

# C O L U M N S

## A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: **STARTING YOUR OWN DESIGN FIRM**

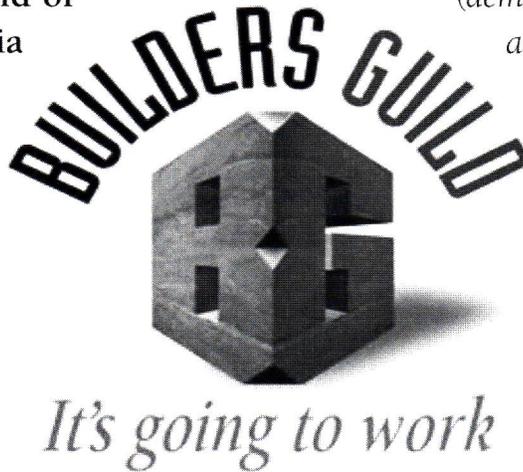
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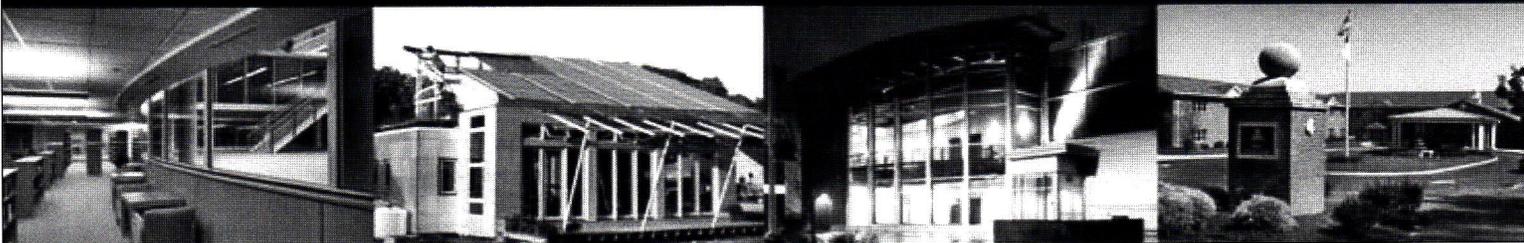
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## A Vacation to Build On By Tracy Certo

### It might surprise you to know

I was wishing you were with me on my last vacation. It was to central Chile, for a Habitat for Humanity build, my first experience doing anything like that. One reason I was selected for the 14 member team was to promote the trip by writing about it. But if any of you architects, engineers or construction pros had applied, you would have been welcomed with *mucho gusto*.

And my guess is the trip would have been as meaningful and as riveting an experience for you as it was for me. For one, the 550-square foot brick house we helped build was surrounded by a ring of mountains: the magnificent Andes on one side—with the tallest peak outside the Himalayas, Aconcagua, visible—and on the other, the dramatic Coastal Range. The fertile valleys of central Chile are Mediterranean in climate, lush with lemon and orange trees, avocado and olive groves and everywhere, grapes. Next to the construction site was a vineyard, with six-foot tall vines in three directions as far as you could see, bearing gigantic globe grapes.

In this serene and beautiful setting we spent five days building: mixing cement, grouting and scrubbing clean brick walls, shoveling dirt and gravel to raise floor levels and building from scratch at least a dozen roof rafters—the kind you order whole here, signed off by engineers. This particular house had thoughtful design features, such as the large corner window that offered unobstructed views of the mountains and a roof that was two different levels for added interest. (The latter was due to a decision following a lengthy discussion about aesthetic considerations. Here's where an architect would have been quite valuable.) The work day stretched from 9 to 6 but went surprisingly fast. As one volunteer, Luis, said, "At 3:00 when I am tired and I look up at these beautiful mountains and these people, there's no where else I'd rather be."

The work was hard but deeply satisfying. The sun poured over us every day, the group clicked from the start and we enjoyed a feast of a daily lunch prepared by the tiny and

smiling Reina, the owner of the house under construction. Best salsa ever at her table, with homemade bread from the adobe oven in the backyard. We ate well and laughed often, hallmarks of a great time in any language. As John, a retired firefighter from Los Angeles joked, "If this is what it's like, I'm never traveling with people I know again."

The rewards were sweet all the way around. In the afternoon workers soaked big bunches of grapes fresh off the vine for us. Can the taste of a grape change one forever? I think it's possible. On Day Four the construction crew threw a party for us with cold beer, salty snacks and music of their own creation. We were bone-tired and filthy but rallied respectfully, savoring every minute of the lively singing and dancing. Another day Pancho the bricklayer strapped on his accordion and serenaded us at lunch as we gathered around the long table under the bright green awning. With his deep rich voice and earnest expression he sang folk songs and ballads from northern, central and southern Chile. One was quite funny, others quite touching. As Joe later said, "I almost cried. It was priceless." Which pretty much sums up the whole experience.

On the last afternoon of the build as we were raising high the roof beams, the skies opened up and poured unseasonable and torrential rain. Sadly, we were forced to leave the build site early. But there was more in store. During the ceremony at the party with pisco sours and empanadas held for us that night, costumed Chilean dancers performed and we received gifts of native wine, framed diplomas and group photos. May I say I'm a better person for a number of reasons having been on this trip. One is that I danced with a Chilean in spurs.

Leaving Los Andes wasn't easy. But the next morning brought a sweet surprise from the all-night rain: snow-capped mountains in every direction. Simply spectacular. It was like Chile's parting gift to us, one of many.

Interested in knowing more? Log onto [www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org) and look under Global Village trips.

PHOTOS BY TRACY CERTO



*May I say I'm a better person for a number of reasons having been on this trip. One is that I danced with a Chilean in spurs.*

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**On the cover:** Peter Margittai's office on the South Side. Photo by Michele Margittai.



AIA Pittsburgh serves 12 Western Pennsylvania counties as the local component of the American Institute of Architects and AIA Pennsylvania. The objective of AIA Pittsburgh is to improve, for society, the quality of the built environment by further raising the standards of architectural education, training and practice; fostering design excellence; and promoting the value of architectural services to the public. AIA membership is open to all registered architects, architectural interns, and a limited number of professionals in supporting fields.

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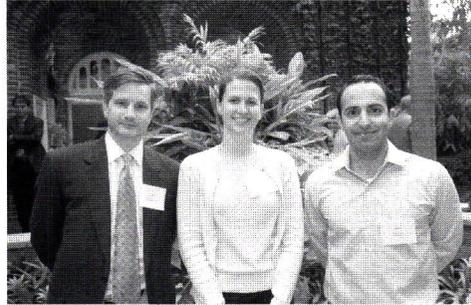
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## Tour and Reception at Phipps Conservatory



The design team from IKM Incorporated led tours of the recently completed expansion project. Pictured L-R are Joel Bernard, AIA, Julie Wagner, Assoc. AIA, and Sonny Sanjari. (Not pictured: Mike Marcu, AIA)



The event was generously sponsored by Atlantic Engineering Services. Pictured here are Nikki Hergenroeder, Andy Verrengia and John Schneider.



AIA, Associate AIA, ASLA and Professional Affiliate members, as well as other industry professionals, gathered under the dramatic 46 foot glass dome in the new Welcome Center to see the new design. The pavilion uses modern materials that complement the older structure and houses a ticketing area, gift shop, and café.



PHOTOS BY TRACY CERTO

LEFT: Following the tour, the beautiful Palm Court set the stage for some great antipasto and a chance to network with colleagues and visit the older areas of the conservatory.

