

Princeton

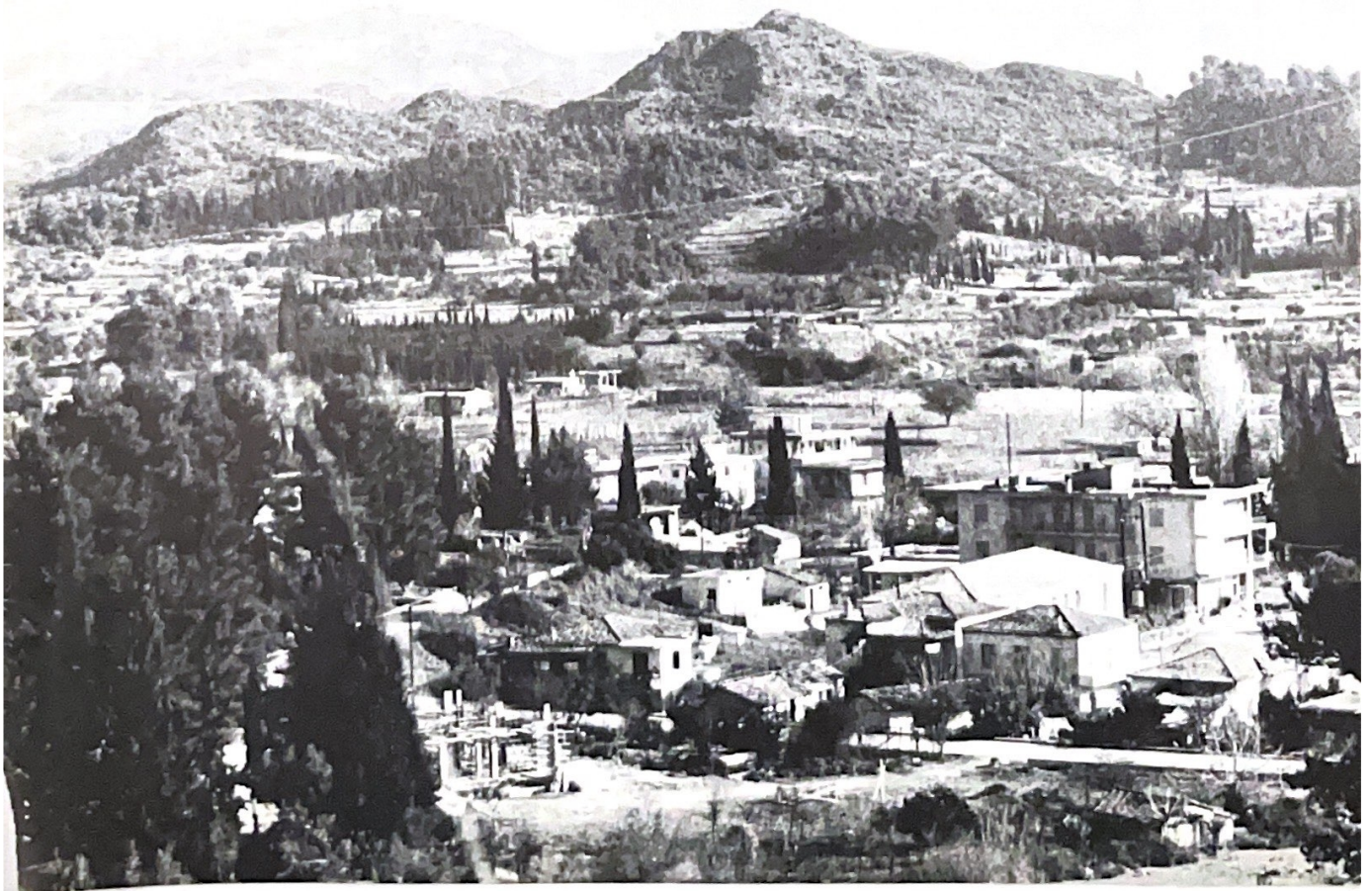
ALUMNI WEEKLY

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Regional Site Plan Key

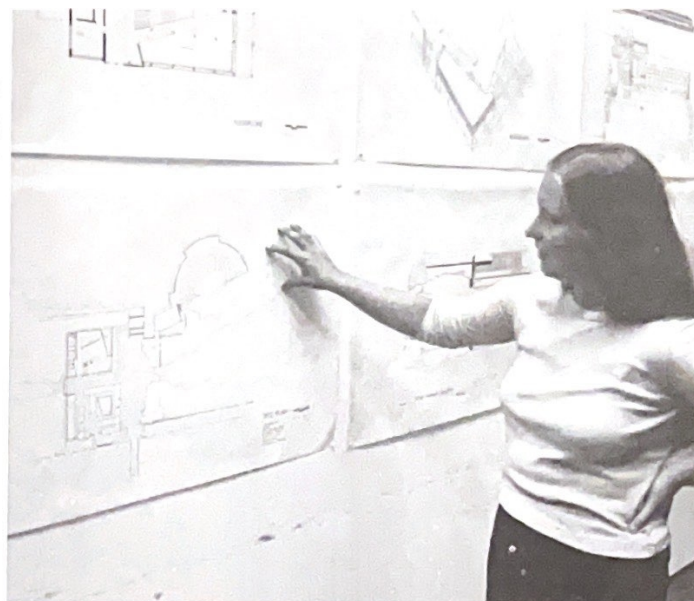
- 1 Olympic Complex
- 2 Olympic Village
- 3 Press Center
- 4 Playing Fields
- 5 Practice Fields
- 6 Racecourse
- 7 Rowing Lake
- 8 Boat Terminal
- 9 Cultural Center
- 10 Olympia
- 11 Ancient Ruins
- 12 Kordon River
- 13 Adriatic River

