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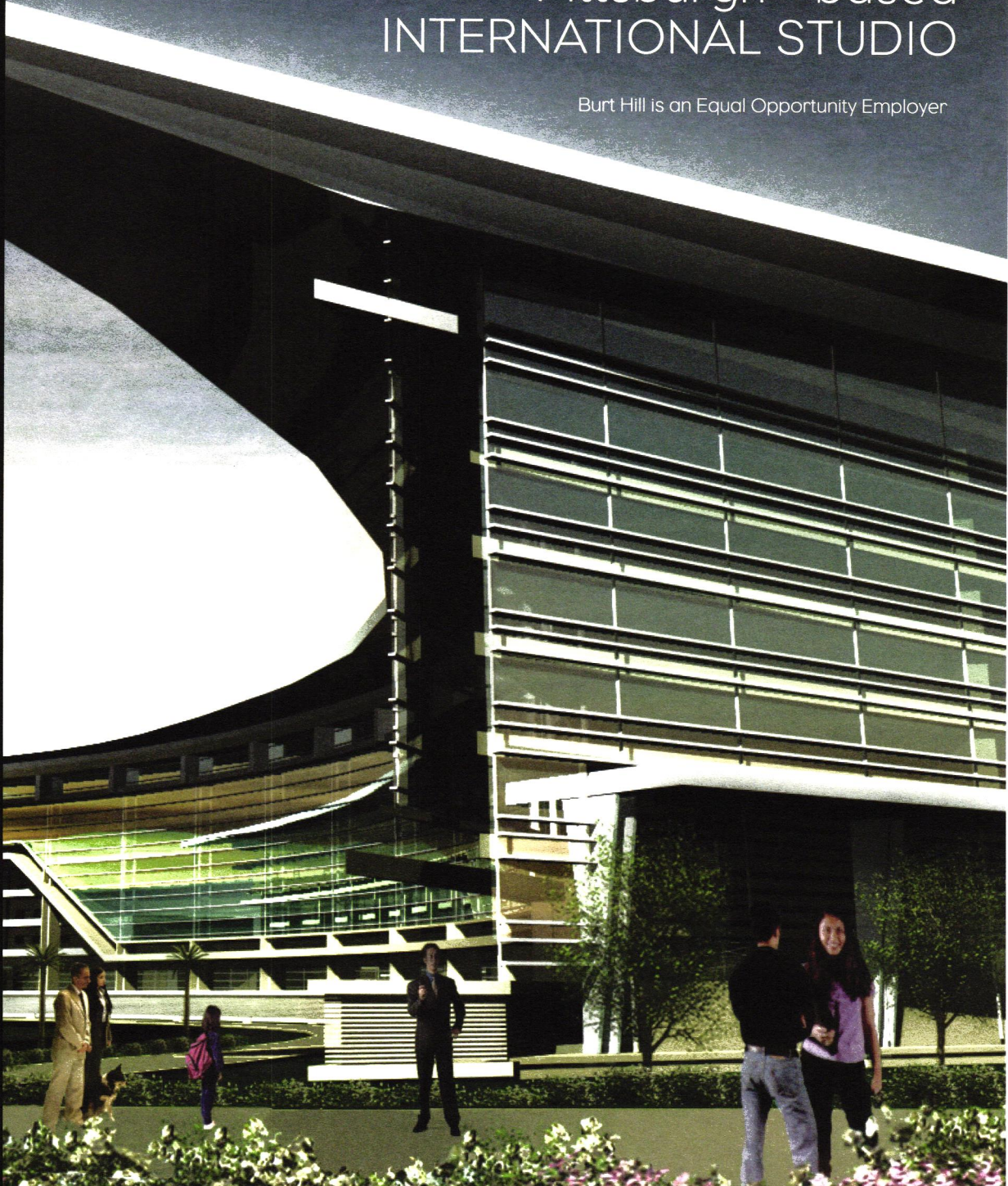
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HOMEFRONT

BY ANNE J. SWAGER, HON. AIA



PHOTO BY JONATHAN GREENE

Losing both of my parents in the space of five months has been tough. It wasn't that it was particularly unexpected. They were both in their mid-80's and in just the past couple of years their health had begun to fail. But despite this, I don't think anyone ever feels "old enough" to have his or her parents die. It seems quite unbelievable – if not a bit surreal – that my brother, sister, and I are now the oldest generation in our family. While I hardly walk down the street worrying about this, it has caused me to reflect over some moments everyday, taking stock of my life. A number of thoughts float through my head at different moments: Am I really doing what I want? Am I making a difference? Will my children think I lived a life well lived? I also think about my parents' lives and remember what aspects of their lives defined them in my eyes.

