



## David Hicks: Commentary on Hospitality, Education History, and Classical Architecture

Lesson 11: Questions with Betsy Hicks

### Outline:

How did the idea for this home come about?

- While on tour of the homes of Italian Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio in Veneto, Italy, David was inspired to build a classical “net zero” (off the grid) house.

What were some of the highlights as you think back on building this home together?

- Betsy remembers standing on a forty-foot lift in the howling wind shoveling concrete into the columns of the home in a race against winter.
- She revels in her memory of picking rocks as honest work and recalls admiring them equally.
- Betsy admits there were lowlights as well such as the time David was called away for five months to a school while she remained to manage the work on their home.

What are the dreams that you and David have for the future use of this land?

- From the beginning David envisioned their land as a great place to build a(n Orthodox) monastery while the idea of living out that monastic rhythm appealed to Betsy.
  - She mentions with a smile from a practical standpoint how monks are wonderful stewards of the land.

Are there any changes in your sense of place with your move over a lifetime from Kentucky to Montana?

- Having lived her life among southern traditions, it was quite a culture shock for Betsy at first moving to the “wild west.”
- Even still, she fell in love with the independence, the freedom, the pioneer spirit, and the rhythms of nature embodied in the west.
- Wherever she has lived, Betsy has always kept horses, dogs, and animals.
- Nature (and dogs) keep Betsy young and out of doors, no matter the weather!

Can you share anything about the organic farm that you helped to start?

- On the day of their retirement, they ended up buying a vegetable farm next to their church that came up for sale.
- While waiting for extended family to purchase the property from them, Betsy ran the farm for three and a half years.
  - She comments that the hard work involved and the learning curve required provided her with a “fifth career” she loved.



What would you share about David as a writer and thinker?

- Betsy first lavishes praise on her husband noting she believes she has been given the finest man in the world.
- She admits David's writing, thinking, and continued learning has blessed her in his pursuit of the existential questions.
- In Betsy's opinion, the fact that David had wonderful mentors as a young man has afforded him with an amazing viewpoint.
- She credits his faith no less with endowing him with so much wisdom when he speaks, writes, and thinks.
  - Betsy demonstrates this fact by pointing to his gift for articulating the things everyone in a room is thinking better than they could even say it.
- Integrity is the single word Betsy uses to summarize her husband and what comes out in his writing.
- It is Betsy's wish that David recount his life and write his memoirs of the incredible people (some famous) he has crossed paths with.

Can you share anything about David's writing process?

- In David's view, a book is never finished it just has to end.
- He has recently "finished" a book that was in the making for five years. Until it is published he will be rewriting it every day.
- David is in the practice of keeping a commonplace book and frequently wakes at night to jot down his ideas that he wrestles with and resolves by morning.
- Betsy likens David's revision work as a craft and appreciates the fun manner in which he writes.
- In conclusion, Betsy comments that she finds her husband is at his best when he is lost in philosophical thought and ideas.