Special thanks to AIA Pittsburgh's Programming Committee members: Tom Price, Assoc. AIA (Chair), Carlton Bolton, Assoc. AIA, Ana Migone, Assoc. AIA, Eric Ost, AIA, Art Sheffield, Assoc. AIA, and Ken Stehle, Assoc. AIA. Extra special thanks to Jennifer Beck, AIA for her leadership as 2004-2005 Programming Committee Chair. Event Ideas, questions or comments? Contact Maya Haptas at 412-471-9548 or [mhaptas@aiapgh.org](mailto:mhaptas@aiapgh.org)



# Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh

On Saturday April 30, 2005, AIA members along with TEDCO Construction and other volunteers repaired the Mt. Oliver house of Earl Tragesser for the annual Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh project. Each year, the program organizes a one-day blitz of repairs on homes for elderly and disabled Pittsburgh residents which allows them to stay safely in their homes. This year 35 houses were renovated. The AIA, a partner and house sponsor

for the last 14 years, and AIA firms contribute volunteers and/or a \$200 cash donation.

The 81-year-old Mr. Tragesser, whose attentive daughter lives close by, wishes to stay in his house as he ages. To make this possible, the team added a

first-floor bathroom and kitchen so he would have a complete living area on one floor. They also made a number of safety improvements along with plumbing and electrical work. In addition, they cleaned—filling to the brim a vast dumpster in the process—and painted the small house inside and out.

As usual TEDCO provided the skilled tradesmen who started construction on Friday since renovation was extensive. Despite rain and a challenging scope of work, the project was completed to satisfaction by Saturday afternoon. Todd Havekotte, AIA and TEDCO wishes to thank everyone who made the project possible.



PHOTOS BY TRACY CERTO

## Participants included:

- Astorino
- Berryman Associates
- Burt Hill Kosar Rittelmann Associates
- The Design Alliance Architects
- Design 3 Architecture
- Lami Grubb Architects
- Perkins Eastman Architects
- Strada
- Ross Schonder Sterzinger Cupcheck
- WTW Architects
- Loysen + Kreuthmeier
- Radelet McCarthy Architects
- Valentour English Bodnar Howell
- IDG Ilp



## McGraw-Hill Construction Reports

McGraw-Hill Construction reported on April contracts for future construction in the metropolitan statistical area of Pittsburgh, consisting of Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Washington, and Westmoreland counties in Pennsylvania.

An authority on the construction market, the firm produces Dodge Reports and Sweets Catalog Files. According to the Dodge Analytics unit of McGraw-Hill Construction, the latest month's construction activity followed this pattern:

	2005	2004	% Change
Nonresidential	\$57,552,000	\$158,322,000	-64
Residential	\$95,646,000	\$134,164,000	-29
<b>TOTAL BUILDING</b>	<b>\$153,198,000</b>	<b>\$292,486,000</b>	<b>-48</b>

### For the year-to-date on a cumulative basis, the totals are:

	2005	2004	% Change
Nonresidential	\$217,593,000	\$444,045,000	-51
Residential	\$282,971,000	\$402,419,000	-30
<b>TOTAL BUILDING</b>	<b>\$500,564,000</b>	<b>\$846,464,000</b>	<b>-41</b>

-Nonresidential buildings include commercial, manufacturing, educational, religious, administrative, recreational, hotel, dormitory and other buildings.  
 -Residential buildings include one and two family houses and apartments.  
 8 April 28, 2005

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## A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: **STARTING YOUR OWN DESIGN FIRM**

*Columns* recently hosted a roundtable discussion about the pros and cons of starting your own firm. Thanks to our participants for bringing their advice, experience and good humor to the table.



PHOTOS BY TRACY CERTO

*Left to right: Peter Margittai, AIA, Paula Maynes, AIA, Dina Klavon, ASLA, Ed Shriver, AIA and moderator Anne J. Swager, Hon. AIA gathered for the discussion.*

**ANNE: Why did you go into business for yourself?**

**PAULA:** Maynes Associates Architects was started 12 years ago because my son was born 12 years ago. I needed flexibility in my life to balance my personal and professional objectives and started my own business as a vehicle to do that.

**DINA:** Many reasons. Eight years ago, at the age of 35, I thought if I didn't do it by then I was never going to so I did it. I was working for Michael Baker and traveling quite a bit. I always had a feeling I wanted to. Had I known what I went through to start my own business I still would have done it. But I wasn't known here at all. I left with no money and no clients, everything you're not supposed to do.

**ED:** I left JSA after an ownership transition and decided I wanted to go in a different direction. I left without the intent of starting my own firm and had interviews with other firms. I knew several other people, mostly through the AIA, and we got together and I said, I think we can form a firm that can do better than average design, make better than average money, and have fun doing it. That's how it happened almost five years ago.

**PETER:** My practice is just over four years old and I couldn't start soon enough. I always wanted to have a practice. My parents are originally from Hungary and my father had his own mechanical engineering practice in Brazil. That inspired me. I had the good fortune of my wife starting her own business four years earlier so I was able to watch her and see how she developed it.

**ANNE: What was the most unexpected thing to happen when you started your own business?**

**ED:** In my previous job I had been largely responsible for managing the architectural side of JSA. When I left, I had the assumption I knew how to run an architectural firm which was true. What I didn't realize was I didn't know how to *start* an architectural firm and that's not the same thing. So it was all the lawyers and the accountants and the marketing people that I didn't expect to be as big a deal as it was. Once we got it going, it was easy.

**DINA:** I would say the same. My mentor told me you have to decide what you're going to be. Are you going to be a

designer? Marketer? What is your role? I didn't know how to answer that so I said, I want to be everything which is ridiculous. As you get more work and experience, you can't be everything.

**ANNE: What are you now?**

**DINA:** It's shifted. I like pursuing marketing. Obviously I still like designing. But yeah, I'm the rainmaker.

**PETER:** As a "young" architect, I thought the technological knowledge would be the biggest hurdle for me, but as it turned out it wasn't that at all. I was resourceful enough to figure that out. The toughest part is managing clients. I didn't think that would be tough at all. It's really difficult especially in a residential practice where expectations are all over the map. Some clients don't know what they will get for their money or what services or materials will cost. They may not understand how involved they should be or shouldn't be in the process. Do they go to Home Expo and come back with new ideas? Or go on a house tour and then decide to redesign their project? Every project is different, every client has different expectations and experience-levels so you can't figure out just one project approach. Every personality, every project, every married couple is different. There's a lot of emotional juggling going on.

**PAULA:** Especially if they're doing the master bedroom suite.  
*(Laughs)*

**PETER:** That's the toughest part managing the project so at the end you have something they're happy with which came in within budget.

**PAULA:** I would say the most unexpected thing was defining how the skills and experience you already have apply to new project types. We went through a formal exercise of documenting all the different kinds of projects we had worked on over the years. We named 50 different building typologies and we ranked them in order based on our individual experience. As it turned out, transportation was last on our list, but it became our next major market!

The second part is how much I have loved growing into the role of principal. It's on-the-job training: I'm the mar-

**THE PANEL****PAULA MAYNES, AIA**

Maynes Associates Architects is currently a four person firm, although it has been twice as large. The firm works with homeowners, small businesses, community-based organizations, and public service agencies to design a better built environment. The largest project to date was a \$10 million transit center in Beaver County with Dina as our consultant.

