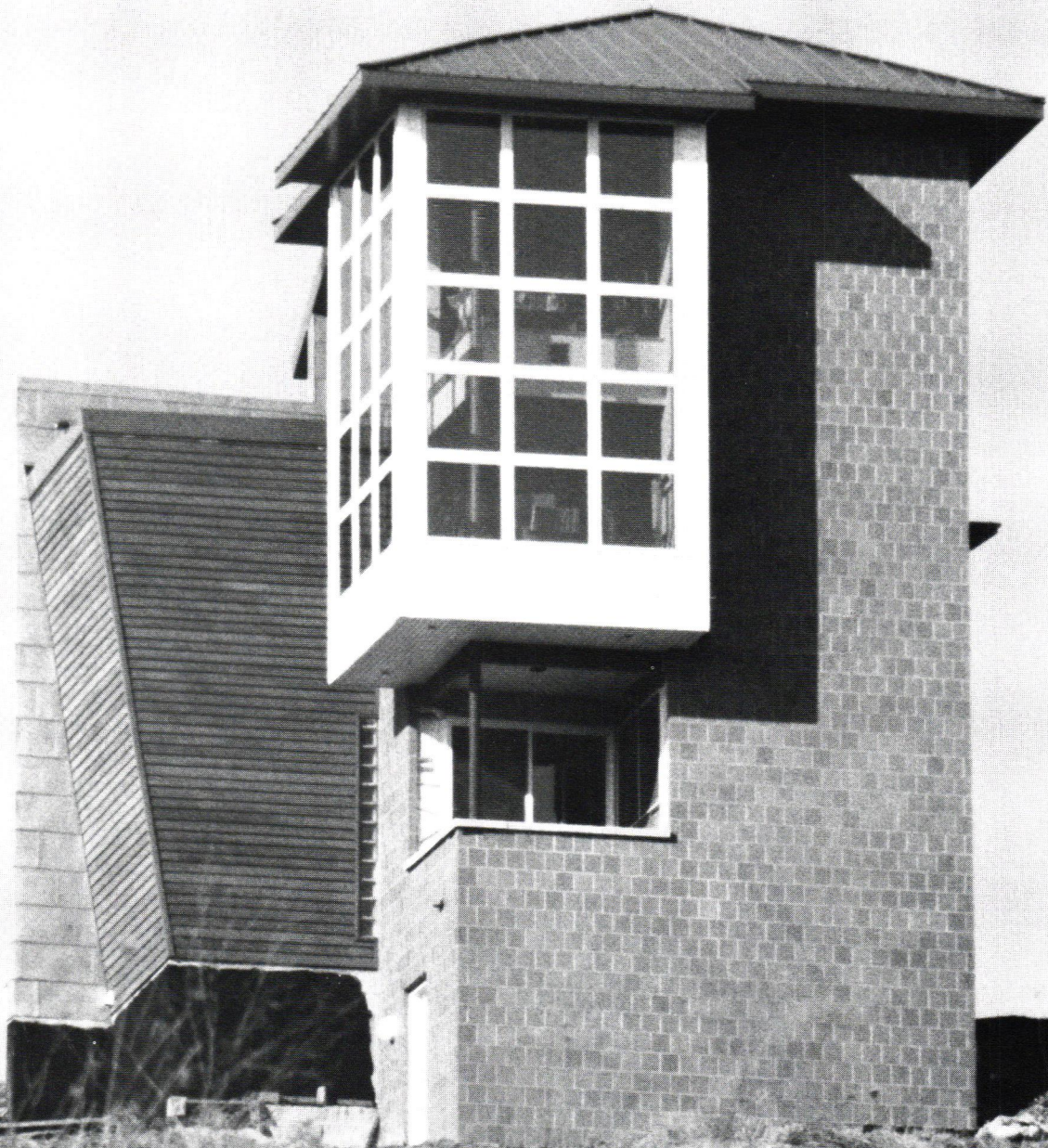


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GENERAL CONTRACTORS BUILDING SUCCESS

# Viva La Différence!

by Michelle Fanzo, Editor

## Not too long ago I urged my sputtering,

little, white Nissan on a nine hour drive to New England to attend a college reunion in the picturesque hills of western Massachusetts. I was thinking all those things people think on such long stretches—what have I done since these folks saw me last? Who will be there? Is there anyone I really want to see? Should I have stayed home? Having attended one of those progressive liberal arts institutions that churn out dysfunctional geniuses and wildly successful oddballs, I thought it worth the effort just to see what kind of people my collegial peers had turned out to be.

