

From the JOHN LAUTNER FOUNDATION website:

BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN LAUTNER



John Lautner was one of last century's important contemporary American architects. His work was concerned with the relationship of the human being to space and of space to nature. "Shelter," he said, "is the most basic human need."

Lautner practiced architecture for more than 55 years, designing unusual and unique residences in and near Los Angeles, including Silvertop, the Chemosphere, the Sheats/Goldstein residence, the Levy residence, and the Elrod residence (Palm Springs, CA), as well as many others around the world. He was also responsible for the innovative design of some restaurants (Henry's, Googies, Tiny Naylor's).

The beginnings:

Lautner was born in 1911, the older of two children. He was raised in Marquette, Michigan, graduating from high school and college there. The northern woods and the deep blue of Lake Superior remained in his soul throughout his life, and he was to return time and time again to bask in what he considered a heaven on earth.

His first building experience came when he helped his father and mother build a chalet-style retreat, designed by his mother, that looked out over the lake from a hillside high above it.

After graduating with a degree in English from the Northern Michigan University (then Northern State Teachers College), Lautner became an apprentice to Frank Lloyd Wright for six years, joining the first group of Taliesin Fellows. In 1937 he supervised the construction of two of Wright's projects, and two years later established his own practice in Los Angeles. His first solo project was a house for his own family, which architectural critic Henry-Russell Hitchcock called "the best house by an architect under 30 in the United States." Later Hitchcock remarked that "Lautner's work could stand comparison with that of his master." A comparison, incidentally, that Lautner himself would have been reluctant to make, given his lifelong devotion to Mr. Wright.

Lautner's work has been the subject of numerous exhibitions in the United States and abroad. His buildings have been featured in countless publications, in a documentary film on his life and work, in the James Bond and Diehard films, among others, and in commercials for television. In 1970, he was made a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects for Excellence in Design. He also received the Gold Medal from the Los Angeles AIA chapter in 1993 for his lifetime achievement.

At the time of his death on October 24, 1994, the 83-year-old Lautner was still working on several large projects.

THE JOHN LAUTNER FOUNDATION