**DINA KLAVON, ASLA**

With two part-time and four full-time landscape architects, the firm works mostly on public and urban projects such as working spaces like Strawberry Way. "Usually they have absolutely no budget" she jokes.

**ED SHRIVER, AIA**

With 19 people, Strada does projects that range from the small, like Ibiza, to the big, such as North Shore for Del Monte and Equitable Building and a whole block of Washington, PA. Also urban design interiors, urban mixed-use projects and university buildings.

**PETER MARGITTAI, AIA**

Sole proprietor with support from interns and sub-contracted architects; a focus on residential and small commercial projects, most of which are in the city or in walkable neighborhoods.

My mentor told me you have to decide what you're going to be. Are you going to be a designer? Marketer? What is your role? I didn't know how to answer that so I said, I want to be everything which is ridiculous. As you get more work and experience, you can't be everything.

DINA KLAVON

keeter, the business manager, the designer. I've been surprised how much I really love dealing with people.

**ANNE: What is the biggest challenge you face?**

**DINA:** On a day to day basis, phone calls you didn't expect and how you put out the fires. You're taking care of client relationships and you want to take care of them because your name is on the door. It's why clients want to use small firms because we respond quickly.

But doing that applies pressure. The other thing is employees—that's huge in a small firm because when you mix personalities it becomes a sitcom very quickly. We could sell our story. It's not enough they're a qualified person but they fit in your small firm.

**PETER:** I'd have to say making money. Being busy and making money isn't necessarily related to one another.

**ED:** That's the first question everyone asks you: Are you busy? But never, are you making money?  
(Laughs)

**PETER:** We moved the office out of the house, I'm getting a summer intern. How do you grow the firm and make the right decision and make the right strategies without losing sight of your goals and doing quality work? And still be as involved as you want to be?

**DINA:** You can have 16 people and you personally can still take home the same amount of money. And I'd rather have fewer people and do that.

**ED:** Why not have 16 people and take home more money?

**DINA:** You can!

**ED:** That's the way it's supposed to work.  
(Laughs)

**PAULA:** I agree with Dina, it's finding good people and having them work effectively in your office. I had a fantastic young guy, a production person, who fell in love with a girl from his hometown and as soon as that happened his productivity dropped. Dealing with people and personal changes and motivations is an important aspect of managing your own firm.

**ED:** With four partners we had to have a philosophy and vision that all four of us would buy into. I think the biggest challenge for us was navigating how we'd be what we want to be. Do I take this project even though it's not consistent with where we want to go and what we want to do? On the other hand, I want the money. How do you balance those things? You have to juggle those kinds of decision to create the firm you intend to create.

**ANNE: Okay, the sky's the limit. Name one resource if you could have it would put you on Easy Street.**

**ED:** I'd like to be taller.  
(Laughs)

**PAULA:** More energy.

**DINA:** Easy St. would be a chef and a personal trainer.

**PAULA:** Having a personal support system is essential.

**DINA:** It could be getting published. It seems every time I win an award I lose work. Swear to God. Or the cash cow, the bread and butter client who won't stop. Or that good client who listens to you and respects you.

**PETER:** Part of the fun for me is the struggle.



**DINA:** Yeah, well we'll talk to you in five years. (Laughs)

**PETER:** I like the struggle, there's something exciting...

**PAULA:** It's never boring.

**PETER:** You get inspired by it. I like struggling to get projects, balancing how much do I put into this project vs. the next project. And still make a living.

**ED:** One more great client, but then I think that every time we get a great client.

**ANNE: How do you define a great client?**

**ED:** Someone who listens. There at least has to be respect, a client who has interesting projects to do, preferably a lot.

**PAULA:** And who pays within a reasonable amount of time.

**ED:** What's reasonable?

**PAULA and DINA:** 30 days.

**ED:** Good luck!

**DINA:** I think we should be doing what attorneys do and get retainers.

**PAULA:** You're not doing that? Absolutely, do that. It's a great test. When I have a potential client who has not been through the process before and they're meeting with me to see if I can see their visions, I'm also evaluating them to see if they can work through the decision-making process. The nature of the project is driven more by the decision making process than anything else. There are a lot of people out there who are not ready to be serious about taking on a project, and by asking for modest retainers it's verification that they're prepared to move ahead with the process.

**DINA:** Get a retainer for the first time consulting, for residents. Last year a client said to me, "What other free advice can I get since you are here?" and I felt so used. You have to protect yourself. After that I said I would never do another residence. Then in 2005 I got a call from someone we did a design for in 2002 and it's a huge residence and I was like, oh, yeah, sure.

(Laughs)

**PAULA:** The second piece of advice about retainers is to put in your agreement it's to be applied against the final payment.

**ANNE: Peter, who is the perfect client?**

**PETER:** They should pay on time but they don't have to have a lot of money. I'd rather have a client who appreciates and values the service I provide than have a client with all the money in the world who doesn't understand the process. And I've been lucky at that. Clients don't necessarily know the process or understand what they get out of it but they understand that there's something you have that they don't have.

**DINA:** Do you educate them?

**PETER:** Yes, there's a lot of that. My fee structure is a little bit different, I break it up into phases and charge the first and last phase hourly. And I get a retainer. It works pretty well as a small practice.

**DINA:** With retainers, though—I work for big engineering firms or large public entities and they don't work that way.

**ED:** Try getting a retainer from the City of Pittsburgh.

**PAULA:** On one particular agency project I have six outstanding invoices dating back to last July. You have to be prepared to carry the costs of certain kinds of projects and that's where a business line of credit comes in handy.

**ANNE: If I were to ask you to characterize your firm, would you say you're one project away from bankruptcy, or do you have a good base of clients but could always use more—just need one more good client—or are you over the top successful ready to go a South Sea Island?**

**PAULA:** It changes from day to day. I don't think you stay stable enough to say this is the constant state. You've got good days and days that are frustrating. At times you are on top of cloud nine and other times okay, what bills can we put off? After you've been around long enough there's less of that. You have a network of friends and associates so if you need another project, you can make inquiries. I feel less desperate than I did in the first five years of practice.

Residential design is my primary focus. I don't do it as a compromise, that's the kind of work I want to get. I don't feel threatened by the economy or by the amount of work out there. My challenge is what do you do with the project once you get it.

PETER MARGITTAI

**ED:** Let's start with desperate architect.  
(Laughs)

**ED:** I think we've reached a stable point where we have finally paid off all our starting costs and we are stable.

**PETER:** The fortunate part about doing residential projects is that there's a lot of work out there and if you're willing to take on terrible jobs there's even more.  
(Laughs)

I think it's a reflection of the economy but with the interest rates low everybody's putting on an addition or renovating a kitchen or buying a house. Residential design is my primary focus. I don't do it as a compromise, that's the kind of work I want to get. I don't feel threatened by the economy or by the amount of work out there. My challenge is what do you do with the project once you get it.

**DINA:** I'll take the middle road. When I first started, my God, I had to give back groceries at the store. I only had so much money. I went from having a real job with real money to nothing and then a divorce on top of that so this was challenging. But now it's interesting, I think I have grown. Peter, you've taught me a lesson because what I *didn't* say was money. That would have been typically the first thing out of my mouth. So here it is nine years later and I've grown. So, say we're in the middle range and feeling comfortable.

