

ALONSOVILLE VOICE

IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

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"Beware the Fog," watercolors, by Denise Bolton

FEATURED STORY

Tom McCracken: Old Buildings and Boats

David Bolton



As a little boy, he liked to build things, wearing out a pre-Lego set of plastic bricks and Lincoln logs. Whenever something was under construction, he had to check it out. He grew up on a small farm, six miles from town, on the edge of the rust belt in Western Pennsylvania... had a horse named Streak, for its “crazy and wild” streak. He spent a good amount of time fishing and walking in the woods... started driving the backroads at 14. Dad wanted him to go to Penn State and study agricultural science. Or he could become a preacher. The town needed a preacher. The boy had other ideas. He wanted to be an architect.

He was accepted into the cooperative work-study program at the University of Cincinnati. “I was unprepared for architecture,” he said in a recent interview. Young Tom didn’t know what he was getting into. In art class, they gave him a list of supplies. He didn’t know what they were. Professor Mimi Paul welcomed the aspiring architects and predicted that by Christmas, half of them would be no longer in the program.

Having absorbed a strong work ethic from his parents, Tom excelled in the highly regarded 6-year program, alternating three months on the job, then three months back at school, leading him eventually to Cambridge, Massachusetts. “Landing in the middle of Harvard Square opened my eyes to the whole world.” The apprentice architect sampled “all that New England had to offer: skiing, sailing, camping, biking—and good architecture.”

One day, he “discovered” lovely Anne Favrao in his office, a writer trying to make her mark in Boston. The handsome lad was smitten. Together they explored New England, biking and sailing whenever they had the chance. In ’72, he married Anne and in ’76 acquired his first state license to practice architecture. Toward the end of the decade, both hit what Tom described as “the glass ceiling.” Anne was having difficulty making connections and his employer wanted to send him to Kuwait. With resumes in hand, they wandered southward and ended up in Baltimore.

FROM THE KESWICK ARCHIVES

Once Upon a Time...

“Trees on the street were all Dutch Elm and formed a cathedral arch all the way down.”

~ Sally Bodie, *Keswick’s History Notebook*

Welcome to Alonsoville

As a rising architect, he was a busy man, working 40 hours a week, going to night school for an MBA, and renovating a small house in Charles Village. One summer day in '81, Tom came across a classified ad in the Sunday Baltimore Sun: "Wickford Road, 5BR, 2B, drastically reduced. Open House today 1pm." He had been "stalking" elm-lined Wickford, driving down to look at the details of bricks, great architecture, nothing like it in the city... seemed perfect for children, dogs, and architects willing to make repairs. Could they afford it?

He and Anne rushed to the open house and within ten minutes agreed on a bid. On Cold Spring, he found a pay phone and called his realtor, submitting a contract that same afternoon, \$97,000. Mortgage rates in 1981 were 16%. They quickly sold the Charles Village house. "We were house-poor in a 5-bedroom house with practically no furniture, no kids and no dogs." He soon discovered that his neighbors were a cast of characters: friendly, funny and full of life. He and Anne, who landed a job with the York Daily Record, had made the right move.

That same year, "Hopkins lured me in," making him Director of Design and Construction at JHU's Homewood Campus. "Homewood at the time had 52 buildings for me to worry about." He also did projects at Peabody Conservatory and the East Baltimore Medical Campus. "Hopkins took me places, exposing me to things I didn't know existed." He supervised building the Space Telescope Institute. He designed Olin Hall for the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences and built biology buildings and dormitories. "I thought I would work there the rest of my days."

Welcome to China

One day in '82, Tom met with JHU's president, Doctor Steven Muller. Hopkins had recently established "a sister relationship" with a Chinese university. In the works was the Hopkins-Nanjing Center for Chinese American Studies; bilingual, post-doctoral students would be the residents. President Muller asked Tom to represent JHU's interests in designing and building the center. Only one problem: his wife was nine months pregnant. He wrote to his colleagues, asking for a six-month delay. They accepted the request.

For three years, he shuttled back and forth, sometimes staying for a month. Mindful of JHU's 50% investment, he aimed to craft something that would satisfy Americans: comfortable apartments, classrooms, and auditorium, with elevators, air conditioning, telephones, computers, "things Chinese students had never seen." Some Chinese were nervous about the "foreign devils." Everything fell on him to ensure that the center was "built right." He procured copper plumbing, massive A/C units, a pair of elevators, aluminum windows with insulating glass, kitchen appliances, furniture, even a few automobiles.

