

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS
SEPTEMBER 7, 2022
PR-2022-116243; GF-2022-120476
1810 DEXTER STREET

PROPOSAL

Demolish a ca. 1953 house constructed by A. D. Stenger.

ARCHITECTURE

One-story stone veneer house with exposed rafter tails, a blind front wall, a cross-gabled roof with deep eaves, and concealed entryway.

RESEARCH

The house at 1810 Dexter Street was built in 1953 by A. D. Stenger in collaboration with the Austin Home Builders' Association. This "Educational Home" served as a model home for the South Lund Park neighborhood; the Association encouraged potential homebuyers to visit the construction site while the home was being built to showcase its concrete slab and single-story plan "similar to the grand prize winner of a recent architectural competition sponsored by Carrier Air Conditioning Manufacturers."¹

According to a 2008 exhibit of Stenger's work at the University of Texas:

A.D. Stenger was a renowned local developer, architect and builder in Austin during the late 1940s through the late 1990s. Many of his houses are in the Barton Hills area. His career began while he was enrolled as a student in the School of Architecture at The University of Texas at Austin. Stenger spent decades building houses for numerous creative Austinites including humorists John Henry Faulk and Cactus Pryor. Acting as developer, architect and builder, Stenger's houses reflected modern designs with touches of "homey comfort" in response to a demand for an affordable, modern lifestyle.^{2, 3}

A 2015 zoning change review sheet, prepared by the Historic Preservation Office for another since-demolished Stenger home, describes his legacy as follows:

A.D. (Arthur Dallas) Stenger was a prominent mid-century modern designer/builder in Austin. He got his start after passing his professional licensing exam in 1950 while a student at University of Texas School of Architecture. Leaving UT before completing the program, Stenger jumped into the post-war housing boom. Stenger was often compared to prominent California developer Joseph Eichler [...] A "Stenger" home has a low-pitch gable roof, pronounced rafter tails, post and beam construction, and conservative footprint, with most buildings being under 1500 square feet, with exposed beams and decking. Stenger also often included walls of collected stone, gable ends that terminate in a projecting point and cantilevered structural systems.

Stenger is one of Austin's most prominent mid-century modern architects and is often credited with establishing the mid-century modern movement in Austin. As a developer/building/architect he was involved with the houses from the conception, design, speculation, and construction. He concentrated his efforts in three areas: A.D. Stenger Addition, South Lund Park and Ridgewood Village...[While] speculative building was becoming popular, A.D. Stenger continued to design buildings that were unique in their architecture and sculpted to the geography of their land. [...] The use of native stone, wide expanses of glass and natural siding materials were used to blend into the [landscape].⁴

1810 Dexter Street was eventually purchased by Lucien and Evelyn Capehart. Lucien H. Capehart, Sr., worked as a salesman and at an airplane manufacturing company. 1810 Dexter was also the childhood home of renowned Palm Beach society photographer Lucien H. Capehart, Jr., who discovered his love of photography while on a UT-sponsored undersea research project in the Virgin Islands. After graduating from the University of Texas, Capehart built his business by photographing notable Floridians until his death in 2012.

¹ The Austin American (1914-1973); 23 Aug 1953: A29.

² <https://news.utexas.edu/2008/03/24/a-d-stenger-architecture-exhibit-opening-reception-scheduled-march-26/>

³ <https://www.docomomo-us.org/event/architectural-capers-homes-by-austin-s-a-d-stenger>

