Name a sport...almost any sport, and Peter Stone has likely participated. He grew up in a small, company-owned, textile mill town in Massachusetts (Whitinsville) where all the kids participated in self-organized sports. At 16, Peter entered a private school. By his second year there, he was on the varsity cross-country team and also enjoyed playing soccer, tennis, and golf. As an undergraduate student, he was on the ski patrol and played dorm hockey. As an adult, he has continued to stay fit by running, swimming, roller-blading, biking, and, on occasion, skiing and backpacking. He has practiced yoga for the last 20 years and includes weight training in his regular workouts.

The period Peter was in graduate school is the only time in his life that he was “out of shape.” Staying fit, eating a vegetarian diet, and being healthy are clearly important to him for health reasons, but he also loves his physical activities. The social aspects of participating in sports with others are an important part of the benefits as well. And, of course, it always feels good to win a competition or two now and then!

Not surprisingly, the excellent reputation of its engineering school was only one reason Peter was attracted to Dartmouth College for his undergraduate work; he was drawn there for its outdoor activities as well. Peter was a civil engineering major, but his roommate was in pre-architecture. Peter became fascinated with his roommate’s courses and, in his junior year, he took a course in the history of art and architecture. He was hooked. His interest in a product design course in his engineering curriculum gave him an additional push into the design field. Peter completed the five-year engineering program but applied to architecture programs at the graduate level. He selected Harvard University for the M.Arch.

Going from the highly structured engineering/science area to the much more loosely structured process of architectural design with its lack of a clear value system was difficult for Peter at first. At Harvard, design professors were only critics and not teachers. To be successful, students were left to figure out the values of the critics and then follow them.

Although he attended prestigious Ivy League schools, Peter says he is not convinced that those particular schools were the best choices for him academically or socially. He thinks many less prestigious schools offer as good or better an education based on one's personal skills, maturity, and interests. “They did open doors for me, and I did learn a lot, but I did not have any mentoring of value from individual teachers, especially at the advanced academic level, so I had to find my own way. It was partly my own fault for not being more confident and aggressive about seeking that sort of experience.”

As was the case for many others of his generation, the late 60s and early 70s were a critical period in the development of Peter’s own value system. The emphasis on environmental conservation in response to the energy crisis, the call for voluntary simplicity in our daily lives, his experiences growing food, the increased interest in passive energy systems, his participation in a workshop with Paolo Soleri at Arcosanti—all these and more influenced not only Peter’s values but also his developing areas of specialization within the field of architecture. He was fascinated by the entire process of architecture, from conception to occupation, maintenance, and disposal. The need for architects to have an in-depth understanding of materials science was reinforced by his own experience in construction, design, and teaching, and it became his focus.
“Generally, I don’t see how one can do architecture apart from personal values,” Peter notes. “While financially not as secure as some other professions, architecture blends seamlessly with my value system and my other interests in life: the natural environment, travel, drawing, building, being of service to the community at large, always learning and doing new things. But architecture has also shaped my values in terms of becoming more aware of the world generally and especially how the built environment has a profound influence on the natural environment, in a positive sense but too often in very negative ways as well.”

The architects and works of architecture Peter admires are numerous. During his first architecture course, he was inspired by Auguste Perret’s Church of Notre Dame, Le Raincy for the use of concrete, light, simplicity, and “classical rationalism.” Learning about Le Corbusier’s Modulor anthropometric scale of proportions fascinated Peter and awakened his interest in materials and the synthesis of construction and art. Josep Luis Sert’s Married Student Housing at Harvard and the Boston University Law School were local buildings during Peter’s tenure at Harvard and had a strong influence on his own design work, particularly in relation to how a building responds to orientation, view, and the urban context.

After earning a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Civil Engineering degree at Dartmouth, Peter enrolled in the architecture program at Harvard Graduate School of Design. While a student there, he audited one of the advanced structures classes taught by Prof. Neal Mitchell to the architecture students in preparation for a Teaching Fellow position involving teaching the beginning structures class for a year. He also worked part-time as a structural draftsman and designer under Deborah Forsman, the principal in charge of the Cambridge office of Paul Weidlinger Associates.

Prior to finishing his thesis, Peter received an officer's commission in the U.S. Public Health Service, an alternative to military service, and had to begin his stint as a designer and planner in Washington, D.C. He was primarily involved with planning the move of the Air Pollution Control Administration laboratories from Cincinnati, Ohio to the Research Triangle Park in North Carolina. After three years in Washington, he re-submitted his finished thesis project to complete the M. Arch. program.

