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2006 Distinguished Achievement Award - Humanities

Robert Hsiung '56

On a dark, early September morning in 1952, 17-year-old Robert Hsiung stepped off a train in De Pere, thus completing his long, often delayed trip from Hong Kong to become one of the first St. Norbert College students from Asia. An even longer, but just as eye-opening, journey was about to unfold.

Robert tried four different majors before settling on architecture, a choice that necessitated his transferring to the University of Illinois after three years at St. Norbert. It was at Illinois that he earned his bachelor's degree in architecture, and was awarded the School of Architecture's highest honor – the Bronze Tablet.

Nevertheless, St. Norbert College's impact on Robert's life was immediate and lasting. It began on that first day when he found the college administration building's main desk and was warmly greeted by a secretary's big, beautiful smile and her enthusiastic, "Robert, we've been expecting you." St. Norbert provided him with a full scholarship that included room and board; opened his eyes to a wide range of academic choices; gave him his first one-man show of his watercolor paintings; and stirred his interest in teaching, which would later become his main volunteer work.

In 1962, he earned a Master of Architecture degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and was a finalist in a 1961 national design competition for Boston's City Hall. Most of his career (1972-2004) was spent with Boston's Jung- Brannen Associates architecture firm, where he was lead designer and principal.

Among his architectural projects are the One Twenty High Street Towers in Boston; Baltimore's Joseph Meyerhoff Concert Hall; The Poynter Institute for Media Studies in St. Petersburg, Florida; and Tuft University's Elizabeth Mayer Campus Center. Robert is also a member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Society for College and University Planning, the Boston Society of Architects, and an elected Fellow of the American Institute of Architects. According to his colleagues, all of Robert's work reflects a "synthesis of humanism, regional context and cultural history ... committed to a team approach to designing projects ... his personal effort is prodigious; his enthusiasm contagious and his example inspiring."

Remember his watercolor show back when he was a St. Norbert student? Well, that interest and

talent has also flourished. A signature member of the New England Watercolor Society (NEWS), Robert has exhibited his watercolor paintings in one-man and group shows in galleries in New England and New York, has his work in private and corporate collections, and has received a number of awards, including the NEWS Grand Prize.

Robert retired from Jung-Brannen in 2004, but keeps busy painting, running a small architectural practice and working at Hsiung Design with his wife, Doral. Professionally, he also remains active by volunteer teaching at the Boston Architectural College. In 2006, he received the Boston Society of Architects Fellows Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Of his St. Norbert days, he says that “most of all, that time is a reminder that we live to serve God only—a lesson that I had to relearn many times later—the true measure of our achievement.”

Robert will be inducted in the Golden Knights on October 14, 2006.

St. Norbert College

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