

STORY AND PHOTOS

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Nine members of the fifth year class of the School of Architecture, Nova Scotia Technical College, were turned loose on the City of Halifax recently and given the task of originating, designing and building a "gift" for that community. A budget of one hundred dollars was allotted ^{by the School.} The project was to be completed in one school week and was not to infringe on the time demands of the usual academic routine.

Fortunately the group quickly found an enthusiastic and articulate client, Jessie Dillard, the Director of the Halifax Recreation and Playground Commission, and a worthy site, the "George Dixon" Playground in Halifax's poverty ridden north end.

A half hour session at the local student tavern produced the usual ambiguous program - "to design and build a piece of playground furniture which would add to the recreation value of the site, by being demonstratively the property of the children, to be climbed over, crawled under, jumped off, torn down, burned, etc. etc. etc."

A crash design session followed in which each team member reverted to his childhood for one hour (~~some members found this easy having never really left that state~~) to try to find what ^{he} ~~they~~ would really like to ~~climb over, crawl under,~~ ^{climb over, crawl under,} jump off, tear down, ~~etc.~~ etc. The most "childish" ideas thus generated were then combined to produce a free "form", made of lengths of telephone pole and 2" x 6" planking, closely resembling a pile of debris left after the retreat of a tidal wave.

"Plans and Specifications" matched the anarchy and whimsy they were describing; ~~example,~~ ^{one could} whatever logs ~~you can~~ find, steal, borrow, fold, staple, etc. ^{were used.}

~~"Find a log that has been sawn into boards and glue the boards together again (carefully) so that you can get the desired shape"~~

and

~~"Make all angles right angled or otherwise".~~

With these clear principles firmly in mind, ^{LA} actual construction began ~~on~~ ^{and a} schedule ~~to the surprise of all). In total the group survived sixteen working hours on the site without a single lost time accident or wildcat walk out, quite a feat considering one of the "craftsmen" was a Cape Bretoner.~~ ^{per person} ~~on the~~ ^{Completed the project,} ~~quite a feat con-~~ ^{meeting the 5-day deadline}

However, in this short time several valuable architectural lessons were learned, such as:

- A. Less than "Wiesian" detailing results when a dull chain saw is used for "finish" work.
- B. In such projects, if you can't do it during school hours, forget it!
- C. Standing one man on the shoulders of another and propping him up there with a long length of 2" x 4" is not the most efficient way of driving nails into place twelve feet above grade.

Aided by these discoveries, the group continued to amaze all concerned (including themselves). ^{by} ~~By~~ actually meeting their Friday deadline, handing the project over to a class of neighbourhood school kids while a flashbulb popped and tears of relief flowed.

The local children seemed impressed, not only by unstructured "fun" the construction obviously provided, but also by the fact that the group was doing it at all, that they would give the project no specific name or purpose, and finally by the assurance that it would eventually be theirs to do with as they wished, as long as they would please get out of the way of the flailing saws and hammers long enough for the job to be finished.

(While a detailed "in use" study would naturally be required to fully evaluate the validity of the design and design approach, several group members, ~~visiting~~ the site several days after completion, were greeted with a hail of stones thrown by numerous young ~~users~~ from various points on or under the structure. The designers preferred to feel that this was a sign that the children were really taking possession of the structure as the program had intended, rather than trying to give the designers an early taste of what to expect from unsatisfied clients in the cold world of ~~The~~ Profession.