



I visited the Hagan Home designed by Frank Lloyd Wright as a 10-year-old child. That inspiration launched a career as a designer of buildings and many other things.

Then The Room Stopped Spinning: The House on Kentuck Knob

By Joseph E. Liston

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a book by
Joseph E. Liston



Then The Room
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The House On Kentuck Knob

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Architecture's Multiple Roles

“There are two key players in architecture. There is the Architect and then there is the Engineer. The Architect designs the floor plan and outlines the project's extents. He envisions the space and wraps a building around it. The Engineer supports the Architect and keeps his vision from falling down.”

Joseph E. Liston

A great architect is the embodiment of both Architect and Engineer.



About This Book

Then The Room Stopped Spinning

At age ten, I had an epiphany. An awakening on a built-in sofa in a home designed by a famous architect. From that moment on I wanted to influence the world around me as brilliantly as he had. I began dreaming of designing fabulous homes, amazing buildings, and everything imaginable. I had a new inner thirst given to me by someone I did not yet know. One day I would learn that this enigmatic person was a man who fully understood that art, architecture, and humankind are connected to each other on a much deeper level. People naturally desire to surround themselves with more than just shelter from the elements. Buildings and homes become extensions of the occupants inside them.

To properly serve in the role of a designer of buildings you must have more than rudimentary construction knowledge. You begin a journey of learning. Learning about changing lifestyles, materials, how to adapt and integrate structures into their environments. Then you mold them to satisfy the wants and needs of complete strangers.

The occupants of your structures in the future will evaluate the success and impact of your journey and the buildings you have breathed life into. But they will

Joseph E. Liston

always fall short of understanding your vision for those spaces during the time you imagined them. The ability to keep those spaces alive and be loved in the future is a skill that few acquire.

About The Author

I am one of the last generation of people who lived on what was known as Front Street, in Ohiopyle, Pennsylvania. That street no longer exists. Today it is the realigned PA state Route 381 that winds through and divides the town. Before Ohiopyle State Park was formed as an entity and then engulfed the tiny borough of Ohiopyle, it was an actual functioning town. It had a post office, a school, a playground, a fire department, hotels, and stores on both sides of the main street and two churches. It was my hometown and my life's beginning.

The pros and cons of the park's creation, its development, and the subsequent visitation that it has brought are now a lifetime of 'just water under the bridge.' I am not an unbiased observer of those years. I have never resolved in my heart of hearts the loss of that quaint little town and its unique culture. The old Ohiopyle is gone forever, but perhaps those tumultuous events were necessary in order for my life to take off and then land me where I needed to be, at an old stone house, hidden in the forest behind the knob of the hill, on Kentuck.

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An Interesting Future

My two years of working at Solar Kinetics went by quickly. The work was interesting and the job financially promising. I had been offered stock shares in the company. The company hired two more draftsmen to assist me, as our workload was growing rapidly. At home, Vicki had recently given me the exciting news that we were about to become parents. We began searching for larger living quarters. Our single bedroom apartment was definitely not large enough to accommodate another bed with another person in it. We were excited. We began to look around the immediate neighborhood and a new development of townhomes was currently going up close by. They looked very nice. We felt our future was getting brighter. That was about the time we would learn that something terrible was going on back in Pennsylvania with her family. Life was about to change in more ways than one.

Vicki's father, James (Mick) McKinney had just received a diagnosis that he had developed late-stage lung cancer. He had worked for years in the coal mines and was a cigarette smoker. Things did not look good for his recovery, even with aggressive treatment. He was given only months to live.

Vicki was the youngest in her family of four and she was still Daddy's "little girl." I would not keep her

twelve hundred miles away from her family during this time. Her first trip home was just a short while after Mick had learned that detected spots in his lungs were growing, and other organs were also being affected by the disease. The first trip was by air flying out of DFW and I believe it was her first plane flight. She didn't like the idea of flying but was too deep in worried concern to be nervous. I don't remember the actual cost, but it didn't matter. She spent a week or so with her mom, dad, and family but of course there was nothing enjoyable about being there. She returned to Dallas, but her thoughts were far away.

Vicki's second return trip happened when a school friend of Vicki's, Holly Mathias, had come to attend the wedding of her sister, Kim. Kimberly Mathias was getting married to my good friend from Pennsylvania, Rodger Chan Burnsworth. After the wedding, Vicki rode back to Pennsylvania with Holly. The third trip home she made by Greyhound bus Lines. The bus trip took 36 hours (about 1 and a half days) instead of the 24 hours it usually takes by car. While she was home, Mick tried in vain to convince her to stay. He even offered her a car to move home.

When Vicki returned to me that time, she said her dad wouldn't have long to live. Since there was no way to know how much time he would have, I decided the best choice was for us to move back to Pennsylvania.

Other unsettling things began happening that reinforced that decision.

Close to our apartment complex, a child's lifeless body was discovered in a dumpster next to a fast-food restaurant. Between that restaurant and our complex, there was a large concert hall and entertainment facility, The Bijou. One evening after a rock concert, a fight broke out in that facility's parking lot and next to our apartments. That gun fight was between a few of the concert goers but then continued to and directly behind our apartment. During the chaos and gunshots, the Dallas City Police were called. Soon at least a dozen police cars and emergency vehicles flooded into the area. The next morning, a car, which was parked directly behind our bedroom, had two bullet holes in it, and another hole was found in the brickwork of our building narrowly missing the car. It was during this time that Vicki had a miscarriage. Too much was going wrong for us. Our minds were made up that we had to leave Dallas. Stress and grief are hard to manage or cope with when living so far from one's home and family.

“If a man can write a better book or preach a better sermon or make a better mousetrap than his neighbor, even if he builds his house in the woods, the world will make a beaten path to his door.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson



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