For his first trip, he tried in vain to learn some basic Chinese language. "This was the biggest thing in my career, and I felt out of my element. I had to rely on an interpreter. There were a lot of tradesmen in the building speaking various dialects of Chinese. I was at the mercy of one guy, who had a good command of English, but not technical English. He didn't know the word for sewer pipe or antenna." He never did learn Chinese. Nevertheless, he forged ahead.

Overall, they treated him well. The end of each visit called for a banquet, a 20-course spread. Each place setting had a shot glass, wine glass and beer glass. The beer was good, the wine decent, but the "white lightning" was something else. Whenever someone made a toast to the visiting guest, he had to raise his shot glass and down the vile stuff, hangovers be damned. *Gan Bei!* or Down the Hatch!

He made a dozen trips to China. The ribbon-cutting occurred in '86, just before Anne went into labor with their second child.

(A copy of the article *Going Up: Hopkins-Nanjing Center is Breaking New Ground* in the **Saisphere** is attached to the end of this newsletter.)

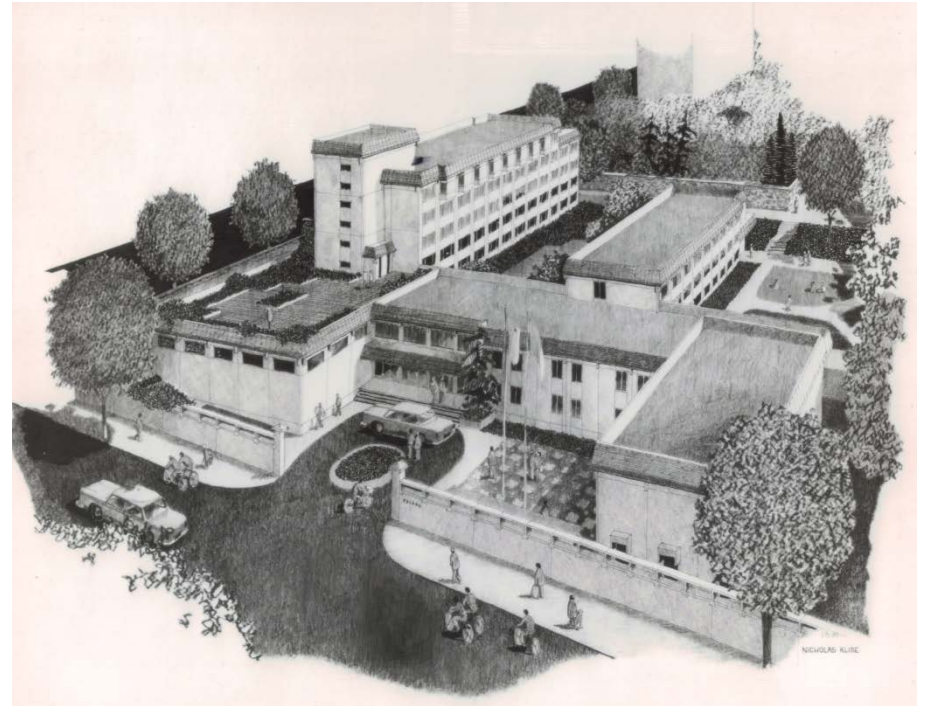


Sailing Into Precious Historic Restoration

“TO BE STANDING ON TOP OF MONTICELLO, I COULD PINCH MYSELF. HERE I AM, ABOUT TO TEAR THE ROOF OFF AND REPLACE IT WITH A NEW ONE.”

A pivotal JHU project for his career was the 1986 restoration of the historic Homewood House. “I was smitten with restoring a 180-year-old national landmark building. The following year JHU undertook the restoration of Evergreen House. Their contractor, Henry H. Lewis Contractors, recruited Tom to be project manager, a dream job in many ways. As a contractor for the next 21 years, he was privileged to do “precious historic restoration” at Monticello in Charlottesville; the Whitney Plantation in Thomasville, Georgia; Baltimore’s Basilica of the Assumption; and University of Maryland’s Davidge Hall. He also assisted in the construction of buildings for Gilman, Friends, Loyola College, JHU, churches and country clubs.