⁴ Zoning change review sheet: 1000 Lund St., HDP-2015-0152

PROPERTY EVALUATION

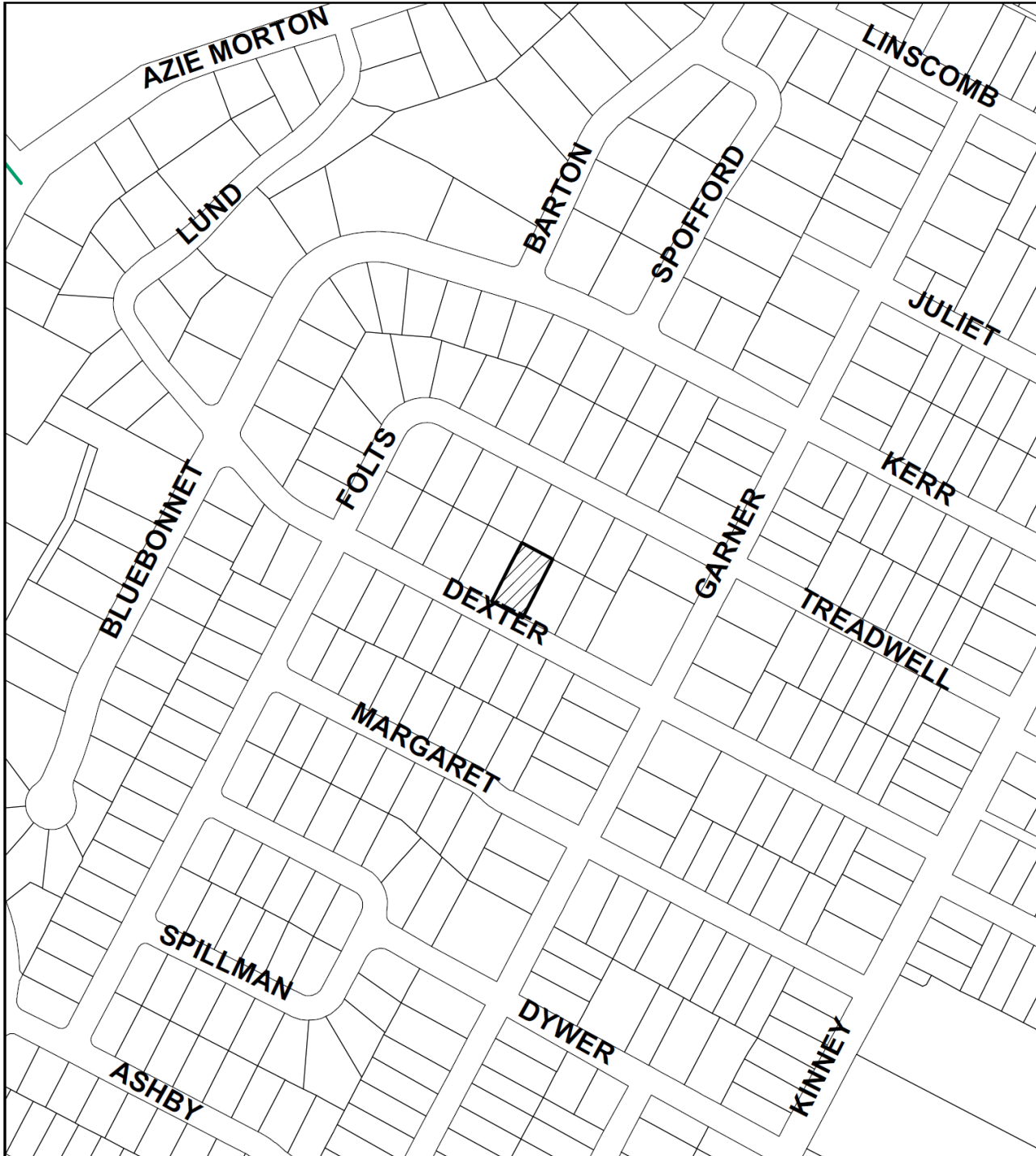
Designation Criteria—Historic Landmark

- 1) The building is more than 50 years old.
- 2) The building appears to retain high to moderate integrity.
- 3) Properties must meet two criteria for landmark designation (LDC §25-2-352). Staff has evaluated the property and determined that it may meet two criteria:
 - a. Architecture. The building is a mid-century Modern house constructed by noted Austin architect A. D. Stenger with a plan inspired by the Carrier Air-Conditioned Village contest winner.
 - b. Historical association. The property was featured as an “educational home” by the Austin Home Builders Association in 1953. It is the childhood home of Palm Beach society photographer Lucien Capehart.
 - c. Archaeology. The property was not evaluated for its potential to yield significant data concerning the human history or prehistory of the region.
 - d. Community value. The property does not possess a unique location, physical characteristic, or significant feature that contributes to the character, image, or cultural identity of the city, the neighborhood, or a particular demographic group.
 - e. Landscape feature. The property is not a significant natural or designed landscape with artistic, aesthetic, cultural, or historical value to the city.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Consider whether the home’s architecture and associations are sufficient to initiate historic zoning on the property. Should the Commission decide against initiation, release the demolition permit upon completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package.

LOCATION MAP



SUBJECT TRACT



PENDING CASE



ZONING BOUNDARY

NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: GF 22-120746

LOCATION: 1810 DEXTER STREET

1" = 250'

This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries.

This product has been produced by CTM for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.



PROPERTY INFORMATION

Photos

Street View, 2022







Demolition application, 2022





Google street view, 2009-2020

Occupancy History

City Directory Research, August 2022

1959	Vacant
1957	Lucian Henry Capehart, owner Salesman, Hubbard Parts Company
1955	Lucian H. and Evelyn Capehart, owners Salesman, Hubbard Company

Permits

Receipt No. 20485 Application for Sewer Connection N^o 32093
SW / 11 Austin, Texas, 9-23- 1953
 To the Superintendent of Sanitary Sewer Division, City of Austin, Texas.
 Sir:—
 I hereby make application for sewer connection and instructions on premises owned by