After another three-year period as a designer with Sasaki Associates in Watertown, MA, working primarily in the area of campus planning, Peter designed and built a house for his parents in Storrs, CT. During that time he took and passed the architect’s license exam in Connecticut. For a short time he taught a course to people untrained in architecture or construction about how to design and build one’s own house.

Intrigued by its potential, in the fall of 1977 Peter joined the faculty at the young and non-traditional School of Architecture (SOA) at Florida A & M University (FAMU) in Tallahassee. Over the course of his long tenure at the SOA, Peter put his impressive background and continuing pursuit of new knowledge to good use by teaching a variety of courses at multiple levels including materials and methods of construction, design, structures, and an introductory technology course that included structures and environmental and materials systems. He served on numerous committees that helped steer the direction of the School and brought thoughtfulness and his personal insight to a multitude of student design juries. In the early ’80s he also taught his course on being an owner/builder to people untrained in architecture and open to the community. During his time as a professor at the SOA, he also designed houses and additions to houses in Connecticut; Washington, D.C.; and Florida. In 1986 he took a leave of absence from the SOA to teach at the University of Minnesota, helping the architecture program formulate some of its materials and structures courses.
“Teaching is a great way to learn,” asserts Peter. “My education gave me a push in the right direction, but teaching, as well as designing and building, was where I really learned to be an architect.” Architects with whom Peter became familiar and learned to respect through teaching include:

- **Luis Kahn** for his articulation of what he called servant and served functions, his ability to achieve spatial complexity through the use of simple geometry, and his focus on the interrelationship between light and materials. Building examples that he visited include the Kimbell Art Museum, Salk Institute, and Richards Medical Center Labs.

- **Clark and Menafee**, disciples of Kahn who designed the Inn at Middleton Place, near Charleston, SC.

- **Glenn Murcutt** for his regionalism, materials/aesthetic synthesis, and low-cost construction.

- **Sam Mockbee** who created the Rural Studio at Auburn University, which teaches students to design and build facilities for the poor.

- **Dan Rockhill** at the University of Iowa who also teaches student design/build and the use of recycled materials.

- **Frank Gehry** for his investigation of materials and construction process.

- **Paolo Soleri** of Arcosanti for his emphasis on the built environment in relation to the natural environment and teaching student design/build.

- **Carlo Scarpa** for his richness of materials, surface, and form.

- **Maya Lin’s Viet Nam Memorial** in Washington, D.C. Peter says it is “the most powerful memorial I have ever experienced, and I have been to most of them in D.C.” He admires its simplicity, emotional impact, and integration with the land.

- **Heikkinen and Komonen’s Finnish Embassy** in Washington, D.C. This Kahn-influenced structure celebrates space, light, energy conservation, the relation to site and climate, and materials.

- **James Freed’s Holocaust Memorial Museum** in Washington, D.C. creates powerful spaces through the use of materials to recollect the German prison camps and the use of simple, Kahn-related organization.

- **Renzo Piano’s High Museum addition** in Atlanta for his use of light/space relationships and roof form.

Another important influence for Peter’s teaching and writing is Gregory Bateson, especially his essay, "The Pattern Which Connects" that first appeared in the CoEvolution Quarterly, the outgrowth of The Whole Earth Catalog. “This idea of patterns, of powerful organizing principles, has been the basis for how I organized and taught my courses and how I approach professional writing,” Peter notes.

As Peter looks back on his academic career and to the future for aspiring architects, he has this advice for them:
Almost any academic subject has relevance to architecture, so try to do well in all of them. Develop both your right and left brain skills. Do not under-value your own life experiences; let them inform your architecture. Designing can go on forever, but at some point you have to stop and turn over your work to others to be built, but don't forget to watch how the buildings you design stand up over the years. There are important lessons to learn there. Expect your learning to continue until you die; that will help you stay young. Don't forget to exercise. Staying fit physically will help you stay fit mentally.

Although Peter retired from teaching at the end of the 2008 academic year, he has not retired from architecture nor from academic activities. He continues to do design work (primarily residential), and he is working to complete two books he began as part of developing courses in materials science and systems. One book covers materials science at the micro level, with an emphasis on the materials used in building construction and how they are impacted by the natural environment. Because Peter understands that architecture students often dread trying to master this content area, he is trying to write it in a non-intimidating way. Many illustrations and diagrams accompany the text. The second book covers materials at the macro level, particularly the exterior enclosure of buildings that interfaces with the natural environment.

In addition to his professional activities and as expected, Peter continues to enjoy biking, running, swimming, reading, building furniture, travel, photography, drawing, and staying in touch with friends.