What thrilled him most was being in “countless attics, domes, steeples, seeing parts of historical buildings the public never sees.” Often, he would end up with keys to these buildings—keys to Old St. Paul’s church, the Basilica, “you name it, I had keys.”



Tom’s other passion was sailing. “Never had the money to sail big boats.” Occasionally he would crew. When there was wind, weekends would find him in Lewes, DE. “I was like 1,000 other people, driving like a demon to get to the beach.” After a couple of days sailing his 16-foot Hobie Catamaran on the Delaware Bay, he’d come home “relaxed as a lamb.”

In 1987, Tom was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes. “I was really depressed.”

An Outward Bound course for diabetics caught Anne’s eye. Kayaking might be just what he needed. She purchased a spot as a Christmas present. The following year Tom bought his own kayak. An old friend invited him to kayak the Everglades. Over the years, he made 10 trips to Florida; he also kayaked in Honduras, Alaska, and Newfoundland. “I spent a lot of time in kayaks.”

After 21 years at Lewis Contractors, Tom launched McCracken Consulting LLC. He calls it “my half-time retirement job” assisting non-profit organizations in managing their capital projects, local projects that might be familiar to readers of the Voice: Clifton Mansion, The Roland Water Tower restoration, Outward Bound’s Crimea Mansion, Maryland School for the Blind, and Second Presbyterian Church in Guilford.

The man can’t slow down. He also volunteers with the U.S. Lighthouse Society, www.uslhs.org, working on the ongoing repairs to Maryland’s iconic Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse near Annapolis. He once participated in the structural and condition surveys of lighthouses on Alcatraz Island and Port Townsend, Washington.

Looking back on his life, Tom compares himself to Walter Mitty.” As a boy, Tom dreamed of driving a Formula 1 race car, sailing around the world, being a forest ranger. “I’ve never shied away from new opportunities.”

In the words of Frank Sinatra, it was a very good year. What a legacy.

A vampire's life cold and dark. A vampire's life a lonely existence.
My life is a hollow grave dead ground. The moon kisses while the sun stings and burns.
A vampire's life is dark and dense never dying but never seeing.
We are feared but then what do we fear? We have everything but it turns out we have nothing.
They want to be us, but in a vampire's life they want death.

~ Count Dracula

The Ghost of Sedgwick*

“The nationally famous cartoonist, Yardley, lived on Sedgewick Road and he used the buses for transportation, always with a smile.”

~ Tom Bracken, *Keswick’s History Notebook*



Yardley, *The Baltimore Sun*

“A Spirit'd Discussion—A protagonist of lower tariffs attempts to quiet certain fears.”

"In the morning, he'd take the streetcar downtown to the Baltimore Sun building, do a cartoon as quickly as possible, and then sit in a car with his colleagues at the newspaper."

* Sedgewick or Sedgwick? Jim says the street sign is wrong. I defer to Mr. Burger.

Richard Q. Yardley lived with his cat, whose image appeared in most cartoons. A large man with a Falstaffian appetite, his career spanned a half century. “Moco” threw fabulous parties at his Sedgwick house; with great fondness, neighbors could recall those festivities years after his passing in ‘79.

On January 20, 1996, Jim Burger and girlfriend Anne, his future wife, moved into the Yardley house, which had been passed down to his daughter. Jim and Moco had a few things in common. Both liked martinis and throwing parties. From an early age, Jim aspired to be a cartoonist; he had the sarcasm and the skill, perfecting it on school walls and textbook margins. At MICA, however, he switched to photography, which led him to working for the Sun. There he became acquainted with the Yardley legend. “He lived the good life,” Jim said. In the morning, he’d take the streetcar down, do a cartoon as quickly as possible, and then sit in a car with his colleagues at the newspaper. The man could drink. As he might say, he wasn’t an alcoholic, just “a professional drunk.” It was the culture back then.

Was it fate that Moco left behind his bar for Jim? This wasn’t just any bar, but a work of art, with plenty of room for bottles, bartenders and ice. It would serve Jim well for his “double wide” parties, spring events not to be missed. Moco’s bar became a shrine to Baltimore, adorned with Colt, Oriole, crab, and pleasant living memorabilia.