A. D. Stenger at 1810 Dexter St. Street,

Sewer service permit, 1953

A. D. Stenger **1810 Dexter Street**
106 **3** **B - -**
South Lund Park
Masonry and frame residence with carport
attached.
54636 8-4-53 **\$12,000.00**

Owner

Building permit, 1953

Sponsored by the

[illegible]

SOUTH LUND PARK is located about three blocks south of Barton Springs Boulevard and along the bluff east of Barton Springs Swimming Pool. The subdivision is best reached now by driving up Kinney Avenue from Barton Springs Road to Dexter. The home is located at 1810 Dexter Street. For further information call Austin Home Builders Assn., 6-6316.

See New **Southwest Austin** Today

You are in for the greatest surprise of your life when you see these modern designed subdivisions incorporating nature's natural beauty which God so graciously bestowed on these areas.

A. D. STENGER
Developer - Architect - Builder
Phone 8-8921 - 8-4587

Only 1½ miles to Sixth and Congress—all paved streets, concrete curbs and gutters and city utilities. See the Educational Home sponsored by Austin Home Builders Association at 1810 Dexter Street.

The Austin American (1914-1973); 03 Jan 1954: 39.

Undersea Project Eyed By UT Grad

Luke Capehart, 24, a University of Texas graduate, is on his way back to the Virgin Islands to rejoin "Tektite II," an undersea research project.

Capehart, of 104 Westhaven, is returning after a three weeks leave spent at home.

The Tektite project is funded by nine U.S. government agencies, with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the Department of the Interior heading the list. A third primary sponsor is the National Science Foundation, which heads up the University of Texas team, under Dr. Robert Helmreich. Capehart is working with this group.

The two teams of scientists — one consisting of five women — will be submerged in undersea habitats for periods of 14 to 20 days.

Capehart, who has spent about an hour in one of the submerged units, said he hopes, after attending graduate school, to be able to stay in the psychological observation field

The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); 13 July 1970: 6.

Society photographer Lucien Capehart dies

palmbeachdailynews.com/story/entertainment/society/2012/04/01/society-photographer-lucien-capehart-dies/9688911007

Shannon Donnelly

Lucien Henry Capehart Jr., who for more than 40 years chronicled Palm Beach society in its finest — and sometimes not so — moments, died Monday at Jupiter Medical Center of lung disease.

His daughter Lily, his only child, was at his side.