It was certainly a great drive, as the hills were beautiful with their end of summer exhaustion offering a glimpse of the fiery change that takes over the Pioneer Valley each autumn. Beyond that, there was some good food at the school (albeit too healthy), lots of kids with “different”

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Are you an artistic white male who liked both math and art in school, found yourself drawing houses at a young age, can't let other people do things for you, and owns a blue Ford Explorer? Then you must be an architect!

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While exploring the uniqueness of architects and their craft, we asked members to share with us one of the most distinctive projects they could design: their own homes. These houses reveal how individual architects think about place, form and life. There could be no better window into the essence of an architect than a peek at his or her self-made castle.

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### On the cover:

The self-designed home of architect Andrew Dunmire, AIA and Anne Dunmire.

names, like Shenandoah Keats and Skylark Marsh (sounds like a paint color), and the wonder of finding out what my acquaintances had done with their lives so far. At a college where becoming a hydrotherapist with a specialty in Rolwing is common, who do you think made the most indelible impression at the reunion? That's right, The Architect. Why? Because at a gathering full of filmmakers, microbiologists, social activists and entrepreneurs he was the only one trading snapshots of friends' children with professional prints of his house.

After we exchanged pleasantries (significant because we had dated briefly—briefly because he had a seemingly incurable case of Howard Roarke Syndrome), he reached for his wallet, like so many folks excited to show their new loved ones and little ones to old friends. Arthur was a pretty decent guy, so I figured I was about to be presented with The Family; Cocker Spaniel and all ensconced in some Westchester enclave. He fished the 2 x 3 photo from its protective plastic sleeve and handed me a picture of “her” (*he* called it *her*, not *me*)—his castle, his queen, his partially solar-powered, deconstructivist, cinnamon and patina green bungalow in Arizona. “Built it myself,” he grinned. No kidding, I thought. You can't buy stuff like that, not even in the J. Peterson catalog. We chatted about the viability of adobe, and the viability of being a writer, and parted soon after. I should have kept the picture, but at the time I did not imagine I would need an illustration for an article exploring why architects are “different.”

As a journalist, I have been told repeatedly that to draw assumptions from one or even two like examples is spurious and unprofessional. So just because there's an architect named Arthur running around with Sears-style snapshots of his three-bedroom “baby” doesn't mean all architects are that different from the next guy. That said, let me

give you two more examples of why I think architects are different. No stranger of any other profession has ever turned to me in an elevator and said, “Don't you just hate how we're so misunderstood?” (I was wearing my nifty AIA shirt at the time.) Granted this occurred in New York, but still. No one of any other profession has ever said to me, when I wear my long, pleated skirt, that I look like an Ionic column. (Help me out, is that good?) Small things I know, but they make an impression.

It was just that kind of impression that led *Columns* to explore, in this issue, the very opened-ended and intentionally vague question: Are Architects Different? At first there seemed to be much uncertainty by architects if there were actual habits, traits or tendencies that could be prescribed to the profession. (However, it was pointed out by a number of members that there is a largely disproportionate number of left-handed architects compared to the percent of lefties in the general population.) But when profes-

sionals who deal with architects regularly were asked the same question, few had trouble finding an answer. Our main feature also explores a variety of “authorities” on the topic that provide additional food for thought. Finally, we offer readers a portfolio of homes architects have created for themselves, suggesting that if it were up to architects to design most residential dwellings, there wouldn't be a boxy, suburban split-level to be seen. Hallelujah for architects and their differences. 🏠



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