

HOMER T. DELAWIE, 1927 - 2009

Homer T. Delawie, FAIA, San Diego's legendary modernist architect, died at San Diego Hospice on June 26. He was 81 years old. The cause of death was complications of Parkinson's Disease.

Mr. Delawie is renowned for his numerous projects in San Diego, for which he earned nearly 100 design awards (AIA & AIA affiliates) from 1961 to his retirement in 1997. His projects include the Plaza de Balboa, Balboa Park (now renamed the Bea Evenson Fountain), the Penguin and Shark exhibits at Sea World, the MTDB Trolley Building & Clock Tower downtown, the M. Larry Lawrence Jewish Community Center and expansion, the Scripps Miramar Ranch High School, the School of Creative & Performing Arts in South Bay, the San Diego Hospice, and projects for UCSD, the San Diego Zoo, S.D. State University, Qualcomm and numerous other public, commercial and residential projects throughout San Diego.

A leader in modernist architecture, Mr. Delawie earned his first design award for the first 17' wide Mission Hills house, built on a 25-ft. lot in 1958.

Throughout his career, Mr. Delawie contributed countless hours to civic planning and development issues. He served as chapter president of the AIA, and on a number of state and national committees and design juries. In 1997, the AIA California Council presented Delawie with a lifetime contribution award, and in 2002, he received a similar award from Save Our Heritage Organization, San Diego. He remained a force in planning and historic preservation; his Postwar Modern houses, uniquely featuring maximum expanses of glass walls and sliding-glass doors framed in cedar, embrace atrium gardens and private decks. Some of his most dramatic hillside houses appear to float over lush canyons.

Many of his projects have been widely publicized.

Mr. Delawie was born in Santa Barbara, California. He served in the U. S. Navy at the end of World War II, after which he worked for the U. S. Forest Service in Los Padres National Forest without quite envisioning his next step. Under the G. I. Bill, he took a series of tests with the Veterans Administration, the results of which suggested that he study architecture, and recommended the fledgling New School of Architecture at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo. Mr. Delawie graduated there in 1951. He later became the school's first licensed architect, subsequently its first National Design Award winner, and its first to be elected to the AIA's National College of Fellows.

In San Diego in 1958, he formed a partnership with pioneer modernist Lloyd Ruocco FAIA; then opened his own office in 1961. Today the firm is known as Delawie, Wilkes, Rodrigues, Barker.

Mr. Delawie is survived by his wife, Ettie; six children, Gregory Delawie of Alexandria, Va., Claire Sosna of San Diego, Shandell Sosna of Marin County, Tracy Delawie of Olympia, Wash., Scott Delawie of San Diego and Stephanie Sosna of Bozeman, Montana; three grandchildren, Torrence Delawie, Frederick Delawie and Dane Sosna.