Born June 20, 1946, in Tennessee, he was the son of Lucien Henry Capehart Sr., an airplane factory worker, and Evelyn Gibson Capehart, a homemaker.

He moved to Austin, Texas, as a child and graduated from William B. Travis High School in 1964. He went on to the University of Texas, on what he often jokingly referred to as “the six-year plan,” and earned a degree in history in 1970.

A trip to the Virgin Islands while working as a research assistant for UT sparked his interest in photography.

Mr. Capehart came to Palm Beach on a visit in 1973 and, like many before him, fell in love with the place.

He worked for several established Palm Beach photographers before striking out on his own. For decades, he recorded the marriages, bar mitzvahs, engagements, debuts and other milestones of generations of Palm Beachers, as well as thousands of charity events and celebrity visits.

“I worked with Lucien for more than 20 years,” said Carrie Bradburn, managing director of Lucien Capehart Photography. “He was my mentor and my boss, but above all he was like a father to me, schooling me in every aspect of the business that he loved. LCP is a family business, and Lucien treated us like family. His wish was that his business continue on, and we’re going to do exactly that.”

In May 1995, he married Dina Gasiunasen, sister of island art dealer Arij Gasiunasen. Their daughter, Lily, is now 16. The marriage brought a halt to what had been a lively career with the ladies for Mr. Capehart.

“He was an amazing fellow,” said Donna Long of Palm Beach, stepdaughter of J. Paul Getty and one of the rakish photographer’s long-term romances. “He really lived his life to the fullest, whether it was jumping out of an airplane or riding his motorcycle through Poland and Russia. He loved many women,” she said, “and we all loved him.”

Mr. Capehart was out almost every night, photographing the social set at private homes and private clubs.

“Over the last 30 years we grew up and grew older together,” said Daniel E. Ponton, owner of Club Colette. “We celebrated many happy occasions and parties, but his proudest moments were talking about his love for his daughter Lily. He was the finest of friends and truest of gentlemen.”

He was honored in December by the Historical Society of Palm Beach County at its annual Archival Evening retrospective of five photographers of note.

Jeremy Johnson, president and CEO of the Historical Society said, “Our community has lost a very talented photographer and a very kind man. With an extremely heavy heart we pass along our condolences to the family of Mr. Capehart, especially his daughter, Lily, and the staff of Lucien Capehart Photography.”

With his longtime friend Bob Eigelberger, Mr. Capehart was a founding member of the Gentlemen of the Garden, which supports the Ann Norton Sculpture Garden and other horticultural causes.

“He was an amazing fellow,” Eigelberger said. “He loved to travel all over the world, loved to ride his motorcycle, and loved working in his garden. I can’t count the number of times I walked into his yard and he was sweating head to toe, planting or pulling or trimming. Not a lot of people knew that part of him. There is a hole in my life where my friend of 32 years belongs. I will miss him terribly.”

Event designer Bruce Sutka remembers Mr. Capehart as one of his first friends in Palm Beach.

“He really helped forge my early career in Palm Beach with the great pictures he took of the over-the-top New Year’s Eve parties,” Sutka said. “He made so many people in Palm Beach happy by making so many of them look good. He will be sorely missed.”

Palm Beach Daily News: <https://www.palmbeachdailynews.com/story/entertainment/society/2012/04/01/society-photographer-lucien-capehart-dies/9688911007/>

Lucien Henry Capehart Jr.

