

The Other Side of ARCHITECTURE

In the September *Sooner*, Hiawatha Estes, '40eng, the controversial designer of popularly syndicated house plans, fired some well-aimed criticism at university-trained architects, their devotion to Frank Lloyd Wrightism, and their inability to design a practical, livable house.

Now the School of Architecture replies—in the words of Professor Mendel Glickman, one of the most respected men in his field.

By MENDEL GLICKMAN

I BELIEVE that I can understand Mr. Estes' position and opinions better than most of his readers, because he and I arrived at the design of buildings by very similar paths. I too began as an engineer, and I obtained my first house-building experience by designing houses for a speculative builder more than 20 years ago.

We built scores of them. They were low in cost and well built. The people who bought them were, and still are, satisfied with their purchases.

The cost was low, not because of any virtue inherent in their having been designed by an engineer, but for the reason that about eight houses were built from each plan.

When occasionally we would design and build a house for an individual client, it invariably cost more per square foot than the ready-built. The plan took more of my time and the builder's, and from foundation to rafters it required more carpenter and mason time per component.

In the ready-built house the fixtures, finishes and such built-in items as there were went in without delay and without regard to any client's preferences. After the first two were built, each carpenter and mason knew every step, and the builder knew his costs within a few dollars. In the house designed for a client, he or she wanted to discuss every detail—which is natural. They invariably added a few that they "just had to have."

Mr. Estes implies that design by an architect who is a college graduate results in high building cost and a greater burden of mortgage debt for the client. My experience over a period of 25 years has been to the contrary.

Other things being equal, the cost of a house depends less on the design than it does on the builder's estimate of the time and materials his men will waste in building from an unfamiliar plan and the trouble he will have satisfying the client and his wife on the multitude of inherent detail.

Understandably, the average builder would rather sell houses "ready-built" and credit the low cost to their having been designed by "practical" people.

Practical as Mr. Estes' plans may be, and perhaps convenient, evidenced by their wide publicity, I am sure that a builder would add just as much to the cost of building from one of them over the cost of the builder's standard plans as he would to any comparable plan that he had not built before.

And again other things being equal, a house designed by a competent architect, who understands the principles of good architecture, has much more chance of being a comfortable, economical and pleasant home than one designed by a "practical" designer. Built in quantity, it will cost no more than any ready-built house. Built for an individual client, it will cost as much to build as one of Mr. Estes' plans.

More and more builders of large housing developments employ architects to de-

sign prototype houses that they build in quantities, because they have come to appreciate the value of an architect trained in both the practical and aesthetic aspects of architecture.

Mr. Estes criticizes the universities who he says turn out graduates that "can recite Frank Lloyd Wright's precepts but can't design a livable house."

The houses that I designed were not entirely without benefit of Mr. Wright's precepts. I had worked for him for several years before associating with the house-builder. I continued to do work for Mr. Wright through the years, from 1932 up to the day of his death last spring. Such comprehension as I acquired of his precepts did not preclude my designing livable and economical houses.

The point I want to make here is that ability to recite a precept is no guarantee of understanding. The fault may not be in the precept nor necessarily in the university. The understanding of a precept concerning an art does not endow a person spontaneously with the ability to put it into effect.

Mr. Estes' experience with university graduates has been unfortunate. But he must understand that a graduate fresh from a school of architecture is no more equipped to design a house than a graduate from medical school is competent to remove an appendix before having served his internship. A period of apprenticeship must be served by both.

