

Photo of the Month

Truman Boling, Master Builder



**Truman Boling, Master Builder
Bentonville, Arkansas
Late 1990s
Courtesy Lorene Boling
Rogers Historical Museum**

In the 1950s and 1960s noted architect E. Fay Jones and Bentonville builder Truman Boling partnered on three houses in Bentonville. A private Northwest Arkansas home, the Enfield home, and the Applegate home were the results of Jones' creativity and Boling's skill. Two of these houses received national attention for their distinctly modern style and unusual features. As Jones once said, "Real beauty grows out of its conditions. It's not something you do as an end in itself." His philosophy focused on creating harmony between the needs of the individual

family and the natural environment of the building site. It took master builders such as Truman Boling to make these ideas a reality. Mr. Boling is pictured at right in the late 1990s.

Master builder Truman Boling (1919-2006) was born in Bentonville and was content to never leave. Building is part of the Boling family heritage and Truman learned craftsmanship at a young age by working with his father, R.D. Boling. His grandfather, Charles Boling, was also known as an excellent carpenter. A 1937 graduate of Bentonville High School, Boling was active in athletics and as an adult, coached youth sports leagues. During World War II Truman served in the United States Marines in an engineering unit. He had married Lorene Mason in 1939 and while away from home during the war his young family was never far from mind. He spent much of his free time drawing plans for a new house that he wanted to build for Lorene when he returned. After the war he built their dream home, where they raised their three children together.

These strong family ties and love of community gave Truman the values and skills needed to help build some of the most beautiful and well-crafted homes and public buildings in Bentonville, including the famous Applegate House. In the early 1950s R.D. and Truman Boling built the Gordon Knott House, one of the most modern homes in Bentonville at that time. The Bolings considered Mr. Knott very pleasant to build for and worked with him on other occasions. Knott used the best of materials in his projects and loved to observe them being used. He once remarked, "I'm not sitting here watching you to be critical. I just love to see you work." Later, Truman would be introduced to Fay Jones and they collaborated on several homes. After working on these homes together, Jones encouraged Truman to move to Fayetteville so they could work more closely together on projects, but he valued his time for hunting and fishing and Bentonville was his home, so he didn't move. He loved to be a part of the close-knit community and served as volunteer fire chief and on the city council. During this time, his son Mike worked closely with him and also became one of the most respected builders in Bentonville, carrying on the family tradition.

You can learn more about Truman Boling from our Community Exhibit, *Master Architect, Master Builder: Fay Jones and Truman Boling*. The community exhibit schedule is listed on the "Community Exhibit" page of the museum's website.