LUCIEN HENRY CAPEHART, Jr. Lucien Henry Capehart, Jr., of West Palm Beach, FL died February 27, 2012 at Jupiter Medical center with his daughter, Lily; his wife, Dina, and his brother, Ron, at his sides. He was 65 years old. Lucien enjoyed a wonderful career as a highly accomplished professional photographer chronicling milestones, generations, and events in Palm Beach, where he chose to make his home. His sharp wit, twinkling smile and charming manner brought out the best in his subjects, and he leaves a legacy of cherished photographs for countless families, friends, celebrities and organizations. Born June 20, 1946 in Tennessee to Evelyn Gibson and Lucien H. Capehart, Sr., Lucien moved to Austin, TX as a child and graduated from William B. Travis High School in 1964 and the University of Texas in 1970, where he earned a degree in psychology. He pursued his love of photography into his acclaimed family business, Lucien Capehart Photography. In 1995 he married Dina Gasiunas. Lucien loved people, food, movies, jokes, opera, traveling and adventure, and he saw much of the world during his fully lived life. He was also an avid gardener and co-founder of the Gentlemen of the Garden. But of all his passions and accomplishments, his greatest love and pride was for his daughter, Lily. Lucien was preceded in death by his father, Lucien Henry Capehart, Sr.; his mother, Evelyn Capehart Lindsay; and his step-mother, Margaret Weaver Capehart. He is survived by daughter, Lily of Palm Beach; wife, Dina of Palm Beach; brother, Ron Capehart and spouse, Joel Wilder of Orlando, FL; step-sister Judy Whitworth and husband, Dain of Port O'Connor, TX; step-brother, Russell Weaver, Jr. and wife, Roseanne of Madison, GA; and their children and grandchildren, as well as numerous good friends, his LCP family and his best buddy, Snowy. As a friend said, "Lucien made everything more fun". He will be deeply missed. The family would like to thank the doctors and staff of Jupiter Medical Center, especially Lucien's nurse Jerry and his respiratory therapist Roxanne, and Hospice of Palm Beach County. At Lucien's request, there will be no services. A barbecue for friends will take place later in the spring in celebration of his life. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Peggy Adams Animal Rescue League or to the Lillian A. Capehart "In Memory of Dad" supplemental educational fund at Wells Fargo, Account 8507536012. To express condolences and/or make donations Visit PalmBeachPost.com/obituaries

Published by The Palm Beach Post from Feb. 29 to Mar. 7, 2012.

Obituary, Palm Beach Post: <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/palmbeachpost/name/lucien-capehart-obituary>

A.D. Stenger: Austin's eccentric, self-made architect

 archive.curbed.com/2017/8/30/16222238/a-d-stenger-midcentury-modern-architect-austin

Patrick Sisson

August 30, 2017

A Hill County Eichler, Stenger pursued his own vision of midcentury cool

Fitting in wasn't a concern for Arthur Dallas Stenger. Known to his friends and family as A.D., the Austin-based architect built homes with his clients in mind—airy contemporary designs, locally sourced and budget-conscious to fit the needs of a generation of returning vets and middle-class homeowners. But he only designed them for himself. Both a developer and architect, Stenger plotted, planned, and in many cases helped assemble his own personal vision of midcentury cool, constructing new developments just beyond Austin city limits so he'd be outside the range of local building inspectors.

- Name: A.D. Stenger
- Dates: 1920–2002
- Worked in: Texas

A college dropout who drew upon the smooth silhouettes of airplanes for his cantilevered constructions, Stenger pursued his own singular vision. In many ways, his "office mascot" was a stand-in for his indomitable spirit. A long-time hunter, Stenger decided one day that he would shoot a polar bear. In 1960, when this was still legal, he flew to Spitsbergen, Norway; boarded a small wooden boat with a guide; and found a bear he'd later rope, stuff, and display near his desk.

Biography

The son of an architect, Stenger grew up in both Dallas and Shreveport, Louisiana. During World War II, he served in the Navy as a member of the Seabees construction battalion. He spent much of his time witnessing action in the South Pacific, looking for gaps between coral atolls, and scouting out potential landing sites for barges on Japanese-occupied islands.

Stenger returned to Texas after the war and enrolled at the University of Texas at Austin, but struggled to pay tuition and make ends meet with his \$50 G.I. Bill stipend. He supplemented his small income by working as a draftsman and playing the accordion at events around town, but

decided he'd be better off practicing and making money, so after passing the licensing exam—but before graduation—he dropped out and went into business.