A Princeton Plan for the Olympic Games





William Sherman '77 points out a detail in his plan for a rowing course and boathouse at Olympia, Greece



Rebecca Rasmussen '77 with drawings of her center for the visual and performing arts at the village

Designing a Permanent Olympic Site

Four seniors make a joint project of an idea proposed by Bill Bradley '65

IN ARCHITECTURE, senior theses take the form of design projects. The subjects students choose, it is sometimes said, reflect prevailing social concerns, like that evidenced by the popularity of underground buildings during the early Cold War period. This year, if the topics represent a trend, it is a difficult one to make out. For the projects shown the faculty during an all-day review in early May included a wide variety of building types — ranging from a nine-story municipal public library to a tiny visitors center for a well-known Frank Lloyd Wright house — and a tremendous geographical spread — from the center of the Princeton campus to Houston, Texas, to the hills outside Olympia, Greece.

That farming town on the Peloponnesus, 15 miles from the Ionian Sea, prompted the first joint architecture thesis in recent memory. Four students, inspired by the beauty of the site where the Olympic games began more than 2,700 years ago, and by an op-ed article in which Bill Bradley '65 proposed the establishment of a permanent Olympic village in Greece (see page 10), decided to draw up plans for such a facility. They spent 10 days last January in Greece, meeting with government officials interested in their project and surveying the area around Olympia for the best location.

Determined to leave undisturbed the remains of the ancient Olympic site, the group chose to put their buildings on a mountainside overlooking the small agricultural village and to separate the athletic facilities from the town by creating a rowing course from the stream that runs between them. Because the university required the bulk of their work to be done independently, the four structured the project so that each would design a separate portion of the Olympic complex. A joint site plan, completed early in the semester, provided their context, and each worked on central parts of it that together would form a skeleton around which the remainder could be later developed.

Drawing on his experience with the Princeton crew, William Sherman '77 designed the rowing course and adjacent boathouse. "From an architectural point of view it was a tremendous thing working at so many scales, going from a planning scale all the way to details like the articulation of a wall," he said. Vinton Lawrence '77, whose architectural interests lean toward mass housing in the context of energy-efficient design, worked on a dormitory complex for Olympic athletes, which he says could be powered entirely by solar energy.

Austi Brown '77, who originally proposed the idea to the rest of the group, contributed an information center that would serve both visitors and the press. Rebecca Rasmussen '77 designed a center for the visual and performing arts in which cultural events could be held while the games took place nearby. The group did not attempt to design the main stadium, which would have required logistical and structural planning beyond the scope of even the most ambitious seniors.

The group's finished designs, however, involved planning decisions beyond the scope of most student architecture projects. First, the list of necessary facilities provided by the U.S. Olympic Committee was scaled down in keeping with Bradley's suggestion that the games be spread out over a period of months to help restore their original emphasis on sportsmanship. The plan was also influenced by the students' own idea that the complex could be used as an international university during the time between Olympiads, since it would have the appropriate athletic facilities, auditorium space, and housing.

Furthermore, while not incorporating specific tourist facilities, the group recommended that accommodations for spectators be constructed as part of a general development of the nearby coastline, which, they hope, would enable Olympia

itself to retain its rural flavor. To provide the necessary transportation link, the students suggested a high-speed railroad to Athens. "We wanted to preserve the sense of a sacred precinct," Sherman noted — a difficult objective, he admitted, for "the scale of a modern Olympics is just incredible."

But whether their vision could ever be realized was not the students' main concern. "It was taken from the point of view of a good context for a design project rather than a moral crusade to get the Olympics straightened out," said Sherman. Though Bradley, himself a former Olympian, encouraged the group, a spokesman for the U.S. Olympic Committee said that organization does not support the idea of a permanent site. In addition, Sherman pointed out, "The feeling of many people in Greece is that they don't want to see Olympia disturbed by the modern games."

Undeterred by the political uncertainties, the students addressed the architectural challenges of the project. In designing his rowing facility, Sherman used relationships of buildings to water based on those of the Villa d'Este at Tivoli. Ras-

mussen's arts center, a pristine, box-like structure, relates formally to both the nearby Olympic ruins and the mountainous terrain, thus linking the town and the new facilities. Brown, faced with the difficult task of separating public areas from those used by the press, made one facade of her information center a giant screen on which facts and figures of the games could be presented. And Lawrence based his housing development on a modular system reflecting many of the formal characteristics of the Greek hill town. All of the buildings would be in concrete because of the difficulty of using any other material so far from a major urban center.

The end-product of their labors is more than two-dozen drawings the size of road maps, two scale models, and more than 200 pages of text explaining their designs — plus a travel deficit of \$1,500 even after contributions from several university funds. Now the group is seeking the capital to assemble the four reports into a single book, which they would then make available to the International Olympic Committee and other organizations. — FRED BERNSTEIN '77