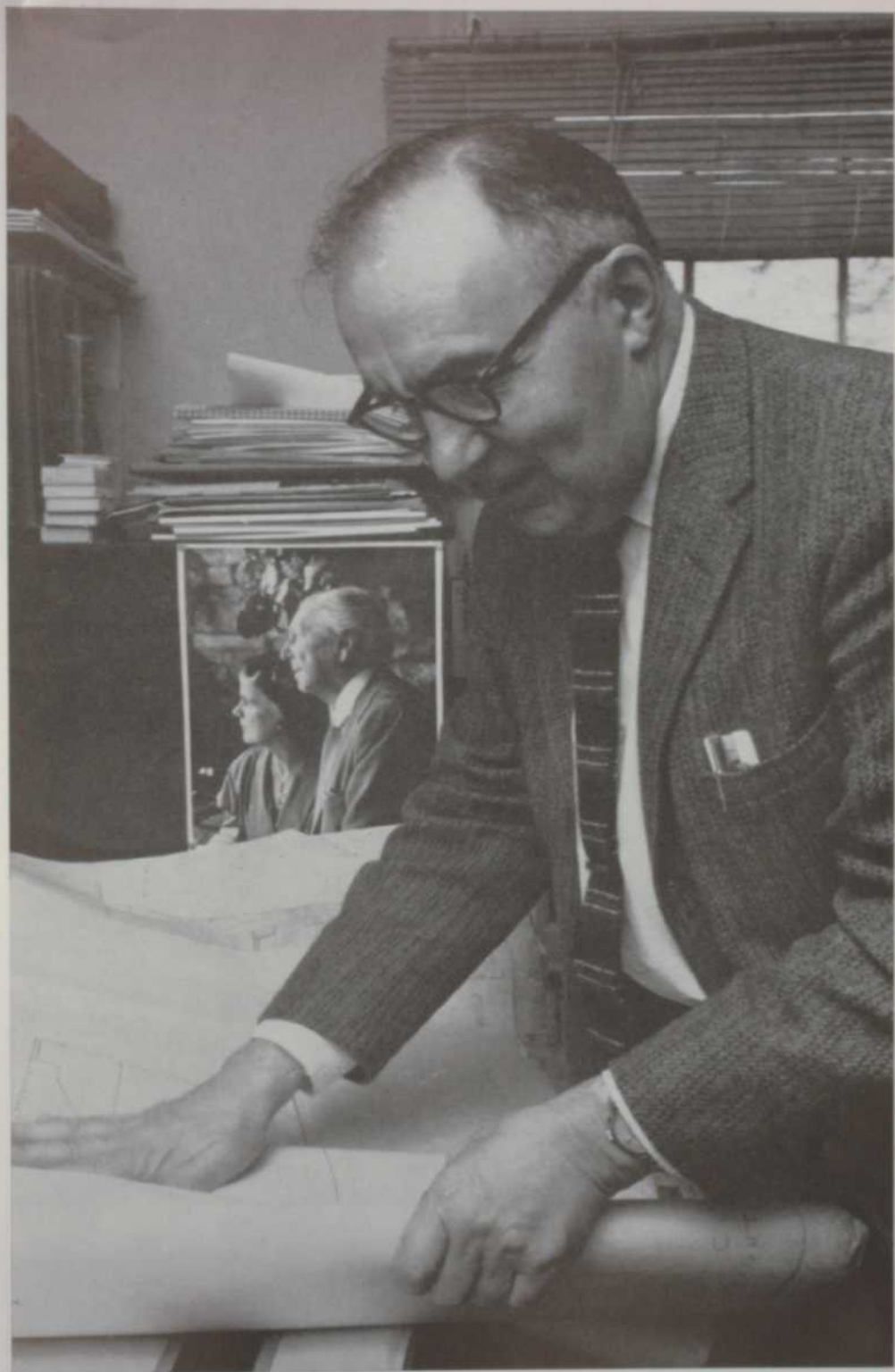
Mr. Estes states a precept of his own—that the "basic principle of home design is to provide a comfortable and efficient headquarters for human activity."

He omits one very essential quality for a home—the quality of delight.

The three essential ingredients of architecture were stated by the Roman engineer and architect, Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, about two thousand years ago. Brief and to the point they translate to Firmness, Commodity and Delight. These three words have been repeated and paraphrased through the centuries by great architects and philosophers of the Arts, but without change in their essential meaning.

Any building, but especially a dwelling, must satisfy not only the requirements of comfort and economy, but also the human need for emotional pleasure in environment. I am sure that many of Mr. Estes' houses have fireplaces, which are neither efficient nor cheap means of heating.

Likewise, people do not light candles or put flowers on a dining table because they are efficient or cheap.



Mendel Glickman with picture of his late friend and co-worker, Frank Lloyd Wright.

BASKETBALL

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vidual skills. In this offense, no man is more important than another. It's designed for better balance. The double post offense put the burden on our post men. If anything, the free lance will increase the possibility of guard play a little."

The changing from a set style of offense to the free lance may slow the Sooner sophomores' progress until they catch on to its workings.