Stenger began building homes in South Austin, near the Barton Springs Pool, working as a developer, architect, and even builder, often strapping on a tool belt and finishing the homes himself (he was much more hands-on than Joseph Eichler, the California developer Stenger is often compared to). Focused on residential clients, he eventually built more than 100 homes around Austin featuring his playful take on midcentury design. Stenger began selling his first homes a few years before Eichler.

While each home was built to the lot and had unique features, his designs, mostly clustered around the South Lund Park, Ridgewood Village, and Stenger Addition areas of Austin, share some common traits. Most of these modest, sub-1,500-square-foot homes featured low-pitch gabled roofs, post-and-beam construction, and local stones. Many contained low-slung fireplaces, not a necessity in Hill Country, but an amenity that recalls cocktail lounges and dude ranches. Many of the homes featured built-ins as a way to maximize space and save money, and cost between \$18,000 and \$22,000 at the time of construction (under \$200,000 in today's dollars).

Stenger operated in his own way, at his own pace. After buying a plot of land, he'd seek out a homebuyer, then finish an entire home without asking them to sign a contract. Despite the risk, Stenger had few clients back out, due in large part to his high degree of personalization. Stenger, who continued to design and build for decades, gave the last home he ever created to his wife right before he died in 2002.

Buildings to know

Stenger built dozens of homes, but a handful stand out. The Butterfly House, a 1964 design on Ridgewood Drive, features an exceptional example of a Stenger signature: clerestory windows for light and circulation. A curved, suspended roof caps a glassy, low-slung home, resembling a symmetrical swirl of white frosting atop a contemporary cake. Modernized by local architects Rick and Cindy Black just a few years ago, the updated home still exudes Stenger's style and attitude.

Another Stenger standout is the Faulk House, built in 1951 for local comedian, folklorist, and radio host John Henry Faulk. After Faulk was blacklisted for Communist sympathies, the architect gave the home to him in 1959 free of charge, allowing him to write a book about his ordeal, *Fear on Trial*. Along with the fascinating story, the cliffside home is an aesthetic gem, built partially of steel and concrete beams, with rooms and a deck that lean out over the expanse.

Legacy and reputation today

Stenger's no-nonsense philosophy and self-made story have made him a cause celebre within the city's modernist and preservation circles, who have often pushed for preservation and protection of his work. His homes, smaller and more cozy than today's larger designs, sell for a premium, often approaching the high six figures. No permanent legacy of Stenger's life and body of work exists, which spurred a local filmmaker to attempt to make a documentary about his life.

Curbed.com: <https://archive.curbed.com/2017/8/30/16222238/a-d-stenger-midcentury-modern-architect-austin>

A.D Stenger: The Man-

By all accounts, A.D. (Arthur Dallas) Stenger (1920-2002) was utterly incapable of coloring inside conventional lines. Described variously by his contemporaries as a maverick, an innovator, bull-headed and larger than life, Stenger's stock response when confronted with an obstacle to an anticipated goal was to navigate around it rather than accept the finality of the impasse. The result is a remarkable number of homes (over 100 according to his daughter, Marlene) that represent the greatest expression of modernist principles executed in Austin.

Stenger passed his professional licensing exam in 1950 while still a student in the University of Texas' School of Architecture, but never completed the program. Anecdotal accounts diverge. One alleges a conflict of opinion over the perceived absurdity of his proposed project, a drive-thru bank. Another cites the implausibility of a wall of mechanized sliding glass doors (later incorporated in his first house at 1904 Arthur Lane). The subtext is consistent and underscores Stenger's refusal to compromise—or inability to reconcile—conviction with convention. It is most likely, however, that a vibrant post-war economy offered Stenger the opportunity to begin building immediately, and working in the "real world" ultimately proved to be more alluring than continuing to design in the hypothetical.

