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ON THE COVER

The old Shields Building on First Avenue sets the stage for COLUMNS to examine the special collaboration between architects and engineers. Story begins on page 10.

THE PITTSBURGH CHAPTER AIA serves 12 Western Pennsylvania counties as the local component of the American Institute of Architects and the Pennsylvania Society of Architects. Membership is open to all registered architects, architectural interns, and a limited number of professionals in supporting fields. Chapter Headquarters: Suite 1207, Bank Tower, 307 4th Ave., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15222. 412-471-9548.

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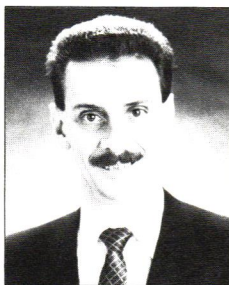
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VIEW POINT

KENT EDWARDS, AIA, CHAPTER PRESIDENT



There is a certain sameness to AIA conventions, both good and bad. The downside is mostly minor, like the annoying repetitiveness from the podium of names followed by "aaa—eye—aaa" or "eff—aaa—eye—aaa." The upside is a certain level of reinvigoration, due in no small part to the comrad-erie gained from convening with fellow architects.

But the St. Louis convention, and the host city, distinguished themselves in a most appropriate way. It wasn't the collection of very fine examples of architectural history, although St. Louis certainly has them in abundance. It wasn't even the jazz/blues, prominent locally but more difficult to find than you might expect. What struck me most of all was the arch—the stupendous, awe-inspiring, omnipresent architectural icon whose image and spirit dominated the place and the assembly.

I'll confess some prejudice toward Saarinen's work, but that aside, the arch is a singular achievement as architecture, as urban symbol, as national symbol, as engineering, as good design. It is even more impressive at night than during the day; it shimmers and sends shards of lights and dark in unexpected directions. It is magnificent.

As an adopted Pittsburgher, I envy few other cities, but I envy St. Louis its arch. Only an architectural genius could have created it; only a visionary client could have commissioned it. Having experienced it twice, I concur with its admirers. Its frequent praise is well deserved. Δ