"The free lance is harder to teach than the set pattern," Parrack admitted. "You have to spend more time teaching individual skills such as driving, shooting, passing and straight fundamentals. These

sophomores were brought up under the set pattern, and it may take them longer to adapt."

A lack of talented personnel prevented Parrack from employing the free lance at Oklahoma before last year. "Poorer material must have a regulated play to give them something to do that they can't do on their own," Parrack reasoned.

Oklahoma's defense this year will be basically the same as in the past—a sinking man-to-man. "But I hope it's better," Parrack grinned. "I feel in practice so far that our defense is farther along than our offense."

Across the hall in another office, freshman coach and chief recruiter Paul Geymann was buried behind stacks of mimeographed play patterns to be used in Okla-

homa's first annual high school coaching clinic.

Asked how he felt about Oklahoma's freshman crop this year, Geymann leaned back clasping his hands in front of his chin and beamed, "I'm real pleased. We got everybody we were trying to get except maybe one boy."

By then it was time for practice to get underway. Whistles swinging from their necks, Parrack and Geymann sauntered onto the gym floor for a talk with the squad.

Oklahoma may bear out Parrack's prediction and not improve a great deal on last year's record. There are those who don't agree. But one thing is certain—the Sooners are well on their way to becoming a basketball power in the Southwest.

ARCHITECTURE

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Just what constitutes beauty in a building is a moot and subjective question. Beauty is not attained by novelty, the bizarre or the quaint.

Mr. Estes also states that in his opinion designing a home is "a relatively artless matter." Contrary to this, my architect colleagues and I find the design of a house for an individual client as much a problem as the design of any other building and far from the "simple kind of challenge" that he says it is.

We also find that in relation to the amount of work involved the financial compensation is less than for other types of building. Some architect's offices will not accept a commission for a dwelling for that reason. On the other hand, many architects find the design of a house a challenge they enjoy taking, even though their financial compensation is relatively less.

Mr. Estes takes our schools of architecture to task for "soft-pedaling" such basic considerations as building codes, selection of appropriate materials and staying within a budget. We "do not get down to earth" he says.

He apparently knows nothing of our curriculum here at the School of Architecture of the University of Oklahoma, nor how it is taught. Had he taken the trouble to inquire, he would have learned that we start our beginning classes in structure with the use of the National Building Code.

We begin with elementary structure in the freshman year, and continue through indeterminate structures in the fourth year. We discuss costs and budgets and practical construction methods and details.

Just plain draughting and lettering is taught and heavily stressed throughout the five years.

But we do not lose sight of the fact that we are a school of architecture in a university—an institution of higher learning—and not a trade school. Our aim is to prepare the student for the practice of architecture, a very difficult and demanding profession that requires creative artistic talent, technical knowledge in many fields and the capacity to co-ordinate the work of other professions and many trades.

We must not only strike a balance between art and science, theory and technique, but in addition make as well-rounded an individual as is possible in five years, and not a narrow specialist. He should have a knowledge of history, of the evolution of art and architecture, some conception of economics and government, and a command of the English language, spoken and written.

That's a big order, even in five years, and throughout we must encourage the exercise and development of inherent talent and creativity under a discipline of the techniques of structural design and the limitations of building materials and costs.

In the 10 years that I have been a teacher at this university, our faculty has been continually at work on the curriculum, examining subject matter and methods, texts and reading material. We are all architects and engineers with years of experience in design, actual building and teaching. We think we have one of the best-balanced curricula in architecture—and we are still working on it.

The "high-flown ideals" Mr. Estes derides so glibly have a place in a college curriculum; but we do not neglect the practical, as he seems to believe.

ROTARIANS

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nating committee for president of Rotary International in 1961-62. Dr. Procter is a former member and past president of the Ada club and a member of the Chickasha club while serving as president of the Oklahoma College for Women. He is now a member of the Rotary Club of Houston, where he is vice president of the Star Engraving Company.

Other University men who have served as Rotary International District Governors in recent years are Joe W. McBride, '28bus, Anadarko publisher and former University Regent; Earl Gray, '10ba, Ardmore attorney; R. Boyd Gunning, '37ba, '37Law, executive secretary of the University of Oklahoma Association, Norman; J. Phil Burns, '27ba, Oklahoma City; Hugh Southwick, '21pharm, Garber pharmacist, and Robert V. Peterson, O.U. professor of journalism.

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