

Former architecture dean dies at 89

■ **DEAN:** Gordon's 65-year career is highlighted by a variety of accomplishments in the field of architecture

By Amy Palanuk
Higher Education Reporter

Walter Gordon, dean of the school of architecture from 1958-62, gained a reputation among co-workers for his love of both architecture and the arts.

He died April 5 at the age of 89. "Gordon was a remarkable person who was always very bright and intensely interested in design," said Bill Hawkins, Portland architect and graduate of the school of architecture, 1962.

A man known for his intense interest in simple designs, Gordon's career spanned nearly 65 years and ranged from curating at museums to designing buildings in the Northwest to teaching students the virtue of art in structural design.

"Walter [was] a perennial student, [had] a keen and inquiring mind, a delightful and sometimes barbed wit, and a wonderful sense of humor," wrote Richard Ritz, historian and architect, in a profile of Gordon in *Architalk* in 1994.

While no list of Gordon's architectural achievements has been completed, highlights to his achievements would be the design of the Marylhurst College library and chapel, Reed College's Community Center and the Hillsdale branch of the Multnomah County Library.

Gordon introduced students to the world of professional architecture by introducing them to professionals.

As dean at the School of Architecture, Gordon was instrumental in getting good Portland architects to visit the school during his period here. One of these architects was the well-reputed John Yeon.

Gordon was also an instrumental organizer for contacting the Yeon family for the School of Architecture and Allied Arts, a contact which eventually endowed the school with \$9.5 million.

Gordon was born Sept. 8, 1907 in Buffalo, New York. He graduated



Walter Gordon, standing, introduces students to Pietro Belluschi, dean of architecture at M.I.T. during a campus visit in 1960.

Phi Beta Kappa from Princeton in 1930 and earned his masters of fine arts in architecture at Princeton in 1932. After studying at Sorbonne in Paris and gaining a fellowship at Yale in 1936, Gordon moved west where he was a curator for the San Francisco Museum of Art and later the Portland Museum of Art. In 1940 he worked for Pietro Belluschi at what was then called A.E. Doyle & Associates designing war housing and community buildings.

After a three-year period where Gordon served in the Navy in World War II, he returned to work with Belluschi and then later started his own practice, designing fine houses for prominent people in Portland. His style was recognized as a distinct "Northwest Style" that emphasized simple designs and integrated environmental elements, including wood paneling.

In 1958, Gordon was awarded by the Artists' Equity for outstanding service toward the integration of art in Architecture.

In 1962, after serving as dean of the school of architecture for three years, Gordon resigned to resume his own practice and become visiting professor of art and design at Reed College in Portland.

In 1979, he moved to Newport, Oregon, where he and his wife lived in a house he had designed himself.

Later, Gordon wrote articles on design and architecture for *The Oregonian*.

Gordon is survived by his wife, Margaret.

No service is planned, and remembrances are to be made to the University of Oregon School of Architecture and Allied Arts, in care of DeMoss-Durand Garden Chapel, 815 N.W. Buchanan St., Corvallis, Ore., 97330.

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