LeRoy S. Troyer, FAIA
2018 AIA Indiana Gold Medal Winner

The AIA Indiana Gold Medal is the highest honor AIA in Indiana can bestow on an individual. The Gold Medal is bestowed in recognition of their significant accomplishments in promoting the aesthetic, scientific and practical excellence of the profession, advancing the science and art of planning and building as well as advancing the standards of architectural education, and training. It is also awarded to those who exemplify many years of service to the society through service in the AIA and other voluntary endeavors. The 2018 Gold Medal Award winner is LeRoy S. Troyer, FAIA.

LeRoy was born on November 23, 1937 to Seth and Nancy Troyer. The household that he was born into was a traditional Amish household in Northern Indiana. In his early formative years, he did chores around the family farm in Middlebury, Indiana including milking cows when he was five years old. He married Phyllis Eigsti in 1958. In 1959 their son Terry was born and in 1962 identical twins Don and Ron were born. Their marital years were spent living in Goshen and South Bend. Today Phyllis and LeRoy reside in South Bend in a house that he designed and oversaw the construction of.

Becoming an Architect
LeRoy says that from the fourth grade he wanted to be an architect. After he finished eighth grade at age 16, he continued to work on the family farm and also for Yutzy Construction Company in Middlebury, Indiana as a carpenter and mason. He traced architect’s drawings from Yutzy projects at night in order to learn drafting. He did so under an oil lamp and using a T square and drawing board that he made. In 1959 he and Phyllis moved to South Bend. He was employed by Church Growth Services. They specialized in the design of churches. He worked
under architect Robert Foltz as a draftsman and project manager. In 1963 Mr. Foltz opened his own office and LeRoy went to work for him. His passion to become an architect was growing year by year. In 1962 he made an appointment with Dean Robert Schbermyl to meet and discuss the possibility of him being accepted to the University of Notre Dame’s architectural program (remember: LeRoy’s formal education stopped after the eighth grade, he did not attend high school). The dean heard his case and felt his passion. He told LeRoy that if he would go to Indiana University South Bend and take college level courses and prove he could do college level work, that the dean would consider him for admission. He did so and from 1962 to 1965 he took night classes at IUSB that included math, writing, chemistry and history. After three years of good grades, LeRoy again met with the Dean who said that he would take his case to the university. LeRoy’s hard work was rewarded when he got the notice in 1965 that he had been admitted to the School of Architecture where he graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture in 1971. Immediately after graduation he took the Indiana architect’s exam and passed and opened his own office.

Practicing Architecture
LeRoy Troyer and Associates began practice in the second story of a building in downtown Mishawaka, Indiana on November 1, 1971. Dave Brown and Bill Ponko (now AIA Emeritus) were his first two part time employees and were both classmates from Notre Dame. Bill Ponko then became the first full time employee. LeRoy was dedicated to energy efficient design from the day he opened his office. He was also dedicated to project and land planning. The early years saw many projects in industrial work with factories in Middlebury and Goshen, Indiana. Churches were also big in those early years. Sam Jones (now AIA Emeritus), also a classmate, joined the firm in March of 1974. Dave Brown was at that time a full time employee. The firm opened a Goshen, Indiana office in 1982. In 1998 an office was opened in Northbrook, Illinois. In 1994 an office was opened in Harrisonburg, Virginia. In 1976 the firm name was changed to The Troyer Group, Incorporated and moved to the historic Dodge House in Mishawaka. In 1997 TTG moved to the current office in Mishawaka. At that time there were 125 employees throughout the various offices.

Significant Projects
The Troyer Group worked on many various types of projects over the years and specialized in a number of areas including office buildings, banks, church buildings, historic buildings, industrial buildings, medical facilities, retirement communities, religious order projects, colleges and universities, and destination planning and projects. One of the most notable projects the firm had to its credit was the Golden Hills Energy Office Building in Denver, Colorado. This project won first place in ASHRAE’s national award for energy efficiency in 1983. In 1995 the National Football Foundation asked The Troyer Group to design the College Football Hall of Fame in South Bend. Major planning work was done for historic New Harmony, Indiana in 1975. In 1970 the firm helped write a document called Early Columbus, Indiana centering on its development and historic structures. By far the largest project the firm was ever involved with was the design, construction and master plan of a biblical based themed attraction, a $500,000,000 project to replicate Noah’s Ark in Williamstown, Kentucky. To this day it is the largest all wood timber frame structure in modern history. The firm was instrumental in the overall planning and construction of the first building for the American Countryside project in Elkhart, Indiana. Another key project was the overall planning and design work for the Miracle
of Nazareth Village in Nazareth, Israel. It was designed as a replicate of a first century village and farm only 500 meters from where Joseph and Mary lived to tell the story of the town that Jesus grew up in.

**Professional and Public Involvement**

LeRoy was president of the AIA Indiana in 1978. He was also a long time member of the AIA National Practice Management Committee in the mid-1970’s. He was granted FAIA fellow status in 1993 and currently holds AIA Emeritus status. Starting in 1985 LeRoy served on the board of directors for Habitat for Humanity. He also served on the Board of Directors for the Millard Fuller Center for Housing in 2006-2014. He met former President Jimmy Carter in 1985 at a Habitat Build and was assigned as leader to the house that President Carter worked on. He has served in that position from 1985 to this year 2018 where the Carter Work Project will be held in Mishawaka-South Bend, Indiana in LeRoy’s honor. He spent many years serving the Mennonite Church Community as a devoted parishioner, member, and board chairman of the International Mennonite Economic Development Association Board. While a student at Notre Dame, he was a co-founder of Environic Foundation and organized the 1971 International Youth Conference as a precursor to the 1972 UN Conference on Environment.

His extraordinary story of dedication to become an architect and passion for the profession after he became registered is a testimonial to our profession and to AIA Indiana.