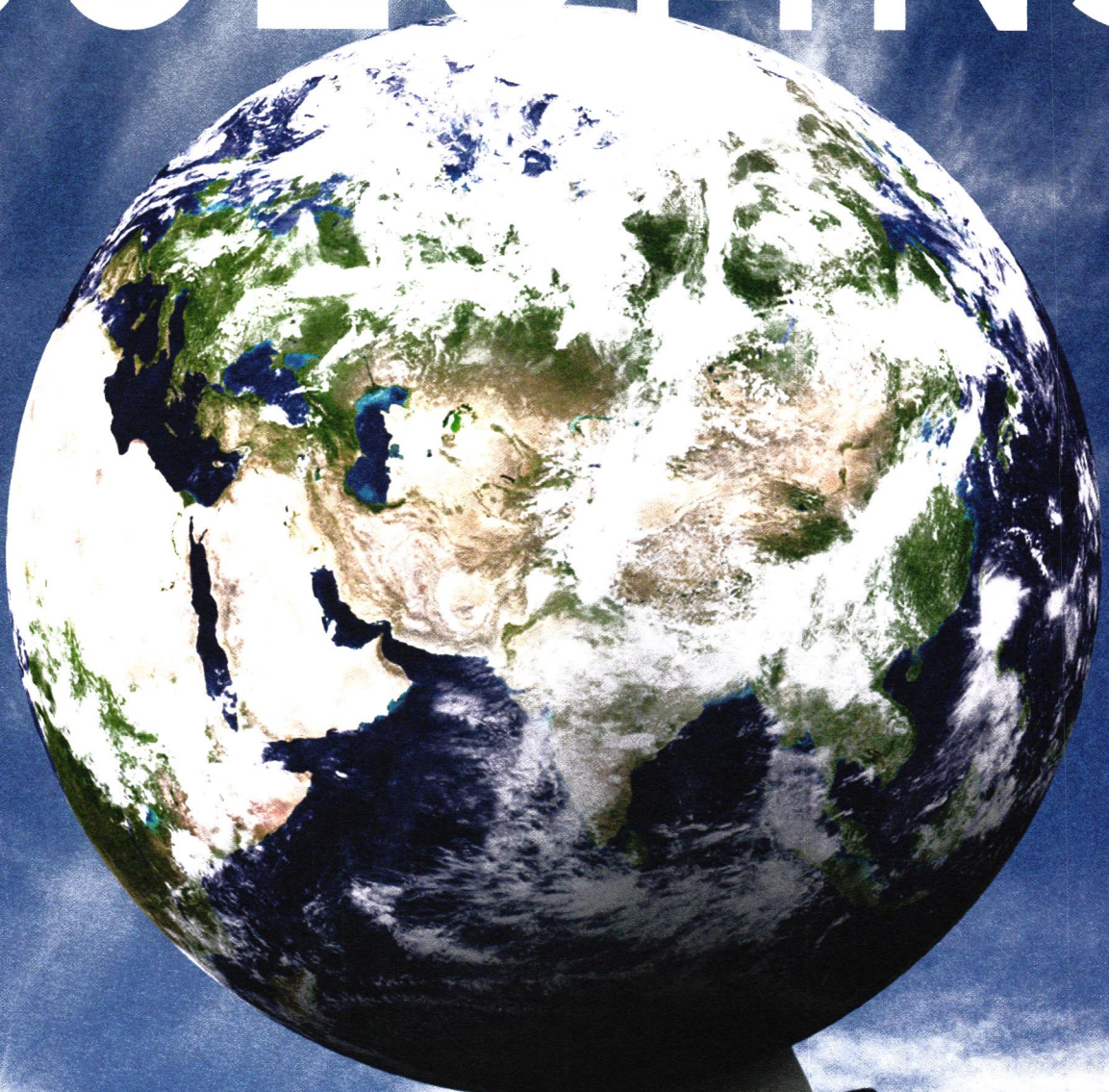


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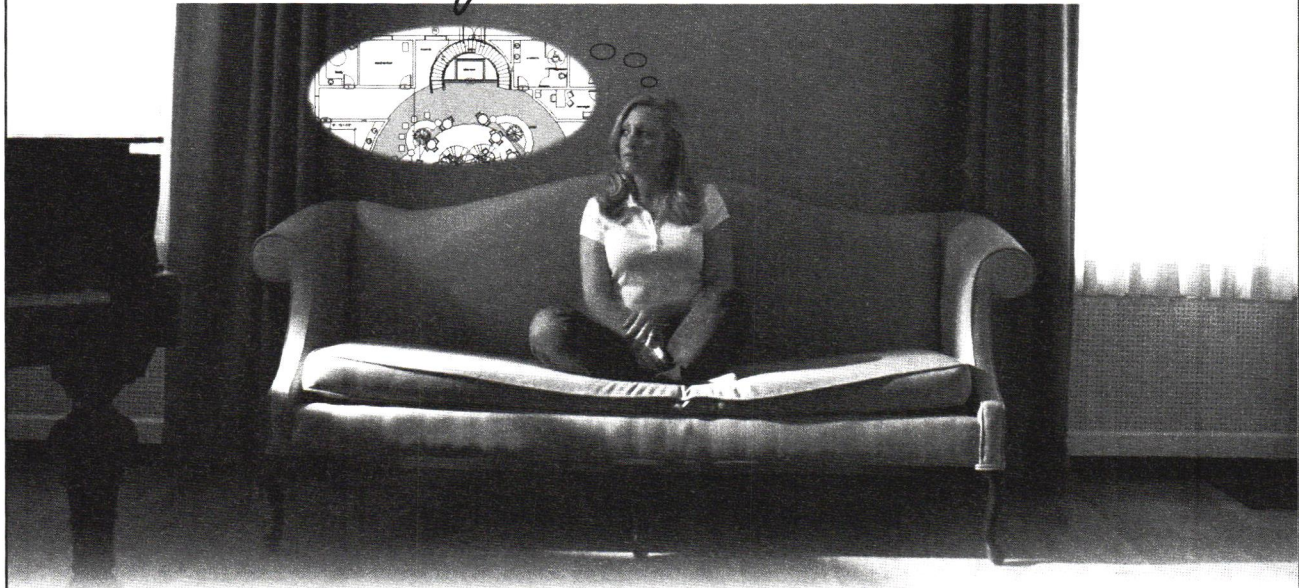


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# HOMEFRONT

BY BECKY SPEVACK



**I was given a wonderful gift earlier this spring.** Two gifts, really. Both are once-in-a-lifetime experiences – experiences shared with family, that have expanded knowledge, increased emotional capacity, and altered who I am as a person. The first gift was discovering that my husband and I are expecting our first child. Something we had talked about often, in a daydream-like fashion, is now a reality. And while our heads feel like they could spin off of our shoulders if we're not careful, the joy and excitement is overwhelming in the best way possible. I know that many of our readers are parents as well, so I realize that this is something many have already experienced; but as a first-timer, it continues to amaze and astound me. Pregnancy has changed my perception of the world around me. Suddenly spring, with its vibrant greens and life fighting through soil, takes on new and deeper meaning. Each step I take, each action, is now taken with someone new, this little person that I carry everywhere.

## Which leads to my second gift...

After months of planning, my Mum and I flew to Ireland in March. She had been hoping to visit this land of her ancestors for years, and asked me to accompany her. I was honored. The two of us have a history of travel together, taking trips up and down the east coast since I was in middle school. We made a good team then – she drove, I navigated – and we found that we still travel well together. We spent eight days in Ireland, taking a tour around the whole of the country, and words cannot adequately describe how breathtaking this place was. (Although it won't stop me from trying.)

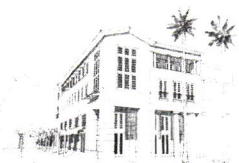
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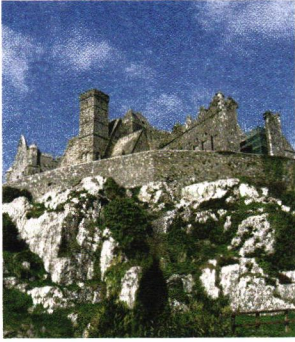


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I have only been to Europe once before, but both times I have been amazed. First Italy, and now Ireland, I found both places to be magnificent. American history is not that old; our infrastructure and built environment, while often found to be crumbling down around us, is still in its infancy compared to the cities and towns throughout most other parts of the world. As we drove through Ireland, the stone ruins all hold stories centuries old. The