



## **Ralph W. Crump**

September 28, 1919 – October 15, 2015

I was a colleague and close friend of Ralph's for 15 years at Cornell. He was a quiet-spoken man who never raised his voice in anger except, of course, when he was on his sailboat. Then he turned into a version of Captain Ahab. Ralph loved sailing. He had a 35-foot Alberg sailboat at his family home in Easton, MD. Ralph asked me one time to help him sail the boat to Cayuga Lake from Easton. He offered that if I let him anchor it in front of my house on Cayuga Lake, I could use it any time. I could not resist. So several faculty and I drove to Easton to sail the boat to Ithaca. We sailed up the Chesapeake Bay through the Chesapeake-and-Delaware Canal into the Delaware Water Gap and eventually into the Atlantic Ocean off of New Jersey.

One night on the Delaware Water Gap the faculty on watch got lost. Ralph was so upset. I will never forget it. He stood up and screamed, "Young man, if you're lost in the Ocean, you're dead!" From that point on, those of us on watch honed our navigation skills. Sailing the Atlantic off of the New Jersey coast somewhere near the Verrasano-Narrows Bridge a huge storm engulfed us. One faculty had two young kids on board. As their little heads popped out of the hatch, Ralph ordered them to stay below. I hung on to Ralph. We were flat in the water, our sails blown out. We limped into Manhattan and stayed at a marina on the lower East Side. Ralph was so upset with his inexperienced crew that I had to take him to several establishments that I knew from previously living in the city to adjust his mood.

We left later the next day to motor up the Hudson River past Albany and into the NYS Barge Canal. The canal cruise was long and tedious, through several locks. When we got into Lake Ontario we sailed to Rochester where we got into the Cayuga-Seneca Canal. We sailed

until we reached a bridge, had to step the mast and then proceeded down Cayuga Lake to drop anchor in front of my house.

It is a trip that will live in my memory forever—for its wonder and fear. For many years after that trip, faculty, staff and students will recall the many occasions we sailed Ralph's 35 Alberg on Cayuga Lake. Several students, Ralph, and I and would race the boat on weekends from the Ithaca Yacht Club. Of course Ralph and I became close friends. When I became Chairman of the Department of Architecture, the College Admissions Committee was under my direction. I appointed Ralph to be Director of Admissions. He did a wonderful job until he retired.

Ralph was a dedicated teacher. He had a Teaching Assistant named Preston who died in an auto accident driving home to Auburn, NY. Ralph became endeared to his parents, Ruth and Leonard Thomas, and was instrumental in setting up the Thomas Lecture Series that continues to be funded by Ruth and Leonard's legacy. The Thomases also funded the first *Cornell Journal of Architecture*, that I started. Published by Rizzoli, the *Journal* helped put Cornell Architecture on the map. In this sense, Ralph was extremely important both to the Department of Architecture and to the University. I tried to talk him out of retiring but he said he wanted to leave with time left to enjoy life. He retired in 1983. I will never forget when Ralph and his son came to my house on Cayuga Lake and just sailed away.

Ralph was born at a farmhouse owned by Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin East in Wisconsin. After serving in WWII, Ralph graduated from the College of Architecture at Cornell in 1949 with a Bachelor of Architecture degree, and was the recipient of the Charles Goodwin Sands Memorial Award. He then worked for Rhees Burkett and T. B. Bourne. He became a registered architect in 1952 and started working for Larson and Larson overseeing the construction of Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, NC. Ralph started a solo architectural practice in Winston-Salem in 1955. He left his firm in 1968 to become a professor of architecture at Cornell.

Ralph Crump was for many years the Department of Architecture's "one man technology program". He not only taught all the basic and advanced building technology courses but also doubled up as a technical consultant to the undergraduate studios. In this capacity he worked tirelessly to ensure that the knowledge students gained in his technology courses were integrated into their design studio projects.

Ralph was also a cofounder of the Department of Architecture's "Career Explorations Program in Architecture Program" an outreach

program targeted at high school and college students who are interested in pursuing professional education in architecture. His enthusiasm for the program went far beyond the classroom. He was also so appreciative of the contributions his faculty colleagues and staff made to the program that at the end of each six week summer session Ralph would invite all us to an outing on his boat on Cayuga Lake.

Although Ralph dissolved his firm Winston-Salem when he joined the Cornell faculty in 1968, he always kept one foot in practice. Throughout his teaching career in Ithaca Ralph served as a consultant to Egner Associates, a local architecture and planning firm. In that role Ralph oversaw the production of construction drawings and contract documents for all the firm's projects. The buildings and projects both locally and throughout New York State are too numerous to list. In spite of his heavy teaching and consulting schedule, Ralph found time to mentor student interns who worked with him.

After a long tenure, he retired to Easton, MD in 1983 and continued to work in historic restoration. Ralph Crump was a quiet, very accomplished, and engaging teacher, professional, and mentor. He was a gentleman in the true sense of the word.

*Henry Richardson, professor of architecture and former associate dean of AAP and department chair, and Jerry A. Wells, professor of architecture and former chairman of the department of architecture*