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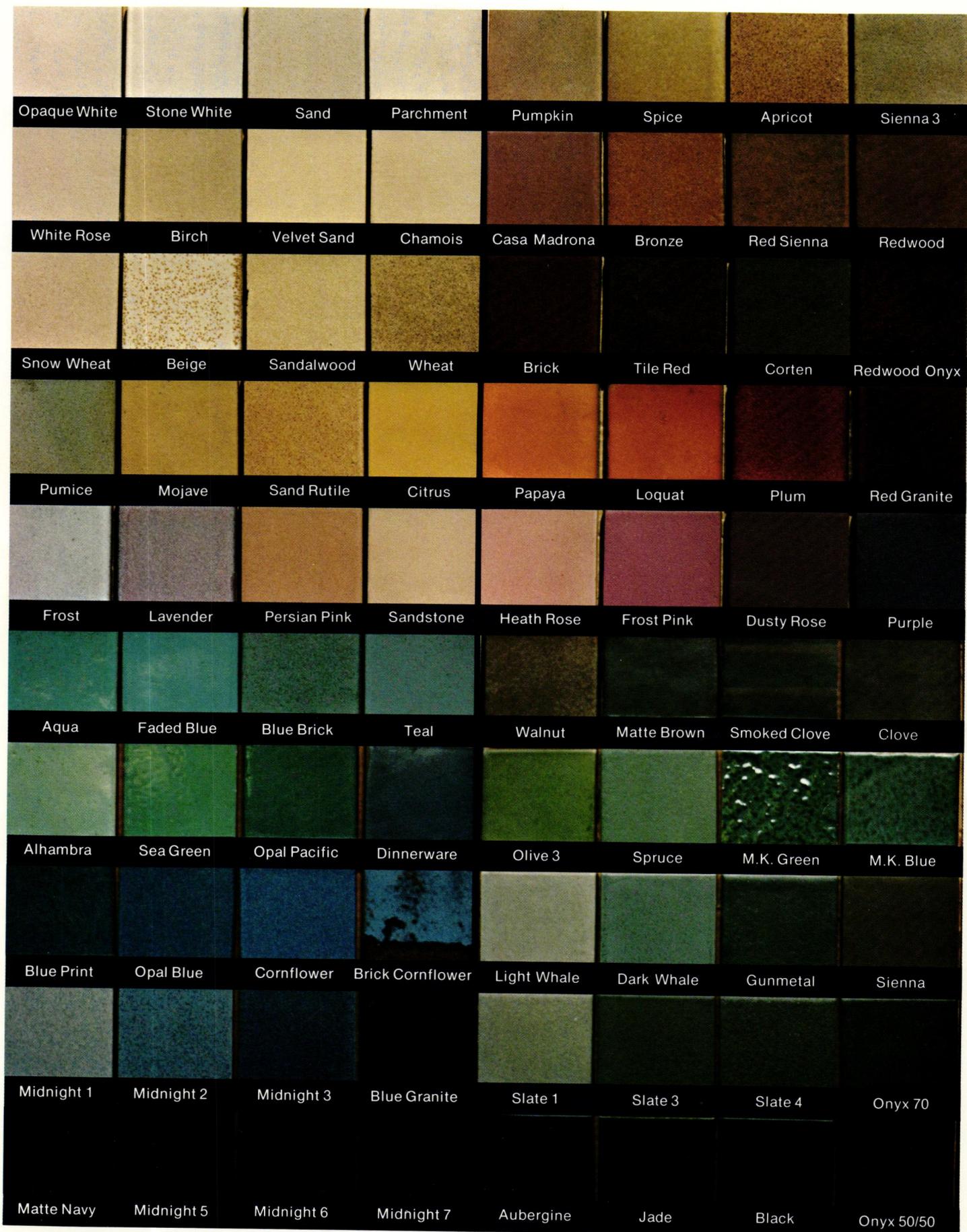
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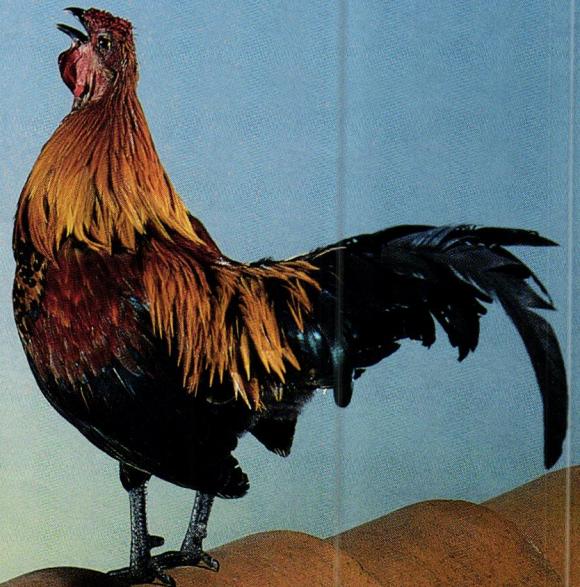
