

# Architect establishes forum

The next time you find yourself admiring the beauty, warmth and magnificent scale of K-State's Hale Library, remember to thank Brent Bowman, architect.

While you're at it, you may also want to note the Holton Hall renovation, the KSU football stadium (in collaboration with HOK Sports), and the Manhattan municipal building, airport, public library and Frank Anneberg Park and Sports Complex. The mark of Bowman's expressive hand is clearly visible on the K-State campus and in Manhattan.

But, this prolific and successful architect, whose work has won numerous awards and whose firm's name is often on lists that otherwise contain only firms from major metropolitan areas, once wondered if he would ever be able to make it in his profession.

"The architecture education process assigns projects that are then critiqued by the professors to help you hone your skills," Bowman said. "Design is something that is not easily taught. Sometimes the students feel uneasy and inadequate as the process unfolds. In the third year, sometimes you are wondering if you're cut out for this."

The intensity of that third year is one of the reasons that Bowman has committed \$30,000 to the KSU Foundation to establish the Bowman Awards for Excellence in Architectural Design.

The awards will be given to third-year architecture students on the basis of a competition, held in conjunction with an architecture forum that will include nationally and regionally known architects.

The awards will be \$6,000 annually, divided into three designated areas: \$2,000 will be designated as a First Scholarship Award, \$1,500 will be designated as three \$500 merit award scholarships and \$2,500 will be designated as cash for reimbursement expenses for the architecture forum.

"The forum will be held once a year and will involve all third-year students. I want the forum to be a positive force for the students and give them an opportunity to have an interactive dialogue with the professionals," Bowman said.

"Tom Beeby of Hammond Beeby and Babka, Chicago, with whom I collaborated on Hale Library, will join us for the spring 2000 forum. We will also have Gene Mackey of

Mackey Mitchell, St. Louis.

"In November this year, our guest architect will be Peter Bohlin of Bohlin Cywinski Jackson, a nationally known firm with offices in Pennsylvania and Washington state.

"This is a modest investment," Bowman said. "But it gives us the opportunity to have additional interaction with the third-year students, and also with the architects who are jurors for the competition."

Jim Jones, R. A., head of the Department of Architecture in the College of Architecture, Planning & Design, said Bowman's gift is just one of the many ways that he (Bowman) has supported the Department of Architecture over the years.

"This is an excellent opportunity to recognize outstanding work at a pivotal time in the students' training. It also exposes the students to the ideas of the reviewers who are nationally and internationally known. To have the chance to hear their ideas will be the opportunity of a lifetime for the students."

## AR-CHI-TECT

Bowman grew up in Pawnee Rock, Kansas. He was in elementary school when he began to think he wanted to be an architect.

His teacher had given the youngsters an assignment to write a "What I want to be when I grow up" essay. Bowman's one-year-older and wiser cousin told him that he had impressed the teacher the previous year with the occupation of "pharmacist," which he had selected by way of the dictionary. Upon returning home, Bowman opened up his dictionary.

"When I came upon architect, I'm sure I couldn't even pronounce it right, but I thought it sounded good. I was good at drawing and I always did like buildings."

As Bowman grew up, his interest in the field flourished. He steered toward classes in drawing and drafting. By the time he was ready for college, there was no question that he was headed for what was then known as the College of Architecture & Design at Kansas State University.

Bowman graduated from K-State in 1972 with a bachelor's degree in architecture. He worked in Phoenix and Kansas City before returning to Manhattan in 1977. In 1978, he established Brent Bowman and Associates Architects, whose offices are located in downtown Manhattan in a turn-of-the-century building that he and his staff renovated.

Bowman's firm, which is chock-full of K-State grads, has a wide variety of architectural projects to its credit.

"We try to be diverse and not get into a specific niche," Bowman said. "That's a creative decision — it's more inspiring to have a change of scene. We've done homes and we've done industrial buildings.

"Public architecture — including municipal and state buildings, as well as schools — is probably our main interest.

"A building is an opportunity to make a creative expression that lives after you're gone. Public architecture, especially, carries with it a responsibility. It can't be faddish."

## BACK TO BASICS

Bowman enjoys the schematic design part of the architecture process, and says he does, indeed, "think with a pencil." He also notes that working through a design with a client is an enriching part of the process.

Another aspect of his work that Bowman finds particularly rewarding is working with students, some of whom are paid interns in his firm.

"The students at K-State enrich this community and they enrich our firm," he said.

"One of the blessings of being in Manhattan is that we have a university here. The students contribute a lot to our lives. We need to continue to interact with them and learn from them."

Bowman's advice for today's students is two-fold.