Here’s another connection: Cut to a warm evening in August of ‘96. Jim is in his studio, drawing his cat over and over. He’s landed some gigs as a cartoonist. Maybe he was “a cartoonist in photographer’s clothing.” Was he being manipulated by unseen forces? Behind him, he heard a sound, like a step that creaks. It was real. The cat also heard the sound.

“Moco? Is that you?...”



FEATURED DOG IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD



Floyd

The lion of Alonsoville

~ Cindy Moss and Don Berger, his humans

Did you just miss out on having your adorable pet in costume featured in the Alonsoville Voice?!?!

Well... Halloween may be over, but a picture of your dog in costume is forever. Send that adorable photo to Sara and Dave and we will put together the picture for the PETS ISSUE coming soon!

We can't wait to see how you've transformed your pet!



Quote of the Day

“Lord, help save my soul.”

Last words of Edgar Allen Poe



News & Notes

Pumpkin Carving at circle, Sunday, October 30. (details to come)

Election Day, Tuesday, November 8

At the **KIA (Keswick Improvement Association)** meeting, Oct. 3, the Board met with Namaste/Alonso's owner Binod. Recently, he bought the laundromat and signed a long-term lease for the Evergreen Café. He plans to transform the laundromat into a formal dining room with its own entrance. Because the laundromat space is part of the same property as Namaste (listed as 511-513 Cold Spring), it appears that a new liquor license would not be necessary. Binod plans to use the existing Namaste restaurant for take-out.

Regarding Evergreen, he wants to open a vegan/vegetarian restaurant that will serve south Indian food, distinct from Namaste's north India focus. He wants a new liquor license for this space. Why not make it BYOB? Patrons could purchase alcohol from Alonso's. This approach has worked elsewhere. That said, he insisted that the restaurant needed to serve alcohol to be successful, though he was open to putting limits on the hours.

The Board will meet again to discuss options.



Photo and carved pumpkin courtesy of Steve Ziger

Unbidden

The ghosts swarm.
They speak as one
person. Each
loves you. Each
has left something
undone...

~ Rae Armantrout



Photo by John Dean



Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, political scientists at Harvard University and co-authors of award-winning book, *How Democracies Die*, will deliver **Loyola University Maryland's Hanway Lecture in Global Studies on Thursday, Oct. 27, at 7 p.m. in McGuire Hall.** The event will also be livestreamed.

Levitsky and Ziblatt will present "Killing Democracies from Within." The moderated discussion will explore how elected leaders weaken democracies from the inside by degrading the government's ability to function and by stoking polarization in society to funnel power to themselves. The rise of authoritarian governments conjures images of violent dictators, revolutions, and mobs, but Levitsky and Ziblatt will show how political changes are usually slow-building and subtle.

In their book and lectures, Levitsky and Ziblatt warn against the steady weakening of critical institutions, such as the judiciary and the press, and the gradual erosion of long-standing political norms. Drawing on decades of research and a wide range of historical and global examples, from 1930s Europe to contemporary Hungary, Turkey, and Venezuela, to the American South during Jim Crow, Levitsky and Ziblatt show how democracies die and how they can be preserved.

How Democracies Die was a *New York Times* Book Review "Editor's Choice," one of *Newsweek's* "50 Best Books of the Year So Far," one of *Time* magazine's "10 Best Nonfiction Books of 2018," and was recommended by Barack Obama as "a useful primer on the importance of norms, institutional restraints, and civic participation in maintaining a democracy."

To learn more about the lecture and to register, please visit the [Hanway Lecture website](#). Please consider submitting a question for the moderated discussion when you register.

The Hanway Lecture in Global Studies is an endowed lecture series made possible by a gift from Ed Hanway, a member of the University's Class of 1974 and member of the Board of Trustees, and his wife, Ellen.



FROM OUR EDITOR...

One Last Word

When I was a boy, my friends and I used to take the Number 8 streetcar down York Road. Destination? The Senator Theater... we'd sit in the front row with our bucket of buttered popcorn, the perfect place to watch horror movies. John Carradine in *The House of Dracula* scared the bejesus out of me. I loved it.

