



Marvin I. Adleman

April 8, 1933 – June 21, 2017

Marvin Israel Adleman was born on April 8, 1933 in Ocean City, New Jersey and was raised there and in Philadelphia. An avid collector of plants from an early age, Marv graduated from Central High School and went on to receive a bachelor's degree in Ornamental Horticulture from Delaware Valley College, the first member of his family to receive a college degree. His career as a landscape architect began with a Master of Landscape Architecture degree at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. After graduating in 1958 with a prestigious Jacob Weidemann Traveling Scholarship, he set off on travels through Europe and Israel. This is the moment when he felt his professional biography began.

On his return he secured a position as a designer with the prestigious firm of Sasaki Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts and lectured part-time at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. Hideo Sasaki would remain a great influence throughout his life, as would fellow designers, such as Peter Walker.

After several years, Marv decided to return to Philadelphia, where he worked for the Philadelphia Planning Commission, then opened a practice with John Collins and David Dutot.

During this time he met and married Susan Plaut, and their family quickly grew to include Elana, David, and Rachel.

In 1972 Marv received an invitation to apply for an Assistant Professor position at Cornell University, one of the oldest programs in the country, founded by Liberty Hyde Bailey, but one that had languished. During his interview, Marv looked around and told the department chair (James Boodley) that he would accept only if he was appointed as Program Coordinator and given a significantly larger salary. Then he went home expecting that to be the end of it. As his family tells it, they moved to Ithaca a few months later and stayed for forty years. Leading the landscape architecture program from 1973-1985, Marv poured his energies into revamping a program that had only provisional accreditation, restaffing it, and setting it on the road to becoming one of the top three programs in the country today.

Marv taught one of the heaviest teaching loads in the department right up until his retirement in 2008 and would not have it any other way. His studios stressed excellence in design and strong habits of craftsmanship, precision, and practice. His courses took students from consultation with clients and representatives of communities, to conceptual design (with the thick pencil known as the Marvin Marker), through the realities of construction and grading issues, to a skillful, well-designed and realistic final project. His dedication to teaching engaged Cornell's Land Grant mission to share new knowledge with clients, current professionals, and communities. His publications and extension activities focused on educating the general public in the issues that underlie well-built landscapes. His extension books, Livable Landscape Design, co-authored with his former partner John Collins, and The Rural Design Workbook, have guided thousands of property owners and rural towns on the issues that affect the design of their properties and communities. For many years an author of questions for the national licensing exam, he had very high standards for design.

He maintained his professional practice in Ithaca, working often with architect Tony Egner. Over the years he designed a number of popular landscapes around Ithaca, including the gardens of the original Laboratory of Ornithology, the Cayuga Medical Center, and the Cass Park children's pool. He is best known for the original design of the Ithaca Commons, one of America's first main street pedestrian malls, recently replaced by the designers of his original firm, Sasaki Associates. His family recalls that he was so bothered by poorly designed spaces that he engaged in "something like vandalism", sneaking into offending sites around Ithaca at night and making small changes to improve bad landscape choices.

Marv was recognized nationally and internationally for his dedication, unique teaching strategies, and contributions to the profession in 1992 when he was inducted into the Council of Fellows of the American Society of Landscape Architects, a career honor. Over the next decade,

he continued to expand his teaching to new audiences. In December 2003 an article dedicated to his teaching, “Making the Grade” appeared in *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, reflected on his decade-long intensive course on site engineering for a profoundly grateful group of professional students preparing to take the licensing exam. That year he was also recognized for his lifetime teaching by the Honor Society of Sigma Lambda Alpha at the Council for Educators in Landscape Architecture. Finally, in 2004, the national ASLA awarded him their highest teaching honor, the Jot Carpenter Teaching Medal for distinguished academic career on the occasion of 30 years of teaching and the 100th anniversary of the department.

Marv Adleman retired in 2008, only when Parkinson’s disease made teaching impossible. After a few years in Ithaca, he and Susan moved to a well-designed senior community in Arlington Heights, Chicago. During these years, he pursued his hobby of photography and enjoyed his grandchildren. There he met local alumni, including one of his first students, Ken Gallt, who welcomed him into the professional sphere. His final reunion with his Cornell students and colleagues took place in 2015, at a special reception at the American Society of Landscape Architects annual meetings in Chicago. The Upstate New York chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects honored him with an Outstanding Leadership award in 2015, “recognizing his enduring commitment to ASLA and the tremendous impact Marvin Adelman has had on generations of young practitioners as a professor, a mentor and friend.” His legacy is recognized by giving his name to the lecture hall in which he taught for many years, 440 Kennedy Hall.

Marvin Israel Adlemand died on June 21, 2017 of complications of Parkinson’s disease. He is survived by his wife, Susan, his daughters Elana Feinsmith (Jason) ‘89 and Rachel Jordan (Neil) ‘96; his son, David; and his grandchildren, Ari and Leora Feinsmith and Emmet and Jacob Jordan.

Written by Peter Trowbridge and Kathryn Gleason