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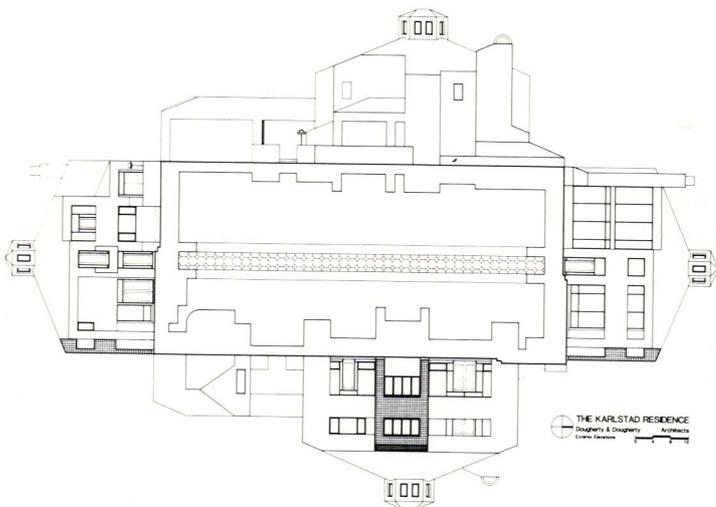
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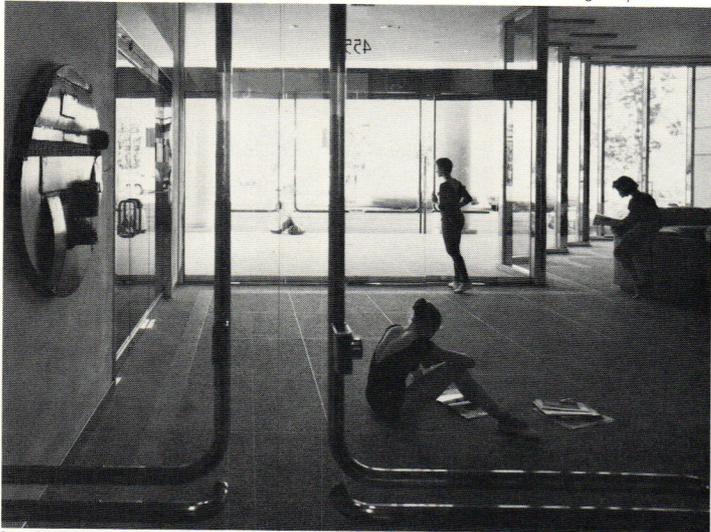