**ANNE:** So if you could change one thing about the whole experience, what would it be?

**DINA:** I would have started with a partner. A male partner actually.

**PAULA:** Finding the right partner is as tough as finding the right mate. You don't just pick someone from thin air. You end up living with this person in the office the way you would live with your spouse at home. And finding a chemistry where you can deal with the conflicts and the challenges. You need to find someone you respect and you don't take for granted. I work with my ex-husband, Greg Maynes, AIA. We have been through so much and knew each other so well. Over time, we realized our professional relationship was the part that worked well.

**ANNE: What would you have changed?**

**PAULA:** My whole outlook in life is that the lessons I need to learn come along on a daily basis, and I take it all in stride and grow whatever direction it's pushing me to grow. So the idea of changing all that—I wouldn't be who I am today.

**DINA:** But why do we keep learning the same lesson?

(Laughs)

**PAULA:** Along the theme of partnerships, I also believe you have to reinvent the partnership every seven years or so. Do we need to tweak this, redefine that, restructure the business?

**ED:** We just did that. We hired a management consultant out of Philadelphia to help us review our strategic plan and where we're going because we had ended the start-up phase. When you're going through that (start-up phase) there's a certain amount of exterior pressure that keeps you all together. We had reached the point where the pressure wasn't quite that strong and we wanted to sit down and review why we started, where we're going and if we're all still in agreement on that. The good news was, yes we were. But you're right. You have to go back and review it. You have to work at it, as a partner.

**DINA:** Do you all get along?

**ED:** Oh, yeah.

**DINA:** Do you have dinner together and get along socially?

**ED:** Yeah. We get along socially and enjoy each others' company. We don't all get together every weekend. I think it's a good mix of people, the skill sets and personality types.

**DINA:** You have a diverse group of people.

**ED:** We like that. We hired a guy who's undergraduate degree is occupational therapy, and because he spent years as a contractor we thought that was a good thing to have.

**ANNE:** Anything you'd change?

I have loved growing into the role of principal. It's on the job training:

I'm the marketer, the business manager, the designer. I've been surprised how much I really love dealing with people.

PAULA MAYNES

**ED:** My first thought is I wish I had done it sooner but if I had done it sooner it wouldn't have been the same thing.

I wish I had been taller.  
(Laughs)

**PAULA:** Ed, you seem to be doing just dandy.

**PETER:** Having been 31 when I started my practice I wish I had had more experience. This is the kind of field you can't have too much experience.

**ED:** That's why they call it a practice.  
(Laughs)

**PETER:** If I had waited another year or two we would have had a child and my responsibilities would have changed so I think it worked out really well. But when I first started my firm right after Strada started, Ed and I went out to lunch and I asked him how's it going? He told me he had this knot in his stomach. That knot gets smaller but it never goes away.

**ED:** When we first decided to start this firm I called a friend of mine who has his own industrial engineering firm in Atlanta, and he said, "You find that you always have this knot in your stomach and you have it forever."

**DINA:** You're in constant pursuit.

**ANNE: Tell me what you like most about having your own business, and what you like least.**

**PAULA:** Most is easy. It's the flexibility. You can go to your son's swim meet in the afternoon and not have to worry about having someone scowl at you when you go back to the office.

What I like the least is the fact that architecture falls prey to the state of the economy so easily. As soon as the economy dips they tighten their belts and say let's put this off. So we really feel the ups and downs. Architecture's relationship to the general economy is what frustrates me the most.

**PETER:** For me the best part is relationships. That I get to do all this with my clients, and the friendships that develop.

**PAULA:** Can we all claim that too?

**PETER:** It's a real thrill when you work on someone's house and then get invited to the party. When you're designing you're always talking about the party—"oh when you have a party the punch bowl will go here" and then you're at the party and you say, "oh, the punch bowl's right here!"

The flip side of that is when clients are unhappy with you. That's a real stressful experience and sometimes despite your best attempts things aren't going to go as planned. Sometimes it's your fault and sometimes it's not but it's hard to pick up that phone when you have an unhappy client on the other end.

**ED:** First of all my partners don't let me design, I don't do architecture anymore which is okay because I have great designers and partners. But I think of Strada as my architecture so that's cool and that's the big plus for me. I think the worst part is similar to Peter's—an unhappy client, whether it's yours personally or one of the other 18 people working there. Followed closely by clients who don't pay.

But then you're on the aggressive side and I can deal with that better than on the defensive side.

**DINA:** My quick answer is freedom but that's kind of an illusion. You know Bob Dylan says in one of his songs that you have to serve someone. So though you may not have a boss, it just translates to a different kind of thing. As designers we're always out there hoping to please somebody. That's such a hard thing to do. I think of you, Peter. Residence is probably the most difficult and one of the reasons why I lean more toward public work is because it's very hard to get into someone's head and understand who they are and design for them specifically without putting your own judgment on it. To do that you have to meet their needs. You can use your expertise but you can't always use your case.

**PETER:** That's the big part, finding those clients something in the project you can get excited about. I like doing contemporary work but a lot of owners have these great older homes and want their additions to match that style.

**DINA:** That's when you have to start using the word eclectic.  
(Laughs)




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**To fulfill a need of AIA members, AIA Pittsburgh is starting a forum for those who own their own architectural or landscape architecture firms. The objective is to compare methods of practice, share advice, and generally help each other. If you're interested contact Paula Maynes, AIA at 412-488-8890 or [prmaynes@maynesassociates.com](mailto:prmaynes@maynesassociates.com)**

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**PETER:** You're right. And then there are some residential clients who get out their trace and begin to sketch. Or a client who buys a "Be Your Own Architect" kit. Then I have to react to three or four faxes a day with the client's ideas instead of working together in a collaborative process.

Other clients wouldn't think of doing that. The flip side is you have the client you think is perfect and they're giving you all this freedom and then the design is being built and they're asking, "Why are the doors swinging this way instead of that way?"

**DINA:** Because they're not involved.

**ED:** They're just taking your advice. We had this same discussion in our office. Some clients who are actively engaged and push back and question and there's a really intense dialogue which can come across as constricting your design. On the other hand you have some clients who say okay, whatever, that's fine and there's no engagement. It's really disconcerting. When I have one of those clients I'm always waiting for the other shoe to drop.

**PETER:** You want some balance.

**DINA:** My worst client is red mulch. When I see it I'm gone. *(Laughs)*

**ANNE: If you wanted to be like any other architect or landscape architect who would that be?**

**ED:** Imhotep. That's the architect and builder of the great pyramids. And the high priest of Temple Rock, the religion of Egypt. Power. That's a good thing.

**PETER:** There was an article in *Architecture* magazine a number of years ago and it laid out a day in the life of young architects. I read that and thought this was really great. There was the day of an apprentice at Taliesin and another who does clothing design and another who teaches at M.I.T. At the time it seemed that I was only doing drafting all day. I thought, "This is what I want, what I want to achieve. And I now get to do fun things every day, meet potential clients, go to job sites, participate in CMU's juries—sometimes all in the same day!"

**DINA:** Dan Kiley would be the landscape architect. I appreciate his design and Barragan the architect for how he uses color and light.

**PAULA:** This may sound like a cop-out but I've never really emulated any particular famous architect. It's the daily little miracles, the day to day exploration. I feel I'm always growing in a different direction and that's exciting. If I were to name somebody else the whole experience would be different and I'm happy with what it's been.

**DINA:** I swear this feels like therapy. *(Laughs)*

**PAULA:** Sometimes I think I could make more money by being a therapist. There's gotta be a way to take these management skills and design talents and love for drawing and do something else that brings a greater return. Ed, how are you making more money?

