

## **Anthony Puttnam**

**January 30, 1934 - July 5, 2017, 83 yrs old.**

Tony Puttnam was the principal in charge and design architect for the construction of Monona Terrace. He spent most of his time from 1990 to 1997 guiding the massive project through to completion. But the journey that would eventually lead him to work on Monona Terrace began decades earlier.

It was 1953, and Tony was 19 years old and a freshman in college when he attended a presentation in Chicago. This presentation was given by Frank Lloyd Wright's daughter, Iovanna and other members of the Taliesin Fellowship. Tony's interest was piqued and he made an effort to meet Iovanna. It must have been quite a conversation, because she invited Tony to visit Frank Lloyd Wright's famous residence and architectural school. Of course, he accepted.

Seeing the Taliesin complex blew Tony's mind. He said he felt "like someone who had never heard music before and then suddenly heard a symphony." After this, Tony wanted to learn more from Wright. He requested permission to attend Wright's famous architectural school for the summer. When Tony changed his selective service address to Taliesin, the draft board of Chicago, oddly enough, threatened to send him off to the Korean War. Why? It turns out that one of the draft board members had a relative who held a grudge against Wright! Apparently Wright owed this person money for the purchase of a piano, years earlier. Of course this threat was illegal and never went anywhere, but it wouldn't be the only time that Wright's reputation would get in the way of Tony's work with him.

After that glorious summer, Tony returned to Illinois for the fall semester of college, but after only a few months he realized he had to return to Taliesin. He left college in January 1954 to become an apprentice under Frank Lloyd Wright. Incidentally, the first project he worked on was helping to build an elaborate Monona Terrace model, which in this iteration included 2 office towers and a massive ring-shaped, three tiered, two-thousand car, parking structure. Tony continued as an apprentice until 1957 when his father, a brigadier general in the army, demanded he have nothing to do with Frank Lloyd Wright or Taliesin. Apparently, Brigadier General Puttnam had heard some disturbing things about Wright and believed association with him would come to no good for Tony. It is interesting to note that around this time a coalition of Madison politicians and media had started a smear campaign against Wright in part because of personal grudges, but also because of the Monona Terrace project! In his strategy to get Tony away from Wright the General decided to enlist the young man in a National Guard unit in New York. This didn't turn out as dad may have wanted because Tony couldn't pass the eye exam. However, now that he was in New York City (and away from dad,) he decided to extend his stay and make the best of it. He was hired to do interior design work for an NYC architectural firm.

Of course, for Tony, the majesty of Taliesin never faded, and after Wright's death in 1959 Tony heard that Taliesin was in need of architects to complete all the projects they had on the drafting boards. So in 1960 at 26 years of age, he started working at Taliesin on a permanent basis. It was around this same time that the City of Madison had approved final preliminary plans for Monona Terrace. Puttnam was assigned to do the construction drawings for the project under the direction of Wes Peters. From this point on, maybe even more so than Wright himself, Tony would become the foremost expert on the intricacies of the building.

Decades later in 1989, civic leaders in Madison came to Tony to find out if Wright's plans for the civic center could be adapted to meet the current needs of the city. Tony determined that this would be possible and from 1991-97 he was the one to steer the project through countless hurdles and challenges in order to make Wright's dream a reality. Most people involved at the time will tell you that it was Puttnam's calm demeanor, innate sense of Wright's architectural style and his indisputable authority on the subject that made the convention center's construction possible.

After the convention center opened in 1997 and until his death in 2017, Tony would continue to be consulted for interior and exterior work on the building. During his visits he would do a careful inventory of the building reporting any concerns he might have; he was after-all the guardian of Wright's Monona Terrace legacy.

In person, Tony was a lovely man, quiet, mild mannered, and humble. He didn't chat much but when he did he displayed a dry wit and keen intellect, even into his later years. He will be missed and always remembered.