Like countless architects before him (and since) Stenger used the design and construction of his own residence to test his architectural suppositions and promote a signature aesthetic. Many features later associated with a Stenger home were already present in his first house. A massive stone wall and hearth organizes the plan, clerestory windows admit diffuse light allowing the roof to "float," and the living area opens with a wall of glass to the outdoors. Frank Lloyd Wright had, of course, introduced many of the same concepts in the design of his Usonian homes in the 1930s. California developer Joseph Eichler, whose design sensibility was shaped by living in a Wright house, insisted that similar innovations be included in designs for his own properties and he increased their visibility (and thus acceptability) by promoting the work of his architects in publications nationwide. Stenger's work has often been compared to that of Eichler's architects and the stylistic similarities are immediately apparent. A "Stenger," with its low pitched gable roof, pronounced rafter tails, post and beam construction, conservative foot print (most

of his homes were less than 1500 sq. ft. and many did not exceed 1000), and exposed beams and decking above an open living area, is as recognizable as an "Eichler" and for the many of the same reasons. However, Eichler can hardly be given credit for inspiring the more idiosyncratic features of Stenger's homes: battered walls of site-collected stone, gable ends that terminate in a characteristic projecting point and, often, a cantilevered structural system (inspired by emerging aeronautical engineering) that allows his designs to soar above their often topographically challenging sites. And in opposition to a prevailing norm that strongly discouraged the design/build union (and unlike Eichler who, his son asserts, never held a hammer), Stenger often did much of the construction work himself. In a 199(X) interview, X years before his death in 2002, A.D. was quoted as saying, "The AIA wouldn't let you do design-build and be a member, so" (and a note of pride seems to emerge from the page), "I never joined."

Austin in the early 1950's was widely regarded as something of a cultural backwater. In 1952, a group of young teachers from the northeast known later as the "Texas Rangers" proposed a radical reworking of UT's architecture curriculum that sought to liberate the school from its Beaux Arts underpinning and focus instead on a more modernist approach to design - a methodological shift already evident (albeit in differing forms) at other schools in the country. An entrenched and unreceptive faculty quickly encouraged the Rangers to move on. Harwell Hamilton Harris, who was responsible for recruiting many of the eventual exiles, would resign as dean of the school after only three years' tenure.

It is within this context that Stenger began developing his first neighborhood, the A.D. Stenger Addition (which includes 1904 Arthur Lane). Post-war residential design was still codified by FHA standards that insisted on a separate kitchen and dining "room," windows with sills no less than 30 inches from the floor, and a "proper" ceiling. Securing FHA financing meant honoring Federal Authority (FHA) guidelines; building without such restrictions necessitated seeking financing elsewhere, and Stenger eventually found funding for his projects in Rhode Island. Working outside city limits (and hence beyond city jurisdiction) in each of his three subdivisions, Stenger attracted a progressively minded clientele that would grow to include several members of the UT Fine Arts faculty (including the father of web site organizer Riley Triggs), members of the Geology and Engineering Departments Frank McBee (eventual founder of Tracor), and writers and humorists Cactus Pryor and John Henry Faulk.

Stenger's architectural practice was regularly interrupted by forays that took him off shore or beyond the limits of civilization. In the early 1960s, A.D. and a Norwegian guide crossed the Arctic Circle in an 18' skiff powered by a 10 hp motor and ventured within a few hundred miles of the North Pole with the intent of lassoing a polar bear. Often repeated, this tale testifies once again to the tenacious personality that enabled Stenger to introduce a then-radical architecture to a conservative Austin.

Stenger's work is most evident in three areas of Austin: the A.D. Stenger Addition (comprised of Arthur Lane, Rundell Place and Airole Way) and South Lund Park (along Robert E. Lee Road, Bluebonnet Lane, and Lund, Dexter and Treadwell Streets) -- both in the Barton Hills area; and Ridgewood Village (paralleling Brady Lane and Ridgewood Road) in Rollingwood. Individually, the five houses presented in detail in this exhibit attempt to suggest the range and individuality of Stenger's design palette. Together, they represent a cross section of work that is slowly vanishing as the value of centrally located land increases and our appetite for grander and larger homes remains seemingly unsated.

The map collecting Stenger's work has been thoroughly researched and compiled. Though the list is not yet definitive, most of the homes indicated on the map can be attributed to Stenger with certainty. The research begun for this web site is ongoing. Stenger's story will continue to evolve as recognition grows for his contributions to Austin modernist architecture.

