

Joseph Henry Wythe

October 18, 1920- September 30, 2019

Joseph Henry Wythe, 98, passed away on Sept. 30, 2019, in Sandpoint, Idaho. He was born on Oct. 18, 1920 in San Jose, California, to Joseph Hills Wythe and Elsie Twelker Wythe.

Wythe worked as a journeyman carpenter before starting his architectural studies at University of California Berkeley, which were interrupted by World War II. During the war, he served on B-24 bombers based in Italy, and they flew missions over Germany and southern Europe. After the war, his wartime experiences inspired him to become active in the peace movement.

After returning from the war, Wythe met Bruce Goff, and later, Frank Lloyd Wright, two giants of modern American architecture. He did graduate work with Goff at the University of Oklahoma School of Architecture, considered by many at the time as the world's finest architectural school. This laid the basis for the architectural work that Joe went on to do for the rest of his life, always inspired by Goff and Wright.

In California, he set up his architectural studio on the Monterey Peninsula, where he taught at Monterey Peninsula College and married Lois Renk. Wythe was instrumental in establishing the Monterey County Chapter of American Civil Liberties Union and was its first president.

In 1977, he and Lois returned to her native Idaho to become part of the Sandpoint community. They were founders of the Sandpoint Friends (Quakers) Meeting in 1980, which they started in the living room of their home. They went on to also help establish the Pend Oreille Arts Council, Panhandle Environmental League, Farmer's Market, and Kinnikinick Native Plants Society. He was also a member of the Sandpoint Rotary Club and its Scholarship Committee and was involved in community action against the Sandpoint bypass.

Wythe sang with the Monterey Peninsula Choral Society, the Carmel Bach Festival, and later with the Pend Oreille Chorale in Sandpoint.

Since meeting Goff and Wright, Joseph Henry Wythe devoted his life to the cause of organic architecture. "Unicorn Farm", the Wythe home near Sandpoint, has been widely published as an example of organic architecture, and he wrote four books on the subject. His work was chosen to be part of exhibitions titled "The Legacy of Frank Lloyd Wright", which toured Europe for several years.

Joe was preceded in death by his wife, Lois Renk Wythe, his brother John Wythe, and sister, Martha Mosac. He is survived by sister Phyllis Karsten, son Joseph Henry Wythe, daughters Romi Elnagar and Luana Morris, nine grandchildren, and four great grandchildren.

His ashes will be scattered at Unicorn Farm to mingle with those of his beloved wife, Lois.