

## Photo of the Month

The Applegate House



Applegate House designed by Fay Jones and under construction by Truman Boling, 1969.

Bentonville, Arkansas.

Photo courtesy of Lorene Boling.

Internationally acclaimed Arkansas architect E. Fay Jones is perhaps best known for his churches and chapels, most notably Thorncrowne Chapel near Eureka Springs. But Jones also designed 135 houses. Deeply influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright, Jones designed unique homes that not only fit into, but actually enhanced, the beauty of their sites.

Fay Jones saw the typical suburban house of the 1950s and 1960s as nothing more than a “box,” and of course the box is a commonly used symbol of confinement. To him living in such a house was truly detrimental to the human spirit. Jones also believed that a house had to meet the needs of the family living in it. Before starting to design a house, he had his clients keep a diary recording their interests, hobbies, and aggravations encountered during daily life. He then used those observations to help shape a house that suited the family’s lifestyle.

Once Jones had designed a house, it fell to a builder to turn the architect’s ideas into reality. And for three of the houses Jones designed, that builder was Truman Boling of Bentonville. Boling built the Joe Applegate house, the William Enfield house, and the first of two houses Jones designed for another client. That house was lost in a fire, and Boling was too busy with other jobs to build the replacement house that still stands today.

This photograph, courtesy of the late Truman Boling’s widow Lorene Boling, shows the Applegate house under construction in 1967. Located west of Bentonville off Highway 72, the 8,700-square-foot structure is on the Arkansas Register of Historic Places (not yet being old enough for the National Register). Incredibly complex to build, the house features curved walls, fireplaces, stairs, and counters, with built-in furniture pieces that fit into stone recesses. Circular plastic skylights bring light into open rooms that lead from one to another without doors to divide the spaces.

The Applegate house was featured in the July 13, 1969, Sunday magazine of the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*. In that article Jones commented on how the design of the house enhanced the freedom of the family living in it. The home featured several optional spaces for dining, for example, one of them beside the curved indoor swimming pool that was one of the most unique features of the house.

But while that article went on at length about the home’s architect, it never mentioned the equally talented builder who had turned Jones’ plans into a house that was the very antithesis of a box. The Museum is grateful to Lorene Boling for sharing photos, documents, and memories of Truman’s accomplishments as the builder of three Fay Jones houses.