

FACULTY MEMORIES

DALE GIBBS

The London Study Abroad Program at UNL is an amazing educational journey that expands the horizons and minds of so many College of Architecture students, and I am proud to have hosted the program for four years, including in 1973, 1979, 1987 and 1992. I was the fourth faculty member to host the program and surprisingly before that I had never been to Europe, so I was learning right alongside the students. Of course I took my family including my two daughters who were aged three and six in 1973. The aspect we often forget regarding the London program is that it benefits more than just the students. It is also a wonderful experience for the faculty hosts and their family members. My girls loved it. I wasn't sure at first if they liked it at the time, but when they were preparing for college, they both included stories about living in London on their college application essays and how it impacted them.

We lived in an apartment close to the students. The students stayed in several locations over the four trips we took. My first year, the students stayed at a hostel owned by Martin Havill like many of the programs in the 1970s. In later years we used alumni living in London to scout out better accommodations so we weren't staying in locations, site unseen. Subsequent sites

included Belsize Park in North London, a place on Kensington Park Road and Regents College in Regents Park. As I remember, international students were also staying at Regents College which was tremendously advantageous for our students culturally. The exposure offered them a great opportunity to socialize, connect and broaden their perspective of the world around them.

As I planned my first program, I did have the advantage of learning from faculty who had hosted before me such as Ron and Judy Hess, Keith Sawyers etc. But I would say the first three or four years it was really just an experiment, and the professors would report back to the rest of us what worked and what didn't and with every passing year we added improvements and the program evolved.

For my program I didn't have the formalized structure of later programs, and the students seemed to like that. I would start off their program with a free week in London so they could get the feel of the city, find out how to use the "tube"/ subway system and purchase their subway, BritRail and Royal Academy passes. I didn't want to pin them down with any big project while they were just settling in. The only thing I asked them to

do their first week was keep a diary. We knew they had been anticipating this trip for quite some time. We wanted them to enjoy their first week there and after that we would schedule a series of small projects.

I found it easier to give the students small projects that usually lasted about a week to 10 days. I would meet with the students on a daily basis to see how the projects were going. They would work on projects such as studying an especially interesting neighborhood and doing an analysis of the area. In between problems we would give them a break so they could discover things on their own. I gave them a decent amount of freedom and responsibility, deserving my trust as adults.

The first two years I hosted the travel abroad program, we would use the student living quarters for our student meetings but in 1987 and 1992 the Regents College provided a classroom/studio space.

We did utilize program alums like Richard Hill who lived in London to arrange firm visits or stop by for project critiques. We were also fortunate enough to meet some fairly notable if not famous architects. A student favorite that stands out was meeting Ronald "Ron" James Herron who was a well-



known English architect, teacher and best known for his work with the seminal English experimental architecture collective Archigram, which was formed in London in the early 1960s. Various other London architects, including Lord Norman Foster opened their offices for student visits.

Another memorable experience happened during one of our periodic student dinners that we would host at our apartment. One time we had Sir Hugh Casson and his wife Margaret join us for dinner. Casson was the renowned architect to Queen Elizabeth II. He designed the interiors for the royal yacht, Buckingham Palace, Windsor and Sandringham. Several of my students had found some out-of-circulation books that he had published and were thrilled that they had the opportunity to have Casson sign them.

As for student travel, it was confined to England for the most part but after the program ended I would say about 90% of our students stayed in Europe for a while longer for some independent travel.

I was often surprised how much our students would change during these experiences. For some of our average students at Nebraska, I would sometimes see a complete turnaround and transformation. Some of them had improved so much I would consider their final projects to be of publishable quality. For those students who were already stellar academically, it was interesting to see how often they would extend themselves and try something new and edgy. I can't say enough about how valuable and transformational these experiences were and still are for design students.