fortresses sprinkle the hillsides, breaking up the vast spans of green. It's almost hard to imagine that people once lived there thousands of years ago. These places, that once served as shelter and protection, were standing before me. A history I had only read about in books was suddenly unfolding in front of me. Organic in its development, new has been incorporated into old, allowing me to visualize life in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, peasants building stone walls by hand. We climbed the road to the Rock of Cashel and walked among the remaining structures, feeling the bitter wind whip through the cathedral and castle remains. As we strolled through the graveyard at 6<sup>th</sup> century Clonmacnoise, finding tombs dating back hundreds of years, I couldn't help but think of future generations, of my own children someday trekking the globe in search of their own experiences. The craftsmanship that remained after centuries of being exposed to the elements was still present enough to be jaw-dropping. Every corner of the country we visited revealed more surprises, treasure, and beauty.

I can only imagine what other parts of the world hold in store, especially those places where the culture, religion, and philosophy are more varied from our own. Similarly, I can't quite grasp how difficult it must be to come from another culture and country of origin to relocate in the United States. Yet that is exactly what the four subjects of our main feature have done. Arriving from three different continents, each person has a unique story to tell of relocation as an adult, and the long road that they had to travel to be able to ply their trade as architects in this country. My brief sojourns in Europe have given me an appreciation as an outsider, but have also opened my eyes to the fact that opportunities can exist elsewhere, far beyond one's comfort zone. And as I type this, with my belly already bumping the edge of my desk, I am beginning to understand that on a whole new and personal level. **C**



ABOVE: Rock of Cashel  
RIGHT: Clonmacnoise

# RESILIENCY AND REINVENTION

BY ANNE J. SWAGER, HON. AIA

I recently ran into a friend at the grocery store. As we chatted, she mentioned hiring an architect for a consult. I had met this woman at a mutual friend's house, a mutual friend who is an architect. Sensing a possible freelance job for our friend, I threw out his name. She looked at me quizzically and then suggested her job was way too small for him.