The organizers of the web site would like specifically and emphatically to thank Marlene Stenger Ciccarella and Shannon Ciccarella Horne for the generous loan and organization of the photographs, drawings, papers, and films of his archive. We would also like to thank the owners of the five showcase homes for their cooperation and participation.

The Architect:

Arthur Dallas [A.D.] Stenger [1922- 2002] was a larger-than-life character who was a developer-architect-builder in Austin, Texas from the 1950s to the 1990s.

A.D. Stenger began building his houses for Austin creatives and many University of Texas faculty including legendary Austin humorists John Henry Faulk and Cactus Pryor, and Sue and Frank McBee, founders of Tracor, Austin's first high-technology company. Stenger found that in order to build for his creative middle class clients, he had to take on the role of developer, architect and builder, a condition that has recently returned to Austin architecture.

A Central Texas parallel to the work of Joseph Eichler in California, the homes he designed had modern sensibilities with "homey comfort," and were a response to a demand for affordable modern design. The contemporary resurgence of the affordable modern home not only in Austin, but also across the country, is due to a similar confluence of conditions present in the city in the 1950s. These conditions include the reversal of the AIA's stance against architects as both builder and designer, a body of young, energetic, and frustrated architects who use design-build as a way to get their ideas into the world, and a hip, aesthetically conscious middle class looking for alternatives to mass-market homes.

Austin Architect Ad Stenger

By: Dane

Arthur Dallas Stenger first began building homes in the 1940s in Austin, mostly on Arthur Lane in the Barton Hills area, which was named after his father (the first Arthur Dallas Stenger), who was also an architect. Though Stenger attended architecture school at the University of Texas after returning home from World War II, he never graduated. He did get his architecture license as an undergraduate, and began building homes for post war Austinites.

Though FHA loans had design restrictions built into them, it didn't stop Stenger from creating unique homes that were moderately priced, even if he had to help the homeowners find loans. He also worked differently from other builders, by purchasing land (mostly in the Barton Hills and Pemberton Heights areas), finding a buyer, and building a home without making his clients sign contracts. There was no pressure for the buyer to take the house upon completion, though clients rarely backed out after seeing the home.

A Stenger home will stand out, with signature low peaked roofs, clad with concrete, wood rock and other organic materials. He also used rock and stone quarried from the home site as siding or built into the fireplace, helping the house fit easily within its surroundings. Stenger had a love for long, low slung fireplaces reminiscent of 50s lounges, so every home he built included a wood burning fireplace, though not particularly necessary in the heart of Texas.

The houses also have many of the amenities that Austin's big modern building boom now cherish, with walls of windows and clerestory windows hanging just below the exposed roofline, and tinted concrete floors, now pricing out around 10 dollars a square foot. He also used the organic building theory of 'bringing the outside in,' by running exterior stonework through the house and into its interior.

Though Barton Hills was featured as 'the world's largest air-conditioned subdivision' in the 1956 Parade of Homes, Stenger didn't build his homes with central air. Instead, he built large windows to catch morning light, and not the hot sun light of mid afternoon, and a floor plan to allow for a breezy pass through ventilation when the windows were opened.

In 1957, when Stenger's friend, radio host John Henry Faulk, ended up blacklisted as a communist in the McCarthy era, he built and financed a home for him, knowing his friend was swamped with legal fees. He took his other clients financial situations into account as well, helping offset furniture costs with several built ins, and pricing his houses between \$18,000 and \$22,000, though today they can range from \$400,000 to \$600,000.

Stenger built around 100 unique homes in the Austin area, building his last for his wife Jean in 1999, a few years before he died in 2002 at the age of 82. Today's battle lies between those seeking out Stenger houses for their originality and great use of space, and others who prefer to tear down these houses to build larger homes, since the locations are highly sought after for their land alone.

http://www.streetdirectory.com/travel_guide/66685/america_properties/austin_architect_ad_stenger.html