**ED:** I think it's a matter of knowing your own worth and sticking to it. The thing that annoys me the most about architects and designers in general is that we're always so gung-ho to do the next project. We see the problem and we say this would be such a cool project. And the client says well, 'I've got three architects and you guys do great work, you are such good designers—buttering us up—but it's a little more than I can afford. If you could come down, say, eight or nine percent then you'd be right in the ballpark and I'd really like to work with you guys.' They sell us a bunch of emotional crap. And we say yeah, I want to do this project. First thing we do—lower the fee.

**DINA:** A college professor told us the ten commandments of professional practice and I remember one of them: sell apples before prostitution. It stayed with me.

**ED:** All the stuff that gives you great emotional benefit? Thank you very much but it goes right out the window because we're talking money. Here's what it's going to cost and here's what I know this is worth.

**DINA:** And you know there's a guy down the street saying I'll do it for less.

**ED:** Absolutely. So your job is to explain to him why you are worth it, not why you can do it cheaper than someone

else. I don't compete with anyone. I sell what we can do and this is what that costs.

**PETER:** How do you factor in the value that's not monetary that is gained from the project?

**ED:** I don't. We have a marketing plan and if a project moves us forward on that then we will allocate a dollar value to that. So let's imagine that we think it's going to cost \$50,000 to do this but we really want to move in this direction. We'll say, okay I think the marketing value for this project is \$15,000 so we'll do it for 35. Then we go to our project architect and say, you've got \$50,000 to work with it because that's what we think it should cost. If it costs us more than \$50,000 then we lost, even though we're only getting 35. If it costs less than 50 then we won. But we make a very conscious business decision as to what that's worth to us in dollars. Beyond that, we make no allocation for "this is a great office building project". We've got to make money.

**PAULA:** We may have all started for the sake of doing design work, but if you want to keep your doors open you have to demand the dollars and cents. I applaud Ed for the professional approach.

Secondly, if you have a client who can't afford the full fee then you negotiate the appropriate scope of work to match the fee they have available. And enforce it. As that scope of work creeps back into the project then you remind them that there will be an additional service.

**PETER:** The problem with that from my perspective is that as an architect your expectations may be more than what the owners might think they need for the project. So if someone comes to me and says we want you to do work up to this point and we'll take it from there and we'll compensate you to that point. As an architect I feel professionally obligated to give 10 percent more because I know that the project will benefit so much more than that 10 percent. After all, it is still a reflection on my work. So even though I'm not getting compensated for that, my tendency is I'm going to want to give a little bit more.

**PAULA:** Would it be feasible for you to put different projects in different categories, to say this one has the design potential and the monetary reward, so I will go all out? These

other projects don't need an excessive effort so instead I'll give them exactly what they want. It's not like you're doing poor quality work, but different clients are looking for different levels of service...

**ED:** Or just charge 10 percent more.

**ANNE: Okay, one final question. How do you market yourself?**

**PAULA:** The most important thing is the face to face contact and that's the hardest because you're making sure the bills get paid and overseeing the design work. It's hard finding the time to meet people. I'm frequently complimented on the proposals I write, but if I haven't met somebody associated with the project it's an uphill battle. I don't think the clients are necessarily trying to give work to someone they know but they're looking for a way to identify with the architect or landscape architect they will be working with. They want a feeling there's something more than just competence in a firm—a way to connect with them.

**DINA:** Because nobody knew me when I started out, I was the section chairperson for ASLA. That doesn't get you jobs but people begin to know who you are. I also sat on the Community Design Center board. The first two years I made cold calls—hard-core cold calls: here's who I am, this is what I do—and I'm still living off of that today. Those two years of work is still paying off today. I made myself talk to at least one person a day.

I knew how to run an

architectural firm which was true.

What I didn't realize was I didn't know

how to *start* an architectural firm and

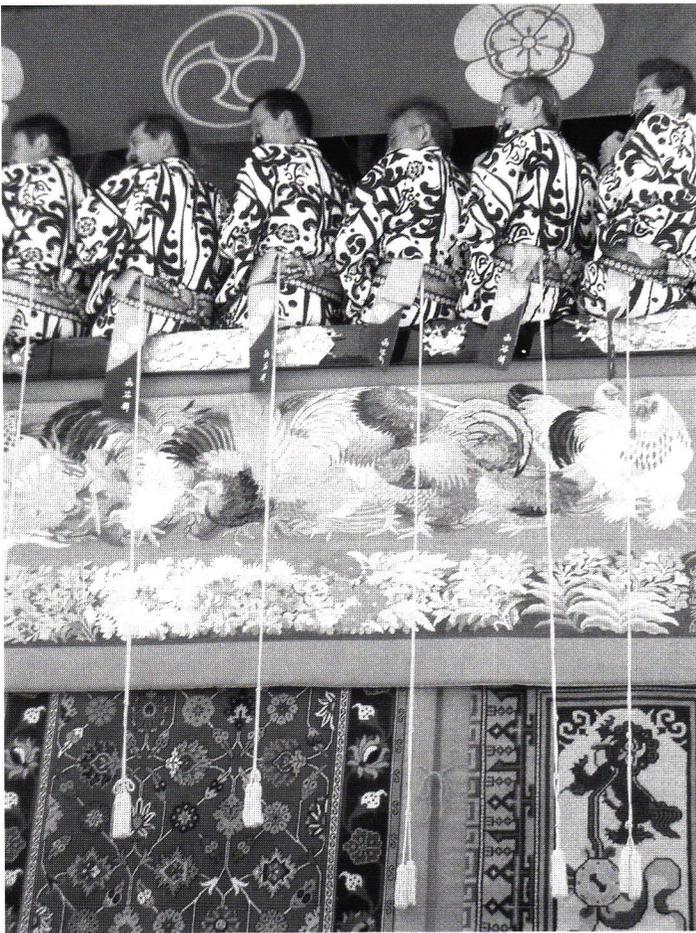
that's not the same thing.

ED SHRIVER



# PICTURE IT: ARCHITECTS FAVORITE TREKS

Ah, vacation. Whether it's combined with work or it's a dream trip of a lifetime, vacations are essential. They recharge and stimulate us, relax and inspire us. Sometimes all at once. As we near the peak vacation season, we asked architects to share recent vacation photos to get an idea of who's going where and why.



*At the Gion Festival in Kyoto every July, handmade wooden floats are slowly pulled (by people) in a ritual procession that includes chanting and music. Here men in traditional costume sit atop the float.*

## Japan

Marc Mondor, AIA  
Christine Mondor, AIA  
evolve::environment architecture

Marc Mondor, AIA and Christine Mondor, AIA, traveled to Japan as critics for and to assist the CMU Studio studying in Kyoto. "There's so much to learn from the Japanese," says Marc, "as well as a heightened sense of aesthetics and craft." The couple did a lecture for the Green Building Alliance on "The Japanese Approach to Designing with Nature" upon their return.



