest, so utterly faithful to beauty in every aspect of life, be made into a dishonest, immoral, manipulator by his critics? As he said, "Boys, you'll know a man by his enemies, not his friends."

Frank Laraway was apprenticed at Taliesin in 1958-59

The Origin of the Taliesin Fellows - with some current observations

by Bradley Storrer

Part One of Two Parts

Several years ago, in the mid nineties, I wrote an essay titled "The Origin of the Fellows." I gave copies to all of the board members at the time, and asked for comments. Although few were received, I have revised the document twice over the years, and again distributed it to directors. So, I do not imagine that they will be interested in this third revision, except for the added thoughts on recent events. I think it appropriate that it receive wider circulation in this inaugural issue of the Taliesin Fellows Newsletter.

The first reunion of the Fellowship was held in October 1987 at the desert camp, as Mr. Wright referred to Taliesin West. Many of those who attended were unhappy with what we saw - changes that were not in accord with his design concept. In February of 1988 I read an announcement in the L. A. TIMES of two exhibitions of Mr. Wright's work at the museum in Barnsdall Park. One was a traveling exhibit on the Johnson Wax building; the other a group of models and drawings of the Southern California houses. On Sunday, there was to be a gallery talk by Eric Wright. I decided to attend.

As I was viewing the models, I noticed John Geiger, and spoke to him. We talked about our dissatisfaction with the physical condition of Taliesin West (particularly the family quarters which had been changed by Mrs. Wright) and some of the financial problems (we didn't realize how serious they really were) that plagued Dick Carney. We decided we should involve Eric in our discussion, and met with him after he completed his gallery talk. The result was an agreement to meet at John's apartment on March 26. Eric, John and I attended, as did John and Martha Paul, Louis Wiehle, Paul Bogart, and Bob Clark. John also remembers that Earl and Barbara Nisbet were there.

Some time before that meeting, I wrote Edgar Tafel : "Edgar, it seems that there are a lot of us, scattered about; we aren't happy with things as they are at Taliesin. I wish I knew how to put us all together to do something positive. Is there an answer?" The answer was the **TALIESIN FELLOWS**.

I remember that we had another meeting or two in John's apartment, and one in Bob's former home and studio on Hillhurst, the first of Bob's now famous dinner meetings. John had used Elizabeth Kassler's (Betty Mock) directory to contact former apprentices in Southern California, and many came. I recall seeing Victor Cusak, and Richard Ciceri in addition to those from past meetings. Much of the conversation at this meeting concerned enlisting new members and "getting organized." I suggested we try to recruit Don Fairweather, because of his firm's prominence, and John Benton, because I thought he "knew how to get things done."

We next met at Don Fairweather's home in Laguna Beach December 10, 1988 and elected John Geiger president; Eric Wright, vice president; Bradley Storrer, Secretary; and Paul Bogart, treasurer. Don's memorandum of the meeting states that our mission statement was: "to further the principals of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Taliesin Fellowship." One of our original purposes was to be a kind of "watchdog" over Taliesin. In addition, we wanted to update Betty (Mock) Kassler's directory, aid in the oral history project, conduct "events" to increase awareness of the work of Mr. Wright and his apprentices, and further the principles of what Mr. Wright called "organic architecture." We also hoped to engage in social activities - "fellowship." We have worked at all of these goals and believe they are still valid.

We have been only marginally successful with the "Watchdog" efforts. Shortly after the first reunion, we were told that the walled patio Mrs. Wright had installed (and said could be removed after she was gone) would indeed be removed to restore the marvelous view one had while walking through the pergola with the light coming through the opening behind the pool silhouetting the vertical rock. After 12 years, with assistance from David Dodge, the wall is coming down. David has contributed half of the costs, and the balance comes from the Fellows. We also fought the idea of a visitors center on the farm adjacent to the Hillside

The views expressed in this essay are those of the author, a member of the Board of Directors of the Taliesin Fellows. They do not necessarily represent official Board policy. Part two will appear in the next Newsletter.

buildings in Wisconsin, and advocated the purchase of the restaurant. This was accomplished not long after the 1997 Wisconsin reunion. While we have not published an updated version of Betty Kassler's directory, John Geiger has created and maintains a comprehensive database that, in my opinion, contains much more information than any of the multiple (non-connected) lists at Taliesin. We have been active in the oral history project, although there has been little involvement in recent years. We have conducted many successful "events," including tours, conferences, and lectures. Unfortunately, their frequency has diminished over the years; primarily because of the difficulty of recruiting adequate numbers of volunteers. We have tried in many ways to help the school, as this is one way to further Mr. Wright's principles, but Taliesin seems to resist our efforts. Hopefully, this will change with the appointment of Art Dyson (a member of our board) as Dean. We are also disturbed that much of the work of Taliesin Architects is a poor example for the students.

We chose to be a non-profit charitable association as this was easier to accomplish than a corporation. However by 1995 it became apparent that a non-profit charitable corporation offered many benefits, particularly in terms of liability. So with the assistance of director Mike Dougherty, we became Taliesin Fellows, Inc.