



Charles W. Pearman

March 8, 1927 – May 10, 2013

Charles W. Pearman, Professor Emeritus of Architecture at Cornell University and resident of Trumansburg, died early Friday morning, May 10, 2013, after a short illness. He died quietly with Carol Skinner, his wife and companion of almost 40 years, and his daughter, Marie-Laure Pearman, at his side.

Professor Pearman was born in Muskegon, Michigan on March 8, 1927, the only son of Harold and Florence Brown Pearman. He was co-valedictorian of his high school class and received his B. Arch degree from the University of Michigan, where he subsequently taught for several years. He also studied at the Institute of Design in Chicago and at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, a school noted for its progressive interdisciplinary art education as well as its distinguished creative faculty. During the Korean War he served in the Army Corps of Engineers doing research on housing for extreme climates. After the war he went into private practice and then was invited to teach again at the University of Michigan. In 1962 he came to the College of Architecture, Art and Planning at Cornell, where he taught for 41 years and also served for periods as Associate Dean and as Interim Dean. In the 1960's, during the height of the Modern Movement, "Chuck" was the studio teacher who brought the architectural ethos of the Midwest to the department.

Although he had an architectural practice, it was teaching that gave him his greatest joy. Professor Pearman was, above all, a dedicated, inspirational and empathetic design teacher. Students valued his quiet Socratic mentoring, his deep understanding of architectural space, and his sharing of places he loved, in order to expand their awareness. He is fondly remembered for his thoughtful guidance in the design studio and his quiet pedagogical style is carried on by the many Cornell graduates who have pursued careers in architectural education.

Professor Pearman was especially well known for his compassion for students in difficulty. He was a student advocate in the truest sense, and the first to recognize when students were in need

of support beyond the classroom. He understood that a university education was much more than the simple sum of courses and credit hours taken for a degree.

Teaching in the Department of Architecture's Rome Program and Summer Programs in Japan was something Professor Pearman particularly enjoyed. He passionately embraced the traditional architecture and culture of Japan and over the course of two decades, he directed six summer programs for Cornell undergraduate architects to study in that country. Sensing that many of these students would be unfamiliar with the unique customs and conventions of the country they were about to explore for eight weeks, and that this limitation might compromise their understanding of the architecture, he developed and taught a preparatory course, the first devoted exclusively to the methods, principles and theories of Japanese architecture at Cornell.

Professor Pearman was co-founder of the Summer Program for the Introduction to Architecture and Environmental Design. This innovative six-week course was directed toward high school seniors and others who were considering professional studies in the field. It was the first of its kind to be offered by a school of architecture, and has served as a model for similar programs now offered by numerous other universities. After nearly forty years, the summer architecture career discovery program is still flourishing at Cornell.

Engaging students at their design desks with equal measures of softly rendered criticism and thoughtfully measured encouragement, Professor Pearman was the perfect one-on-one tutor. Beyond his full command of the European architectural tradition, he brought to his students an unusually rich understanding of the synthesis of American and Asian architectural perspectives. He was equally as comfortable with the mid-western meanings inherent in the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright and his vast Ukiyo-e collection or the Tokyo Imperial Hotel; as with traditions evoked through the great 8th century Japanese Buddhist temples at Nara or the modernist architectural translations of Le Corbusier through the Japanese architect Kunio Maekawa. Chuck was the recipient of many honors and grants. Perhaps the most treasured was one his appreciative students nominated him for, the Martin Dominguez Award for Distinguished Teaching, which he was awarded in 1984.

Professor Pearman will be missed and those of us who had the privilege of being among his many students or admiring colleagues will be forever grateful for his kindly ways and deeply insightful turn of mind, and not least, for the way he instilled in each of us a deep appreciation for the artistry of building.

Leonard J. Mirin and Kent L. Hubbell