*Torii gate, entrance to Shinto shrine on Miyajima Island*



*Kinkaku, a Buddhist temple from the 1200's, covered in 40 lbs. of gold leaf, Kyoto*

## Egypt

Hosam Habib, Assoc. AIA  
Architectural Designer  
Astorino

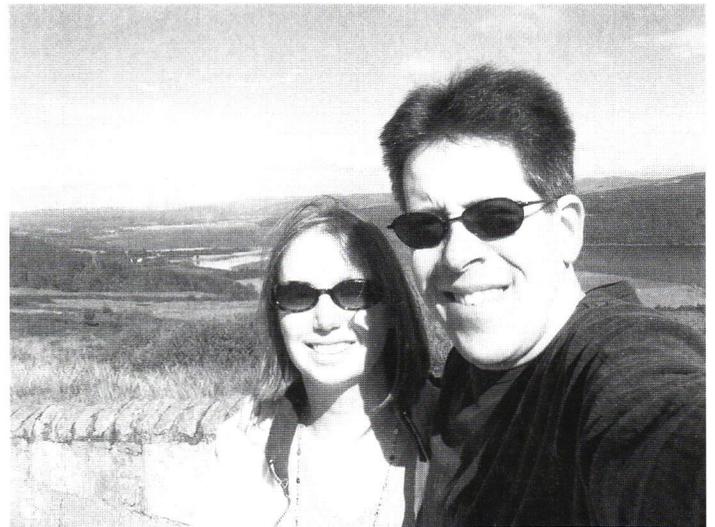
For their honeymoon, Hosam Habib, Assoc. AIA took his wife Jean to his hometown, Cairo, Egypt. As they explored the pyramids and the ancient city, they enjoyed sunny blue skies and temps in the 80's during their January voyage. It was much warmer there than if they had ventured to Jean's hometown. Where's that, you ask? Anchor Point, Alaska.



*After a long cruise on the Nile, Hosam and his wife stopped at a cafe to watch the boats along the Nile.*



*Glasgow School of Art*



*Davis Wells, AIA and his wife Olivia*

## Scotland

David Wells, AIA  
Radelet McCarthy Architects

Last August, David Wells, AIA and his wife, Olivia, traveled to Scotland for the wedding of Olivia's brother. Among the many impressive parts of an overall wonderful trip, David especially loved the topography of the small country. "So much natural landscape compressed in so small a space. From the sea to the Atlantic coast in four hours, you cross low country villages to barren mountains and back down," he said.

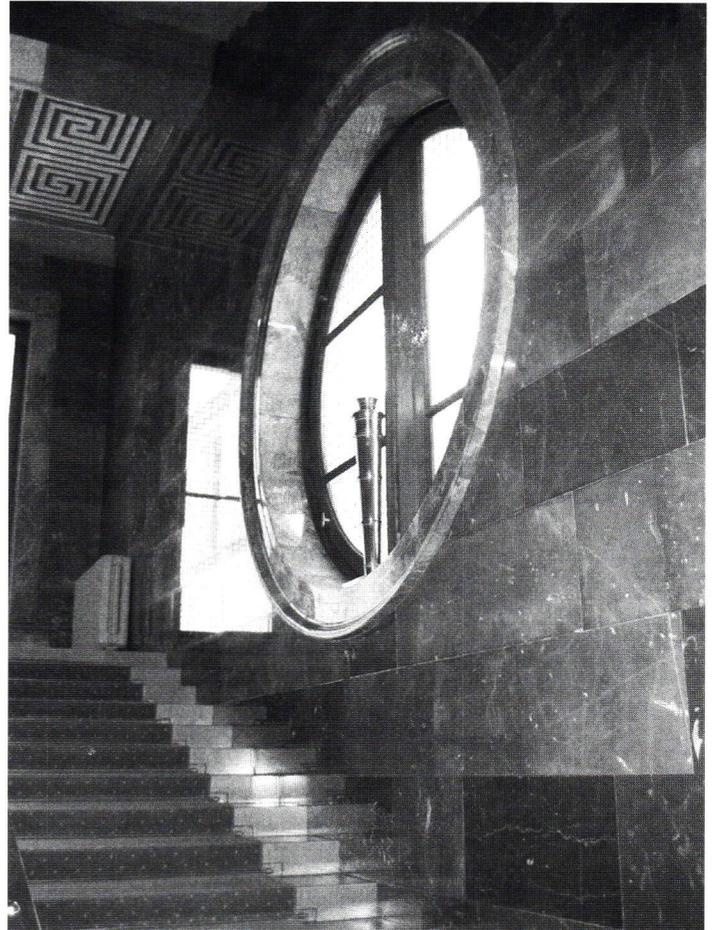
From an architectural standpoint, he enjoyed the old Norse and pre-Norse remains of old villages, the mysticism of Scottish castles, the Rennie Macintosh buildings, and the Standing Stones on the islands of Orkney.



*Standing Stones on Orkney*



*Cooperative Bank 1922 by the architect Ivan Vurnik*



*Grand Staircase of the Chamber of Commerce Building; renovation of a 19th century building completed by architect, Joze Plecnik in 1925-27*

## Slovenia

John Martine, AIA  
Strada

Combining work and travel, John Martine, AIA traveled to Ljubljana, Slovenia last fall to plan for the upcoming Victorian Society Alumni Association trip this September, and took these detail photos. As president for 10 years of the Alumni Association, Martine has traveled with the group to Hungary, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Scotland, England, the Netherlands and most recently, Poland.

The Victorian Society in America is a national organization of 1,500 members in 20 chapters who study nineteenth century architecture and culture through two internationally recognized summer schools in Newport, RI and London, England. Founded in 1966 as a companion organization of the Victorian Society in Great Britain, each summer school's two to three week program focuses on the Victorian period through lectures, site visits, and tours of significant buildings, many of which are not open to the public. More than 1,000 international alumni have attended the summer schools and meet each year for a reunion.



*Detail of door handle at the National University Library, Ljubljana, Slovenia by Joze Plecnik 1936-41.*



Artist Helen Martins spent 12 years working with Koos Malgas to create hundreds of sculptures that cover the walls of her house in Nieu Bethesda, and crowd the "Camel Yard" at the fascinating Owl House. Inside, "every surface is covered with crushed glass," says Radelet. Following Martin's suicide in 1978, the house has been maintained by a non-profit organization. (Editor's note: see [www.owlhouse.za](http://www.owlhouse.za) for more info and photos.)



Table Mountain, Cape Town



Kruger National Park

## South Africa

John T. Radelet, AIA  
Radelet McCarthy Architects

For John Radelet, a trip to South Africa in 2002 was unique in many ways, including allowing a significant time of three weeks to really see different areas and meet many people. Architecture was a secondary (at best) issue, he says. To readjust, he spent a week in Paris on the way back.



We brake for giraffes

# CALENDAR

## AIA ACTIVITIES

JULY 19, TUESDAY

**AIA Pittsburgh Board Meeting**, 5 p.m. at the Chapter office. All members are welcome. 412-471-9548

AUGUST 5, FRIDAY

**AIA Communications Committee Meeting**  
Noon at the Chapter office. All members are welcome. 412-471-9548

## AROUND TOWN

JULY 13, WEDNESDAY

**SDA 'Convention 2005 Highlights'** at the Engineers Club from 12-1:30 p.m. For more information please contact Christine Stewart at 412-261-0660.

AUGUST 10, WEDNESDAY

**SDA Monthly Meeting and Walking Tour**. For more information please contact Christine Stewart at 412-261-0660.

SUBMIT YOUR WORK TO COLUMNS!

