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Travel With A Purpose: A Sample Book Review

Jim Stembridge has always loved projects. “A good, worthwhile project has a beginning, a middle, and an end. When I believe in the purpose of the project, it gives me great energy for the project, and immense satisfaction to see progress toward the goal.” Stembridge says.

Projects he has worked on include remodeling homes for use as rentals, adding an office, deck, and piazza to his own home, a PhD dissertation on coastal erosion, committee administration for Oregon’s six-month-long legislative sessions, and, most recently, travel around the country to photograph all fifty state capitols.

“What joy it is to arrive at a state capitol—most any state capitol, really—early in the day to capture the building’s architecture in the low-angled, soft light of dawn,” says Stembridge, 65, who retired from his continuing job at the Oregon capitol in 2003 and now works just the legislative sessions whenever he is invited to return.

Stembridge’s capitol photographs, 276 of them, are scheduled to be published as **Fifty State Capitols: The Architecture of Representative Government** (Coho Publishing, ISBN 978-0-9830292-0-5, 128 pages trade paperback, \$27.95 list price). The book has a two-page spread on every state’s capitol building or state house, with accompanying text explaining the history and architecture of each, plus reflection on the symbolism and evolution of the form; beginning with Thomas Jefferson’s design for the Virginia capitol (1788) through the years to the hollow volcano that is Hawaii’s capitol (1969).

But more compelling than the book itself, perhaps, is the story of its creation—Stembridge’s travels with his dog, Ruthless, around the country, with stops for locally-famous restaurants, mountain biking, and camping—as related on the author’s website, **www.fiftystatecapitols.com**.

“It was a wonderful time of life for both Ruthless and me,” Stembridge says. “Few things in life are more fulfilling than traveling with a purpose.”



Author Jim Stembridge and his dog, Ruthless, at the Utah capitol, November 2007

Fifty State Capitols: The Architecture of Representative Government

by Jim Stembridge

ISBN 978-0-9830292-0-5

128 pp., 12 × 9 in., trade paperback

276 color photographs by the author

Glossary, index, and references

Retail price: \$27.95

Publication date: June 6, 2011

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