

IN MEMORIAM
INDIRA BERNDTSON

CHARLES PATERSON (1929-2018)

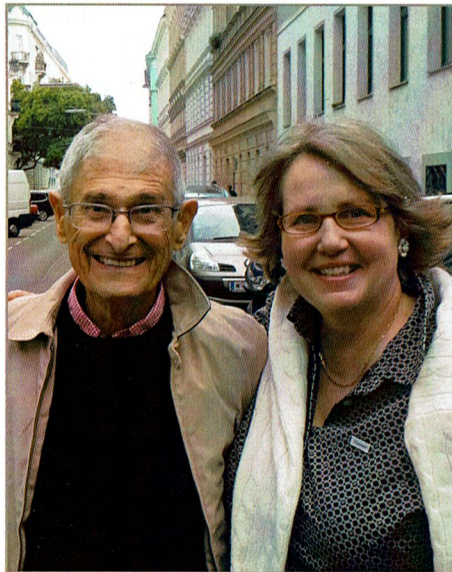
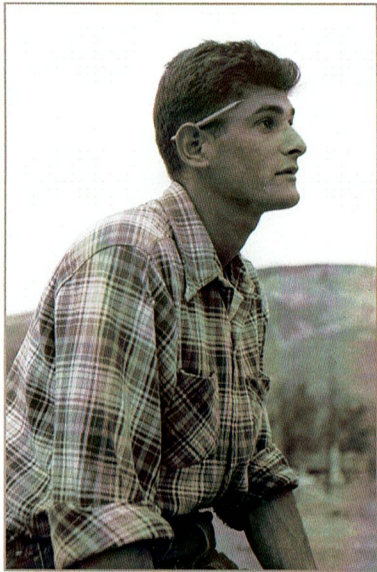
Charles Paterson was a Taliesin apprentice from 1957-1960, attending from April through the fall in Wisconsin. He had a special arrangement with Mr. Wright whereby he could go back to Aspen every winter to teach skiing and run his small lodge. The G.I. Bill paid for his schooling.

Charles was born Karl Schanzer to a Jewish family in Vienna (in an interview done on November 8, 1997 with Indira Berndtson for the FLIW Archives, Charles pointed out that "Schanzer" means "fortification builder"). During the Second World War he and his sister were sent for safety to Australia and adopted by the Paterson family in Brisbane where they lived from 1940-1948. Charles and his sister then rejoined his father in New York. He kept the name "Paterson" as a tribute to the family that saved their lives.

In 1949, he bought a half a city block in Aspen and built a log cabin there. He spent two years in the Mountain and Cold Weather Training Command at Camp Hale, Colorado. After he got out of the Army he heard about Frank Lloyd Wright and Taliesin and applied. Charles' maternal uncle was Adolf Loos, a connection Charles thought helped make Mr. Wright more receptive to accepting him as an apprentice.

At Taliesin he participated in all the work of the Fellowship, especially as a plasterer. In fact, once when his father visited Taliesin, according to Charles Mr. Wright told him: "Well, you know your son's a damn good plasterer; we're going to make a good architect out of him." While at Taliesin, Charles also designed and completed working drawings for the Boomerang Lodge, which he later built in Aspen. Over the years he and his wife Fonda were very generous about inviting apprentices to stay in the lodge during their cross-

Above: Charles Paterson.
2013 photograph by
David O. Marlow.



country trips from Taliesin to Taliesin West. Their daughters, Carrie and Jenny, especially loved the visits by Ling Po; Charles credited his health to the tai chi Ling taught him.

Charles told us in the 1997 interview that he continued in architecture after leaving Taliesin. In fact, he was one of his own best clients, because in addition to his clients' homes he designed a number of other buildings on his various properties. Part of the Boomerang Lodge is historically designated as an example of "Mountain Modern." He was ski instructor with the Aspen Ski School for 17 years. He chaired the Rocky Mountain Ski instructors Association as well as the Aspen Chamber and Visitors Bureau and the Aspen Lodging Association. He also became very active on the board of the Music Associates of Aspen and the Aspen Music Festival and School where he and Fonda both served several terms as Vice President and set up the Paterson Scholarship Fund. Charles also commented in our interview that the Taliesin experience changed his life; he had found the spiritual growth there that he felt he needed at that time in his life and a mentor in Mr. Wright, as well as many lifelong friends. In 2013 Charles published his book *Escape Home: Rebuilding a Life After the Anschluss - A Family Memoir*, about his ancestral family's life in Europe and his life in Aspen. The book was authored by his daughter Carrie and their research took them back to Europe multiple times. In the book he also wrote about his Taliesin years.

In recent years, Charles and Fonda visited Taliesin West; he was on the Board of the Taliesin Fellows and a generous donor to the School of Architecture at Taliesin. We had a lovely time visiting with this vibrant, handsome man in his late eighties and his wonderful wife, Fonda, just about a year ago. Charles has left us, but his book and his family will continue to be a testament to his amazing life. ■

Above Left: Charles Paterson building his Aspen log cabin, circa mid-1950s.

Above Middle: Charles and Fonda Paterson.

Above Right: Charles with M/M Wright at picnic 1957.

All photos courtesy Paterson family.