Come Halloween, you'll find Denise and me on the front porch, wearing our scary masks, a 20-year tradition. When darkness descends, we turn on the black light and settle into our chairs with our libations. Upon the approach of trick or treaters, we spring into action. We don the masks, turn on the witch, and sit, still as corpses. On the table the witch wails; the old girl doesn't move that well (she dates to when my daughters were small) but her creepy sound can still cause a munchkin to pause on the sidewalk. Sometimes we remove our masks. Don't want no tears. We have candy, sweetheart. Don't'cha want some?



WINTER 1985

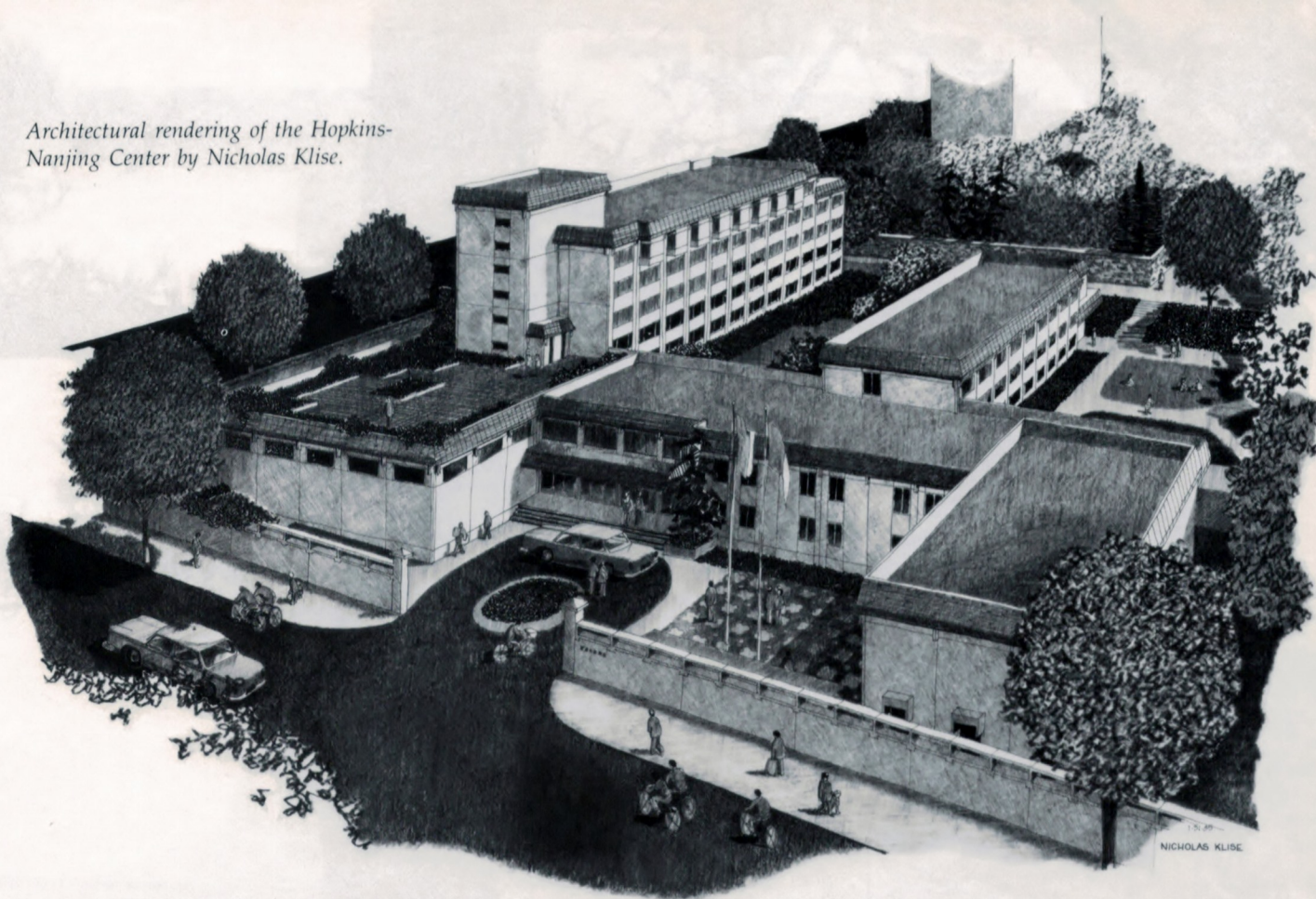
SAISPHERE



The Hopkins-Nanjing Center Breaks New Ground in China

The Johns Hopkins University
School of Advanced International Studies
Washington, D.C.

