

1981

Opinion of our readers

Even great architects can ^{lay an egg}

Editor, The Times:

Your June 3 editorial, "At last, the art museum," because of careless extravagances in rhetoric probably should be filed in my "ho hum" or "so what" basket forever.

The editorial writer knows me almost not at all and cannot accurately predict the professional value judgements that I am forever asked to make about architecture, both here and there. I am not Zeus, and I have no thunderbolts, as suggested, but if I should acquire them it is not likely that I would use them on Ed Stone, since we were friendly for nearly 50 years.

Ed Stone's biographer, if one comes around, will probably describe Ed's four professional careers in architecture, following the many women in his life. After his first marriage failed he lived with a gifted New York sculptress, and it was during those years that he did his best work.

I have stated publicly on a number of occasions that his American Embassy in New Delhi and his American Pavilion at the Brussels World's Fair are masterpieces of modern architecture.

A few years ago I chaired an architecture award jury that gave Stone an Honor Award for his National Geographic Building in Washington. Stone accepted that award from my hand. It is true that I have been critical of his Legislative Building in Raleigh and his Kennedy Center in Washington.

Ada Louise Huxtable, the architecture critic for the New York Times, has called the Kennedy Center the most banal large building in America. Stone himself has acknowledged to NSCU School of Design graduates who have worked in his office that, "We laid an egg in Raleigh."

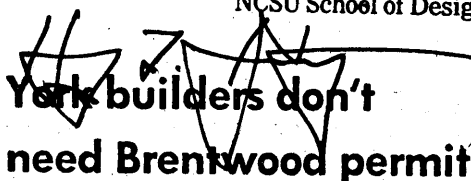
In Stone's third professional period after he married his last legal wife his work became careless and thoughtless and the grill used so well on the New Delhi Embassy became a meaningless trade mark. Sometimes when he would drop into the drafting room of his office, the drafting

crew would break out with a chorus of "A Pretty Grill is Like a Memory."

Even a great architect may sometimes produce a mediocre building, especially when the building has been programmed by a discredited museum director.

I have not said in print, or privately that I think the new North Carolina Museum of Art is a bad building. I think it is ugly, unfortunately sited, inhumane in scale. If the building had been done in a design studio when I was the Dean of the School of Design I would have given it a grade of C plus.

Henry L. Kamphoefner
Dean Emeritus
NCSU School of Design


**York builders don't
need Brentwood permit**

Editor, The Times:

I read your "Building Permits Granted" listings every night, looking for a permit for the grading being done on Brentwood Road just outside the Timberlake subdivision (Yonkers Road exit off the Beltline).

The York Construction Co. has approximately half a million square feet cleared, graded, surveyed and staked, and just this morning (May 27) they had six big earthmovers out there packing down the soil. If you call York Construction or the city Planning Department you will be advised that they are just preparing the area to plant grass seed. However, the construction workers will tell you that it is the site of a sewage treatment plant, and that is why no building permit is displayed.

If I am bound by law to obtain and display a building permit to build a fence around my garden, why doesn't the law apply equally to developers, for their endeavors?

Bob Gorman
Raleigh.

(Editor's note: There'll be no sewage treatment plant on Brentwood Road, city