For me, it was their "Maine-ness". My father was born and raised in Maine and while he spent over 30 years in Ohio, there was never any doubt that he was headed back to Maine. When we were young and money was exceedingly tight he bought an acre+ piece of property on the coast with deep-water anchorage on two sides. While this by all counts smacks as a very good investment, at the time the land was not considered to be worth a lot. There was nothing more than a badly rutted dirt road which dead-ended part of the way in, and the rest of the way you hiked. When I was a child our Maine fishing village was not the quaint place it has become. It sported a really smelly sardine factory and lots of commercial fishing boats. Local fisherman routinely lost limbs and sometimes their lives in boating mishaps. The Maine I grew up with was a hardscrabble place with vast weather changes. People like my parents were practical and frugal because they had to be. No one ever thought Maine would be sought after as a retirement/summer home place.

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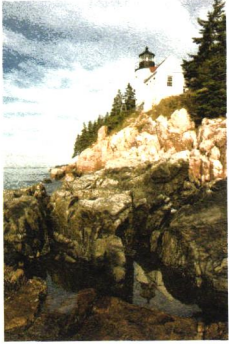
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Cover photo by Bradd Celidonia

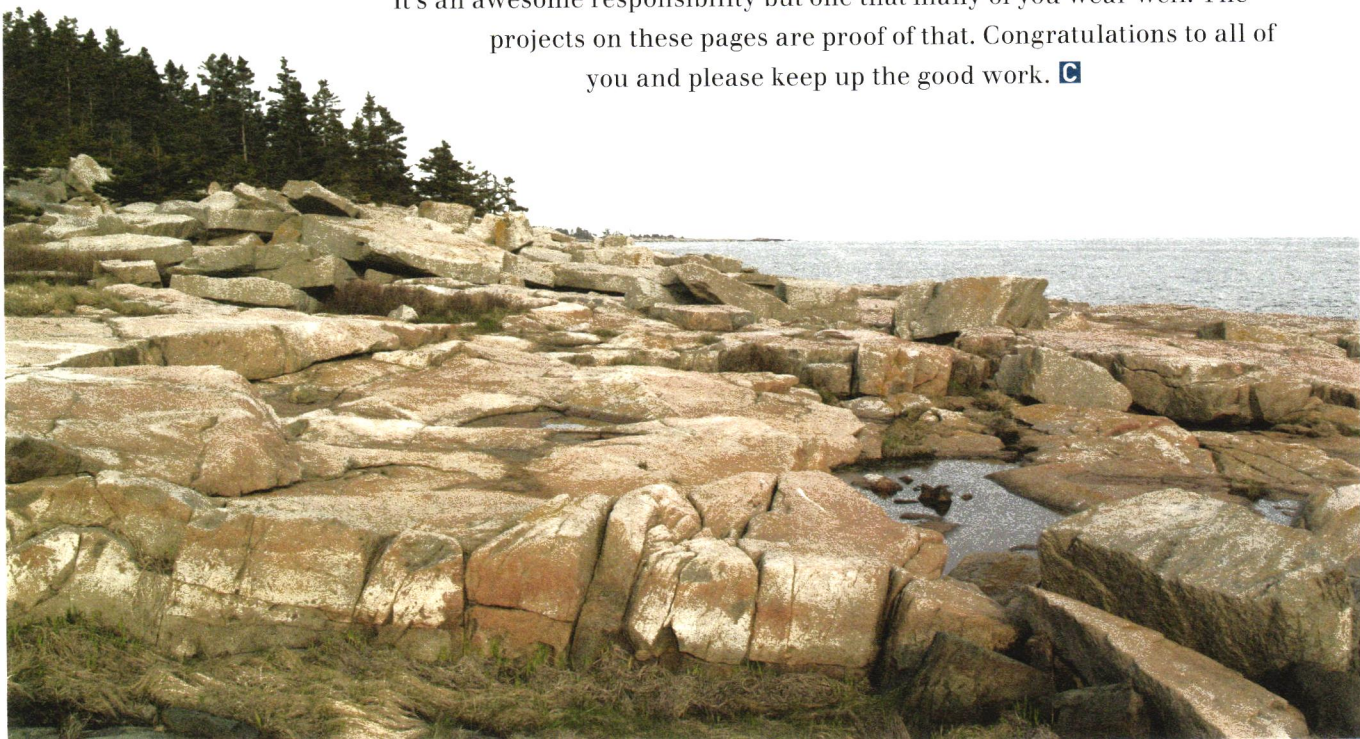


Maine is a poor state and to this day still struggles with a legacy of an inadequate road system and underperforming public schools. Yet, what draws people there now is the same thing that drew my parents back – the stark beauty of the place. For my father there was no better sight than the rocky Maine coast overlooking the Atlantic Ocean with pine tree covered islands in the distance. As he slept away the last few weeks of his life I feel sure that is what his closed eyes were seeing.