She hadn't heard the news – our friend was recently laid off. She looked at me in shock, saying, "Whenever I hear about layoffs and unemployment during rough economic times, I always think about mill workers. I didn't think this could happen to a well-educated, hard working architect."

I left this conversation feeling envious. I'd like to think that layoffs only happen to people I don't know. I would like to feel safe and secure and somehow untouched by the economic chaos of recent times, but I can't.

When the economy is tough, the AIA is more relevant than ever before. The need for jobs, leads, and an edge on the market becomes more pressing. To assist in this, we have started a group for unemployed architects in the area. We invite anyone, intern or registered, member or nonmember, to get together every other Friday to share thoughts and ideas on what jobs are out there and how to survive difficult times. We bring in speakers at the group's request on a variety of subjects like boning up your resume and how to write killer cover letters.

There have been a number of surprises for me in this endeavor, and a number of confirmations. First and foremost, there are *lots* of talented, hardworking architects without jobs. Another surprise is the relative age shift in those that have been laid off. It is a mix of interns and sea-

soned project managers. Everyone is busy honing their skills, from seeking LEED certification to learning REVIT. Finding a job is no longer a matter of walking your resume from office to office. Web-based social networking is the new model and our group has embraced these new approaches. One architect even started participating in a minute-by-minute online consulting service (for a fee of course). Everyone is now on LinkedIn and by the time you read this we will have our own LinkedIn group to create a central spot to post resumes and portfolios.

This group confirms for me the resiliency of the human spirit. It isn't easy to have the definition of what you are taken away and then go on to reinvent yourself. Some are facing tougher economic challenges than others,

but everyone is facing diminished income. Some feel resigned, some are angry. Those who had the benefit of a more humane process, with a severance package, are fairing the best. All of them have shared their experiences, good and bad, of how they were laid off. I imagine hiring practices and negotiations will be impacted when the market picks back up.

Economic circumstances for AIA Pittsburgh are diminished as well, yet the Chapter is committed to all architects whether employed, partially employed, or laid off. Helping all of you keep your skills sharp and your spirits positive is important. We can't sit by passively and hope to retain the many talented, hard working architects we have in our region. Please think of us when you hear of job leads or opportunities that might be interesting to an architect. If you pass this information on to me, I will make sure our unemployed group gets the information as well. **G**



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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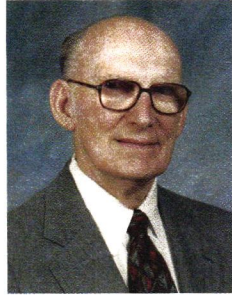
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## IN MEMORIAM: JACK ROSS, AIA



**Jack Ross, age 78**, a resident of Pine Township since 1984, formerly of Ross Township, died April 22, 2009, at his home. Jack was born on September 3, 1930. Growing up in Mt. Lebanon, he was the son of the late Donald R. and Elizabeth Stiteler Ross, Sr. A graduate of Graceland Junior College in Lamoni, Iowa, he received his master's degree in architecture from Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa.

Jack began practicing architecture as a sole proprietorship on March 13, 1964. Eight years later, he was joined by John F. Schonder to form Ross and Associates. In 1975, the firm became Ross and Schonder Architects. In 1988, the firm was incorporated as Ross Schonder Sterzinger Cupcheck PC. He retired in 1995. He was a member of the American Institute of Architects and in 1975 he served as president of the Pittsburgh Chapter. Some of Jack's notable projects include Northland Public Library, The Society of Automotive Engineers, Aerotech Inc, and the Western Pennsylvania Order of Eastern Star Home. Jack was also responsible for the design of numerous religious facilities throughout Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Michigan.

Jack was a longtime member of The Community of Christ in Gibsonia and also fellowshiped with Memorial Park Presbyterian Church. He was a member of Rotary International since the early 1970's and past president of the North Boros Rotary Club. Jack served many years on the North Hills YMCA Board of Directors and was involved in the design and construction of the North Hills and South Hills YMCAs along with several buildings at Camp Kon-O-Kwee and Deer Valley. He was also a member of the Northern Allegheny Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and a recipient of the Chamber's Arcadia Award.

He was an avid sailor and often took friends on his 505 sailboat at Moraine State Park. He also enjoyed freehand sketching and sculpting in clay. He greatly admired the works of Frank Lloyd Wright.

Jack is survived by his wife of nearly 55 years, Bonnie Luray Carmichael Ross, and his three children.

If you would like to remember Jack, contributions may be made for a book in his memory to the Northland Public Library foundation, 300 Cumberland Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15237. 