## Upcoming Issues

### SEPTEMBER:

- Allegheny County Comprehensive Plan
- Impressions of the AIA National Convention in Las Vegas

### OCTOBER:

- 16:62 Design Zone
- Design Pittsburgh

Contact editor Tracy Certo at 412-563-7173  
or at [tcerto@adelphia.net](mailto:tcerto@adelphia.net)

# KENTUCK KNOB

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT'S HOUSE FOR I.N. AND BERNARDINE HAGAN

REVIEW BY ROBERT J. BAILEY, AIA



## Kentuck Knob

Frank Lloyd Wright's House  
for I.N. and Bernardine Hagan

by Bernardine Hagan

*The story of working with the legendary architect to build Kentuck Knob and life in this idyllic location. Includes stories, photos, correspondence, and more.*

COURTESY OF THE LOCAL HISTORY COMPANY. PHOTO BY I.N. HAGAN

Periodically the design community receives a gift; sometimes one that is both delightful and educational. In the instance of *Kentuck Knob: Frank Lloyd Wright's House for I.N. and Bernardine Hagan*, it is a rare gift indeed. The book is written by Bernardine Hagan, doubtless one of the last surviving Frank Lloyd Wright clients. In 1953 she and her husband I.N. Hagan commissioned Wright to design a home in the Laurel Mountains. Kentuck Knob was the result of that collaboration. This book is a result of friends and family urging Mrs. Hagan to compile her memories of an extraordinary experience.

It begins with a forward by Gerald Morosco, AIA, President of Taliesin Fellows, who recounts visiting Kentuck as a Taliesin apprentice in the early 1980's and includes a description of the different type of relationship Wright had with the Hagans and how it seemed to inspire the old man.

The preface, by Christopher Hagan, Bernardine and I.N.'s grandson, gives you a good sense of the chapters to follow. "Kentuck is where I grew up," he writes, setting a down-to-earth, genial tone to this book about a house that is both legendary and a family home.

Mrs. Hagan's prose is similarly disarming. Her narrative moves quickly through early chapters on planning and construction. This portion contains an amazing series of high-quality photos of the construction sequence along with other treats such as photos of the Hagans' cancelled checks paid to Wright, and a reproduced advertisement for Revere Copper that featured its use on the roof of Kentuck.

It is impossible to read about Kentuck Knob without thinking about its Laurel Mountain counterpart, Fallingwater, and we learn that the two do in fact have a connection —



PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER HAGAN

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** *Bernardine Hagan, now in her 90s, is a living legacy, one of the few people still alive who actually knew Wright. Her first-hand account reveals the process behind the creation of an architectural masterpiece and the importance of good design. Mrs. Hagan lives in Uniontown, Pennsylvania not far from her beloved Kentuck Knob, and still enjoys visits there. She remains active in helping to preserve Frank Lloyd Wright's legacy in the region.*

*Images from Kentuck Knob, Frank Lloyd Wright's House for I.N. and Bernardine Hagan, by Bernardine Hagan (ISBN 0-9711835-5-4) published by The Local History Company.*



PHOTO BY I.N. HAGAN

I.N. Hagen asked Edgar Kaufmann if he thought Wright would design a house for him. Kaufmann's response? "Tell him just half of what you intend to spend!" The difference, as one realizes from Mrs. Hagan's account, is immediate and significant. Kentuck Knob was actually lived in — it served as the Hagen's residence for some 30 years until 1986 when I.N.'s health had reached a point where they could no longer stay at Kentuck.

Indeed, most of Mrs. Hagan's text is about life at Kentuck over the years. Her prose is so simple and genuine that you may find yourself wishing you could have spent a few crisp mountain days at the house in its heyday. Mrs. Hagan's text is also relatively short; there are nineteen chapters but most are just a few pages. Numerous illustrations and images of family life are included along with a shot of the family dog as well as copies of Wright's letters and notes to the Hagans. Eight pages of color photos, both recent and vintage, are featured at the center of the book.

Following Mrs. Hagen's narrative is an 'afterward' by Eleanor C. Ulmer, a lifelong friend of the Hagen family who fills in a bit on some aspects perhaps Mrs. Hagen was too modest to mention: the beautiful décor and splendid gardening and Mrs. Hagen's many talents and interests.

The last part of the book is a series of appendices, including a copy of a letter to the Hagans from Lord Peter Palumbo, the present owner of Kentuck; and a reprint of a 1964 article on Kentuck, from *Charette* magazine, written by James Van Trump. The third and final appendix consists of a multitude of copies of correspondence between I.N. Hagen and Taliesin. This plethora of letters and notes should satisfy the most voracious Wright student seeking documentation of the process of a Wright commission — this one elucidates the rocky road that seems to have characterized being a client of Wright's.

*Kentuck Knob: Frank Lloyd Wright's House for I.N. and Bernardine Hagan* is now available from The Local History Company, where former *Columns* editor Cheryl Towers is editor-in-chief. The book, remarkable for its sweep of illustrations and correspondence as well as for Mrs. Hagan's engaging narrative, will give you a deeper appreciation of Kentuck Knob. Buy it, settle back in your favorite chair, and be transported to the Hagans' wonderful mountain home.

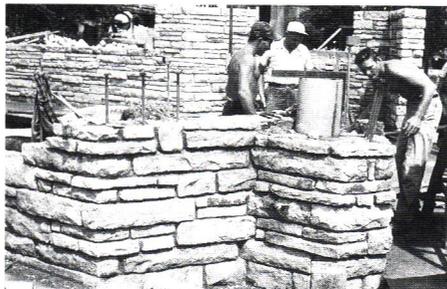


PHOTO BY I.N. HAGAN



PHOTO BY I.N. HAGAN



PHOTO FOR SOTHEBY'S BY MICHAEL RAY



PHOTO FOR SOTHEBY'S BY MICHAEL RAY

**From the Firms**

→ **JSA Architecture Planning Engineering and Interior Design** announced their selection as the architect and MEP engineer of record for two new Dick's Sporting Goods Stores in Melbourne and Orange Park, Florida. The stores combine for roughly 100,000 sf of new retail space.

KMA Design has been selected by West Virginia University Hospitals to develop a new signage package for its Ruby Memorial Hospital in Morgantown, WV. The project includes developing a complete bid package to upgrade the hospital's existing wayfinding system and develop signage for a new 180,000 sf addition.

**Business Briefs**

→ **L. Robert Kimball & Associates, Architects and Engineers** announced the appointment of three new staff members to their Architecture and Engineering Building Systems Group in the downtown Pittsburgh office. Jason L. Derkosh and James Fezczko joined the firm as a building designers. Marc Peterson will serve as a structural designer.



**DERKOSH**

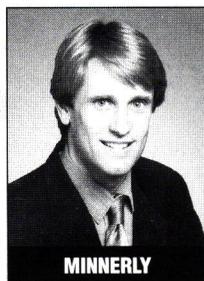


**FECZKO**



**PETERSON**

**The Design Alliance Architects** announced three new principals in the firm: **L. Christian Minnerly, AIA**, Sheri T. Spoharski and Virginia Seeley Weida. Mr. Minnerly rejoined The Design Alliance Architects as an Architect in 2003. He is currently completing his Master of Architecture degree from Cornell University where he received his Bachelor of Architecture in 1985. Ms. Spoharski joined the firm as an interior designer in 1996. Ms. Weida has been an interior designer with the firm since 1995 and is a LEED Accredited Professional.