- Dale Gibbs

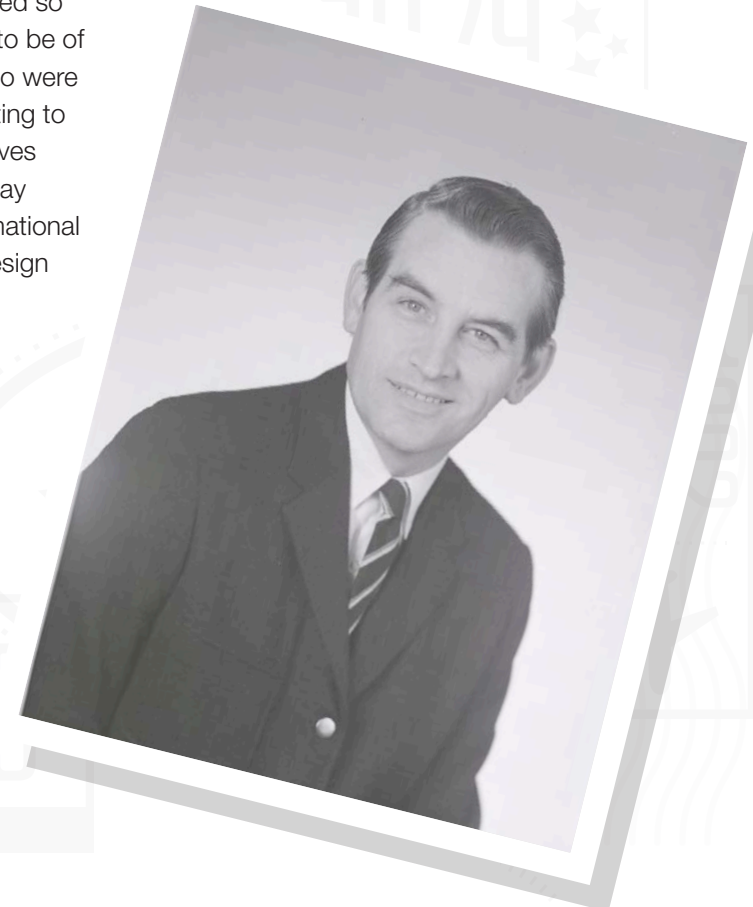
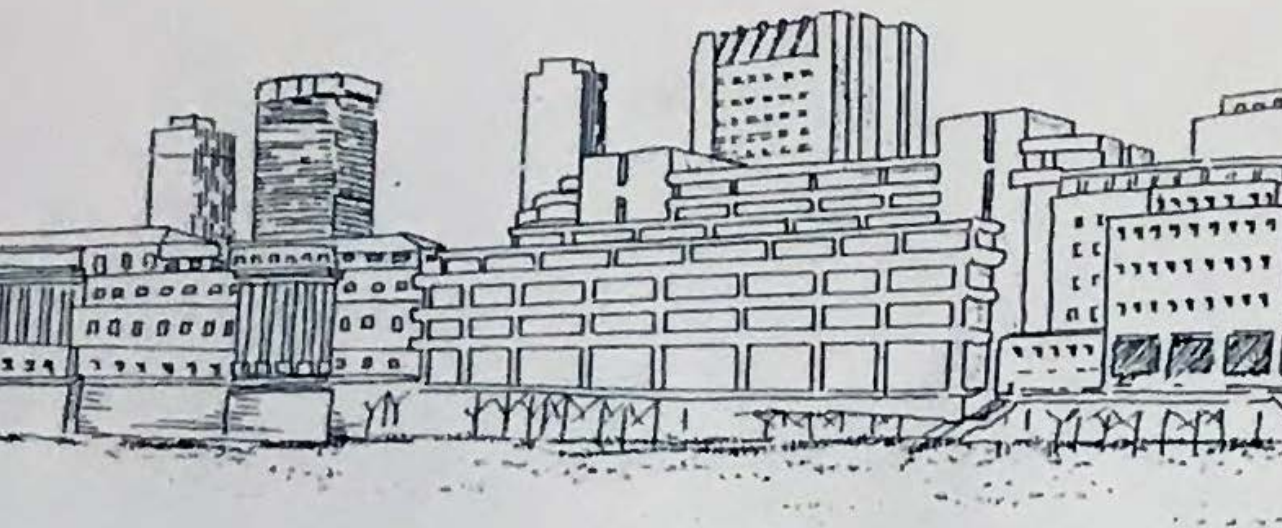




Photo from Dale Gibbs and Gordon Scholz, 1987



Professor Gibbs did an excellent job!

I was also fortunate to be surrounded by bright, energetic and talented classmates. We learned enormously from the experience!

- Jay Murphy, student 1979



“We were invited to sketch outside with Dr. Gibbs on a few occasions.

He was always patient and able to encourage us to make our images better. He could create the most amazing images, usually in the lesser traveled parts on London. He always pointed out how overlooked building and sites could be just as aspiring as the usual, better known places.

- Joseph Saniuk, student 1987



Photos from Joseph Saniuk, 1987