Architectural rendering of the Hopkins-Nanjing Center by Nicholas Klise.



Going Up

Hopkins-Nanjing Center is Breaking New Ground

By Nancy E. Roman and
Susan L. Crowley

Chinese workers, toting straw baskets filled with dirt on their shoulders, dug by hand the hole for the foundation of the 64,000-square-foot building that is to be the Hopkins-Nanjing Center for American and Chinese Studies.

"We could see the outline of the auditorium and the bottom of the elevator shaft," Dr. William Speidel, project director for the new center, said. "It was really exciting to see it all come together after we've fussed over it for all this time. And construction is right on schedule."

Speidel traveled to Nanjing in the People's Republic of China with Hopkins architect Thomas P. McCracken in November to look at the progress of construction and discuss the blueprints with the Chinese architects working on the building.

The Nanjing-Hopkins Center, which will open in the fall of 1986, will accommodate American and Chinese graduate students who may take courses in Chinese and American history, economics, society, political science, international relations, law and other subjects. The Americans will be taught by Chinese faculty members and the Chinese by Americans, although at least one joint course will be offered.

Earlier, in September, a delegation of Hopkins representatives had traveled to China for the ground-breaking ceremony of the center. The driving rain and typhoon winds didn't seem to dampen the spirits of Provost Richard P. Longaker, university Board of Trustees chairman George Radcliffe, Physics Professor Chih-yung Chien, Bill Speidel and the Chinese officials who donned their hard hats and rubber boots to trek through the mud and lift the first shovels of dirt from the ground.

"I was overwhelmed by the emotional, economic and political commitment by Nanjing University and by the local and provincial governments," Longaker said of the groundbreaking. "It was a symbolic act. The Chinese and the Americans were each doing their part, and it underscored the commitment on both sides to be ready for students by September 1986."

The Hopkins-Nanjing Center has broken ground in more ways than one. It is the first equal educational partnership—with a shared facility—between China and the United States since diplomatic relations were resumed in the 1970s. And, as international joint ventures go, the center has evolved from an abstract notion into a reality with all deliberate speed.



Construction workers haul dirt out of the foundation site.

Former Nanjing University president Kuang Yaming visited Johns Hopkins in the summer of 1979, and a year later Hopkins Professor Chien accepted an invitation to visit Nanjing. At the request of Hopkins President Steven Muller, Chien broached the topic of future cooperative programs between the two universities.

In 1981 Muller led a delegation, including SAIS Dean George R. Packard and Professor Isaiah Frank, to China. In three weeks of talks with Nanjing University officials and officials of the Ministry of Education and the Council of State, they agreed to establish a center on the Nanjing campus where Chinese and American students would live and study together. Six months later, in March 1982, the China State Council approved the project, and the planning—for the facilities, the curriculum, the faculty and staff—got under way in earnest.

"The government and universities throughout China are watching the center's evolution with great interest," said Longaker, "since it is an experimental model for learning about the outside world—and especially the United States.

"The American embassy in Beijing," Longaker continued "is equally curious about the center and how it will work. Our school in Bologna, Italy, sets a precedent for the Hopkins-Nanjing Center. Having established ourselves firmly in Europe, it is time to look toward East Asia because academic interests, science, trade and diplomacy are focusing more intensely on that region. A great university needs to be part of that."



Center designers visited a factory to look at furnishings for offices and dormitory rooms

The center is administered for Johns Hopkins by SAIS, which has a highly regarded Chinese program under the direction of Professor A. Doak Barnett. Bill Speidel is the SAIS coordinator for the project. One aspect he liked about the groundbreaking trip in September and the November on-site inspection was "getting beyond the abstract planning stages and into the nuts and bolts of the program with our Chinese counterparts." In addition to being pleased with the progress of construction, Speidel expressed satisfaction on his talks with Nanjing officials concerning the curriculum, library and student life.

