



Richard H. Penner

August 7, 1946 – December 11, 2016

Born in Brattleboro, Vermont, on August 7, 1946, to Albert and Bernice Haskin Penner, Richard Haskin Penner died on December 11, 2016, in New Paltz, New York.

In the fall of 1964 Dick happily enrolled in Cornell University's College of Architecture, Art, and Planning, earning a bachelor's and a master's of architecture. In 1970 he began his teaching career in the Cornell School of Hotel Administration, primarily teaching hotel students how to design and develop hotels, equipping them to work with the developers and designers they'd encounter as hotel administrators.

The hospitality industry – and hotels in particular – requires facilities that are effective and efficient in their design because these buildings essentially determine the success of the business. Richard was at the right place at the right time, to greatly influence the industry's lodging segment as it expanded in the later part of the 20th century and the early part of the 21st century. Professor Penner was the first faculty member in the long history of the School trained as an architect, and he was the lead author and co-author of three editions of *Hotel Design, Planning, and Development*, the seminal book on the subject. This design book, and others by him, continue to provide benchmarks for architects and developers. The breath of his impact is best expressed by his partner Susan several years ago. "The first inkling I ever got of his reputation and influence was on a street corner along Madison Avenue. As we waited to cross, a stretched out car literally stopped traffic so one of its passengers, a very imposing, elegantly dressed man, could jump out to enthusiastically greet Richard. He then pulled him over to the car to introduce him to his friend. 'This isn't just the man who wrote the book on hotels, this really *is* the man

who wrote *the* book on hotels.’ I don’t know if the friend was impressed or not, but I know I was.”

Richards’ impact at Cornell reached beyond the Hotel School. He chaired University committees on such diverse issues as campus planning, residence life, transportation and study abroad. Most recently, he authored “Cornell University” (2013), a pictorial history, and joined the few Cornell faculty members who have written a book about Cornell.

There are several characteristics that epitomize the essence of Dick's 40-plus-year career at the Hotel School. The faculty knew Dick for uncanny quietness and calmness, his willingness after much patient listening and reflection to contribute in his unassuming way a suggestion of great value, his quiet willingness to assume a sticky-wicket task no one else wanted to do, to undertake it without fanfare, and to carry it out to its often unheralded completion. Dick also mentored faculty in his discipline: As stated by Dr. Stephani Robson, “I have been so incredibly lucky to work closely with Dick for 27 years, first as his TA, then as a neophyte lecturer and co-instructor, and recently as a co-author.”

Over the years, Professor Penner taught required courses at the School to undergraduate and graduate students -- Hospitality Facilities Design and Properties Development and Planning, respectively – and many electives, all of which stimulated students to understand the impact of design on a hotel’s guests and its business success. Furthermore, he hired some of his students as TAs, and many went on to meaningful careers. As Michael Loughran said at Dick’s retirement party, “there is not an individual in the hospitality design industry who has provided greater influence and direction than Richard Penner has over the past 40 years, and that influence will continue as all of those teaching assistants continue in their careers. His influence is as a result of what he shared and what he gave. I can’t thank him enough for what he shared and how he shaped my career.”

Professor Penner’s impact on facilities design was deep and wide. He wrote several books and book chapters ranging from textbooks to topical articles for encyclopedias. He taught professional development seminars in Ithaca and around the world. Throughout his career, Dick kept updating his materials through sabbatical leaves, consulting projects, and advisory boards to industry design firms and industry roundtables. The scope and depth of his influence was acknowledged by *Hospitality Design* magazine’s Platinum Circle for contributions to hospitality design as an author, teacher, architect, and consultant. Dick was a man of many talents, kindness, drama-free sense of proportion, dry wit, and generous spirit.

A member of the Cornell Hotelie family, now gone but not forgotten. Dick is survived by his partner Susan Woodburn, his daughter Anne (Moss) Penner and grandchildren Tobias and Molly, and his former wife, Catherine Penner.

Written by Michael H. Redlin and A. Neal Geller