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## Letters: Remembering Evan Turner

Posted Wednesday, January 6, 2021 12:30 pm

I write with gratitude for the role Evan Turner played in building credibility for the new Chestnut Hill Historical Society (now the Chestnut Hill Conservancy) during our earliest years in the late sixties. Today we would call him a mentor although we didn't use the term then. To us he was the accomplished Director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art with ideas about building a substantial organization through programs. And that he did!

Often, he invited us to lunch to talk over opportunities. Once I remember his mentioning that his staff noticed that we met with him more often than they did. One opportunity was his offer to speak for us about Chestnut hill's architecture.

At that time our naysayers promoted the belief, “There is nothing historic in Chestnut Hill.” The program with Evan was well attended, and afterwards Evan confessed that putting together the “architectural history” became much more work than he anticipated.

His most famous success was mentioning the idea of bringing together Louis Kahn, Robert Venturi, and Romaldo Giurgola for a program. We thought of creating “An Evening of Speculation: Chestnut Hill Future” with the architects. We called Louis Kahn first, and he said “yes.” Then, it was easy to get a “yes” from Robert Venturi and Romaldo Giurgola to join the discussion.

And, yes, Evan agreed to moderate the evening. That became our famous event when 800 people showed up (many from architectural classes in New York City that had been cancelled) for the chance to see and hear these architectural stars.

I extend to his family sympathy and send these memories of a talented, energetic, and generous individual who gave our new organization a lively, not-to-be-ignored beginning.

**Shirley Hanson**

**Chestnut Hill**

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