The center facility will be owned and maintained by the Chinese, who are also doing the construction. The exterior of the building will be cream-colored stucco with decorative trim of gray-green glazed tile and a mansard-type roof. Part of the two-story front section houses the auditorium, lobby, reception area and administrative offices. The other part includes the snack bar, dining hall, banquet room and kitchen. The library, language laboratory, faculty offices and classrooms will be housed in a three-story wing, and double dormitory rooms for students and apartments for faculty members will be located in a five-story wing.

An atrium garden behind the reception area and a roof-top garden on the auditorium are part of the architectural design.

The Chinese have designed the facilities although Hopkins architect Tom McCracken is acting as a consultant. He visited the site in December 1983 and with Speidel in November 1984, and has met with the Chinese planners dur-



Tom McCracken holds an old cornerstone discovered during the digging of the Hopkins-Nanjing Center foundation.

ing their visits to Baltimore. His suggested changes, such as moving the library away from the auditorium to the quieter academic wing, have been accepted "very graciously."

"The Chinese build their buildings to last," McCracken said. "They use terrazzo floors, masonry walls. Everything is permanent. 'Adaptive re-use' is not part of their vocabulary. They don't have available temporary components or lightweight construction. Quick and frequent renovations are not possible."



Students make their opinions known by spelling them out on a 75-foot long board on the Nanjing University campus.

SAIS Librarian Peter Promen packs up shipments of books for the Nanjing Center.



McCracken stands in what will be the projection room in the center's auditorium.

The furniture produced in China is equally sturdy, usually made of wood. The armchairs are big and stuffed. McCracken says that when it was suggested that some of the furniture in the center offices be of the tubular steel variety commonly found in the United States, the idea was nixed. Metallics are precious commodities in China, and even the structure of the center building was designed to minimize the use of structural steel.

Johns Hopkins is contributing some components to the building such as bronze-colored aluminum windows and doors with tinted insulating glass, two huge heating and air-conditioning units, and an elevator for the residential wing. It is also contributing equipment for the language laboratory, computers and typewriters (both electric

and manual), the auditorium's sound system and wireless simultaneous equipment, and vehicles for center use, McCracken said.

When the Hopkins-Nanjing Center opens, the library will have about 20,000 volumes and 400 periodicals, half in Chinese and half in Western languages. SAIS librarian Peter Promen, who is overseeing Western acquisitions, said 2,000 volumes will be added to the collection each year after 1986. He has already started the task of getting 10,000 books to Nanjing: The first boxes were sent in January via the Smithsonian Institution, which ships them free of charge under the international exchange service for library materials.

Speidel thinks the city of Nanjing and the university will be congenial hosts for center inhabitants. The capital of Jiangsu Province, Nanjing has been the seat of government for eight dynasties or rulers during the past 2,000 years.

Situated on the south bank of the mighty Yangtse River, Nanjing has many scenic and cultural attractions including a major art museum, tomb of Sun Yat-sen, the Drum Tower and a 14th-century, 20-mile-long wall that surrounds the city. It also has superior educational facilities.

The University of Nanjing, once known as Central University, was established in 1902 as San Jiang Normal

School. Today Nanjing University has 15 departments in liberal arts and natural sciences and an enrollment of more than 6,000 students, about the same as Johns Hopkins.

Speidel said there is a great deal of spirited activity in Nanjing that he believes will provide a healthy atmosphere for the Hopkins-Nanjing center. "Especially among the students at Nanjing University, there seems to be a feeling of optimism," Speidel said.

He described a huge blackboard, about 4 by 75 feet, that runs along the main thoroughfare of the university's campus. On the blackboard are poems, essays, and even criticisms of the administration, among other written works.

"I don't know who has the authority to erase," Speidel said, recalling that one day he saw a student removing one commentary and writing another. "About 10 to 15 students were standing around and watching her write her essay like it was hot off the press," Speidel said. "It was like watching each word come up on the AP ticker tape."

He reported that the latest interest in Nanjing is the Friday, Saturday and Sunday-night dances that began last year. They may not be recognized by Americans as dances, he said, since the style is more akin to ballroom dancing than to the rock style currently popular among Westerners. Although most partners are mixed couples—dancing at a discreet distance—it is not uncommon to see men dancing with men and women with women.

"So much is changing in China now that it's very exciting to be a part of it," Speidel said.