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Mr. Gene Green, Editor
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On page 9 of your December 2008 issue, your writer states it was Richard Archer, in 1972, who first gave the "cardboard boat" problem in SIU's Design Department. That is not true, no matter how frequently Mr. Archer or SIU publications so state.

I was a senior in the Design Department in 1962. In September of that year, class members were given the problem of designing, building and demonstrating a boat made of cardboard on Thompson Lake. The problem was given to Design classes in a few subsequent years, also. (Although Davis Pratt is no longer alive, I can give you the names of others who can confirm this.)

To see the 1962 assignment, my solution and a photo of the class taken with Buckminster Fuller, see this website:

www.grantmaclaren.com/cardboard

In the early sixties, there was a great deal of interest in cardboard (more precisely "paperboard") by members of the Design Department and the department's research arm. The material was used for the roofs of buildings, student furniture, research animal cage supports, etc. Alton Paper Boxboard Company supported our work with the material -- and, in fact, the material supplied for our cardboard boats came from that company.

If "The Cardboard Boat Regatta" continues at SIU, I hope to read accurate accounts of its origination in 1962 by Davis Pratt and his students that year.

Sincerely,

Grant MacLaren

PS -- I will be out of the country until January 11, 2009. If you want to contact me, it will be best to use email until that date: grant@grantmaclaren.com