REMEMBERING HIS ROOTS
Bob Rice says Architectural Studies launched his career

Robert Rice’s career has carried him across the country — from Cornell University, where he earned his Ph.D., to teaching and administrative roles at universities in Michigan and Arizona. But Rice feels a stronger emotional tie to the University of Missouri than anywhere else his career has taken him.

“Mizzou really launched me,” Rice said. “The program there got me started in what would eventually become a very satisfying career.”

Rice, a native of Columbia who attended Hickman High School, received a bachelor’s degree from MU in industrial design in 1954 before starting his commission in the U.S. Air Force. Years later, he returned to Mizzou for a master’s in interior design, a program now housed in the College of Human Environmental Sciences’ Architectural Studies department.

Rice credits mentors like Kate Rogers, MU’s late “Grande Dame of Interior Design,” with pushing him to finish his master’s at MU, even as he juggled full-time work with support of his young family. Rice, who retired from the University of Arizona in 1995 after 20 years as director of the university’s School of Family and Consumer Sciences, now gives back every year to the program that served as a springboard for his career.

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Rice fondly remembers his time with Jorgensen. The two still talk regularly and the last time Rice visited Columbia two years ago, they attended a Mizzou football game. “I was so delighted when Steve ended up at my alma mater as dean of the college where I started out,” Rice said. “In a funny sense, it kind of seems like a full circle.”

Rice says the Architectural Studies department, now ranked among the very top programs in the country, has grown far beyond what it was when he attended Mizzou. “That program did so much for me,” Rice said. “It’s quite an honor to be able to support it so that other students can have the opportunities that I did.”