"First I would say to hone your skills at drawing. Even with all of the technology we have, there is no substitute for the craftsman skills. They are still important.

"I also believe that architecture is a community endeavor. You don't practice in a vacuum. Be a part of your community. Get involved."

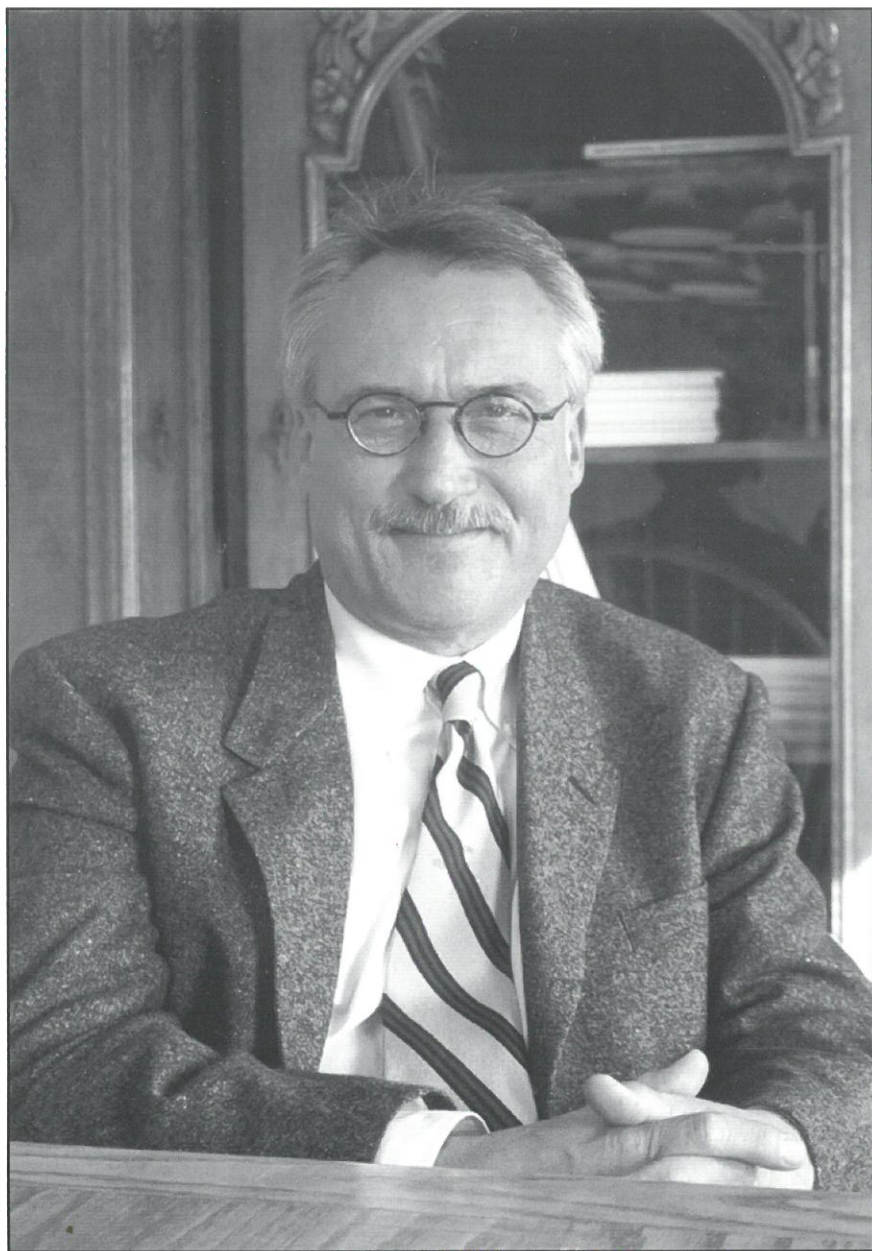
## KICKING BACK

When Bowman isn't working, he may be tending his garden, reading, or researching the various ethnic groups that originally settled the Flint Hills. One thing he would like to do is work toward refining a particular style of Flint Hills architecture.

"Original settlers were very creative in devising architectural inventions in response to the climate and topography of the area."

Although Bowman's passion and devotion for his work are clear, you can't say that he's married to architecture. You can say, however, that he is married to an architect. His wife, Lorie Doolittle-Bowman, has a firm in Kansas City. Consequently, the couple divides their weekend time between the two cities. They also enjoy traveling. "Wherever we go, you know we're looking at the buildings."

—Julie Lea



"It's important for a building's design to be appropriate to its place. You want to feel like it belongs in its setting. When that happens, it's inspiring."

—Brent Bowman