Almost every day that I come into the city, I come through the Fort Pitt tunnels and I am greeted by the signature view that defines our city. I confess that after all these years I am still in awe by the vision before me. The ability to not only appreciate but also deeply connect with a place is something I share with my father. While he found beauty in the ruggedness of nature, I find myself drawn to the built environment, to feats of design that speak of the ingenuity of man. Each fall, as the Design Pittsburgh submission binders arrive at the AIA office, I take the time to look through the newest ideas and creations before sending them on to our jury. The projects presented in the following pages were chosen as the winners this year by a group of thoughtful, committed jurors. While they considered many aspects of all the projects, they rewarded beauty, stewardship, and practicality. Watching them carefully consider your work reinforced for me the importance of what you do.

Beauty is important. Marrying the built environment with the natural environment or even adding to an already existing neighborhood should be done with the care and sensitivity that you bring to it. While perhaps this does not always translate into more compensation for you the architect, I remain convinced that people do care deeply about the places of their daily lives. It might be a building, an interior, a campus, or a rocky coast but we all have those places that are imprinted on our souls.

It's an awesome responsibility but one that many of you wear well. The projects on these pages are proof of that. Congratulations to all of you and please keep up the good work. **C**



TIME FLIES

BY JIM RADOCK, AIA

Eleven short months ago, I began the year by extolling the virtues of the “Family of Architects.” At the time, the board and staff of AIA Pittsburgh were hard at work programming our spring Build Pittsburgh seminars. Fast-forward to December and, after another successful Design Pittsburgh, we’re already planning Build Pittsburgh 2008.

Ever since our first spring continuing education event – then called “Tri AIA” – in 2002, AIA Pittsburgh’s calendar year has revolved around these two major, complimentary events. Mix in membership meetings, board and committee meetings, a host of other events held in conjunction with affiliated organizations, and an untold number of document sales and phone calls, and you get an idea how our chapter’s volunteers and, most especially, our staff spend their year.

With so much happening in any given year, it sometimes seems a wonder that the chapter continues to offer new initiatives and refine old ones, even as it continues to provide the core events and services that the membership expects. One reason for the board’s ability to effectively develop and implement a vision for the chapter is the continuity in leadership that comes from the makeup of our Executive Committee.

Our Executive Committee, consisting of the president, first and second vice presidents, and immediate past president, provides a fluid, continuous four-year transition period that allows for consistent, effective implementation of the board’s vision. Typically, each individual focuses on a particular event or initiative, building on the previous year’s experience. This year I am indebted to Paula Maynes for helping orchestrate Design Pittsburgh and to Chip Desmone for his work with the Revenue Committee – a product of 2006 President Tom Briney’s leadership.



This continuity extends, of course, beyond the Executive Committee, and beyond the board itself. As we welcome new members to the board, we should thank three who are leaving this month for their participation. It was during Dan Rothschild’s tenure as president that our re-examination of the AIA Pittsburgh brand set the framework for the phased communication plan that we continue to implement. Ed Shriver was instrumental in laying the groundwork for the Design Center, our AIA 150 Blueprint for America project. And, although Felix Fukui is leaving the AIA Pittsburgh Board, he is now one of Pittsburgh’s representatives on the AIA Pennsylvania Board.

Beyond the board level, AIA Pittsburgh benefits greatly from our extended resources at all levels of membership. At our September Membership Meeting, former chapter President (and current AIA National Regional Director) Maureen Guttman, AIA updated chapter members on key issues and initiatives that are front and center at the national level. Based on the positive response we received following previous dialogue sessions with the Fellows, we expect to hold another next year. In addition, the chapter is planning to address diversity in the profession at Build Pittsburgh 2008, an outgrowth of our involvement (spearheaded by 2005 chapter President Steve Quick) as a founding partner in the multi-disciplinary Western Pennsylvania Diversity Initiative.

Ultimately, though, all of these projects would grind to a halt if not for the tireless work of our chapter staff: Anne Swager, Becky Spevack, and Rachael Kelley. As we celebrate the conclusion of the design awards and turn our attention toward a busy 2008, I extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who cares enough to make it all happen. **C**