**MINNERLY**



**SPOHARSKI**

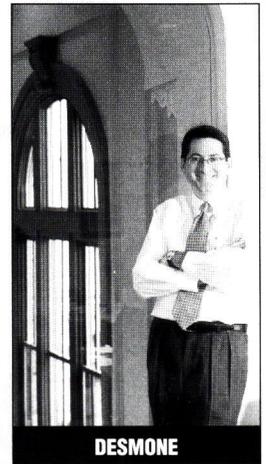


**WEIDA**

**C. Noël Kennard, AIA, Yanet Kaplanski, Assoc. AIA**, and Paul Eric Rich have joined **The Design Alliance Architects**. Mr. Kennard, an architect, has more than 20 years of architectural experience in the United States and Canada. Ms. Kaplanski, a native of Uruguay, is an architectural designer who has worked in both Uruguay and the United States. Mr. Rich is an architectural designer who graduated from Florida A&M University in 2002 with a Bachelor's in Architecture

**Kudos**

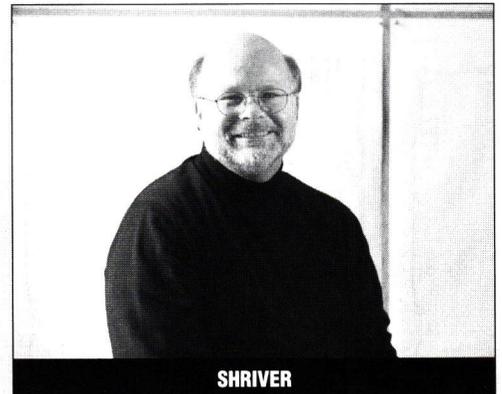
→ Principal **Charles L. "Chip" Desmone, II, AIA** of **Desmone & Associates Architects** has passed the exam to become a LEED Accredited Professional by the United States Green Building Council.



**DESMONE**

**Strada** celebrated the grand opening of Ibiza Restaurant with the owner, Antonio Pereira, and friends in June. As Pittsburgh's first authentic Wine & Tapas Bar, Ibiza was designed to create an experience as unique and diverse as the wine and food being served. The project combines old and new architecture to create a series of spaces, each with unique characteristics, intended to excite patron's senses as they enjoy the journey through the restaurant. The restaurant will also feature murals by local artists that enliven this journey and emphasize the spirit of the Spanish islands. The new restaurant is located at on E. Carson Street next to Mallorca Restaurant.

**Edward A. Shriver, AIA**, principal at **Strada**, served on an Urban Land Institute Advisory Panel to study downtown revitalization efforts in downtown Rochester, NY. Held June 6 through June 10, the interdisciplinary team evaluated the current socio-economic conditions and proposed future development concepts



**SHRIVER**

**Michael A. Stern, Assoc. AIA**, principal at **Strada**, has been named Chairman of the Urban Land Institute Pittsburgh District Council. He also serves on ULI's Inner-City Council and recently published an article about Pittsburgh in *Urban Lands* June issue.



The April issue of *Metropolis* ran a six-page feature on Koning Eizenberg's design of the Children's Museum in which it mentioned **Paul Rosenblatt, AIA of SPRINGBOARD** for his innovative exhibits. "Rosenblatt's exhibit designs—including an incredible wet water feature that requires kids to don yellow slickers—fit into the space like art installations. The building has that sense of being an armature..."

The spread featured numerous photos of the "messy" museum where "rigorous irreverence is a better approach to designing for kids than the tacked-on color that typically counts as playfulness." In other words, they really like it.

Mary F. Crawford, President and Founder of Crawford Consulting Services, Inc., has been named the 2005 Western Pennsylvania Woman-Owned Business of the Year by the Small Business Administration (SBA). Mary was recognized for her achievements at the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Small Business Awards Luncheon on May 20.

### In the News

→ The cover story on U.S. News and World Report, "Mysteries of the Mind", featured **fathom**, an **Astorino** design firm that helped Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh uncover subconscious thoughts from user groups and translated the information into more meaningful design. (See *Columns* September 2003)

The magazine reported on the ZMET technique that provides guidance to business seeking to better understand the minds of consumers. Children, parents and staff members of Children's Hospital created collages of images they associated with hospitals. They were then interviewed in-depth. "The process is painstaking," reports the magazine, "but after the transcripts of all these sessions are reviewed, even in all the enormous variety of human expression and emotion, core themes emerge...the main metaphor was transformation and the supporting metaphors were control, connection and energy."

How does that translate into more meaningful design? When the new Children's Hospital opens in 2008, the entrance will be surrounded by images of butterflies, "the ultimate symbol of transformation." Hospital rooms will be more like home and children will have more control over their personal space.

## MARKETPLACE

The Hayes Design Group – Architects, a South Hills firm that works in educational, religious, and commercial markets, is seeking two architectural professionals.

An Associate-level Architect with 5-8 years experience who would manage moderate-size projects and be responsible for overseeing portions of larger ones. We would like a person who wants more responsibility, including managing all phases of the design process, contract documents, and client relations. Must have the ability to lead and direct a team, solid technical knowledge, good communication style, and organizational skills. Professional registration is desired but not required.

An Architectural Graduate with B. Arch degree and 2-5 years of experience ready to expand their experience into design, coordinating construction documents, field administration, and client contact. Must have AutoCad proficiency and good technical skills.

We offer competitive salary, profit-sharing, healthcare, professional association fees and a collegial work place. For confidential consideration, send resume to

The Hayes Design Group – Architects  
110 Fort Couch Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15241  
Attn.: Mr. Kevin A. Hayes, AIA

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A LISTING OF AREA CONTRACTORS AND THEIR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES. To include your firm in this directory, call AIA Pittsburgh at 412-471-9548.

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WEB SITE: www.flynn-construction.com

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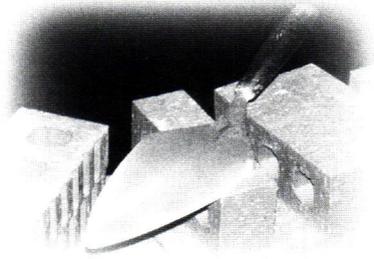
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E-MAIL: tom.ali@psiusa.com  
WEB SITE: www.psiusa.com  
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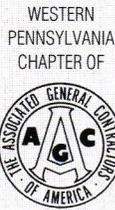
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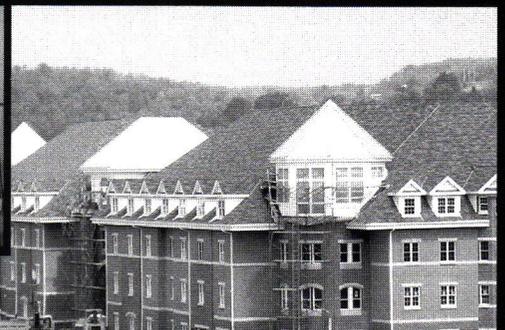
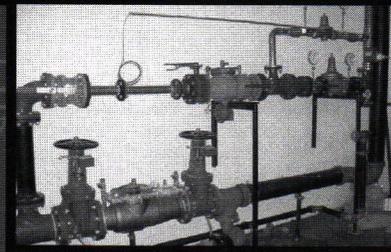
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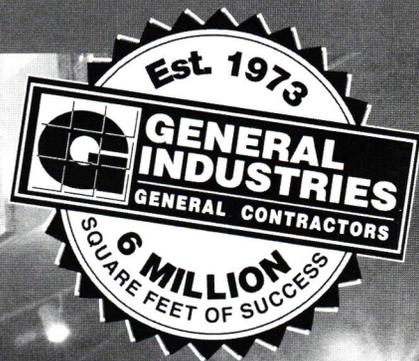
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