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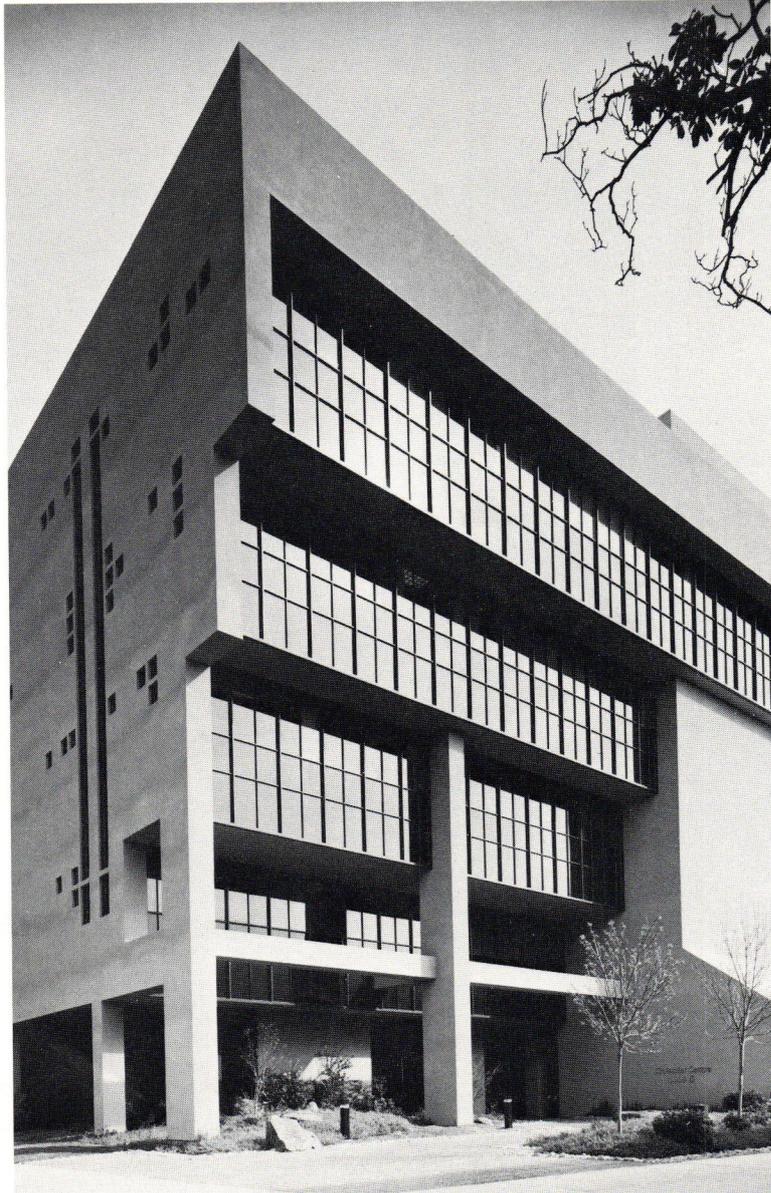
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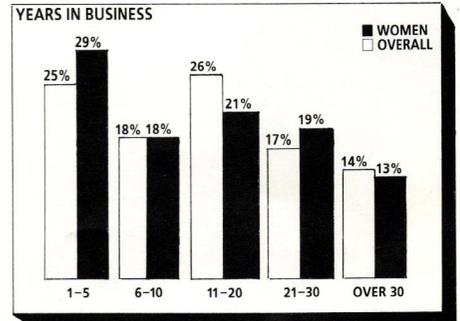
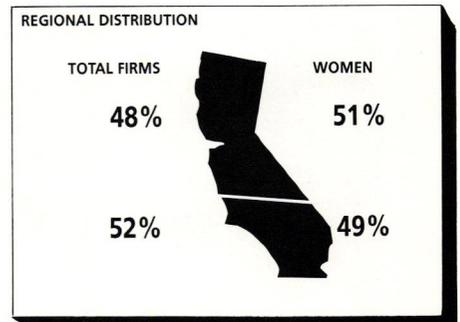
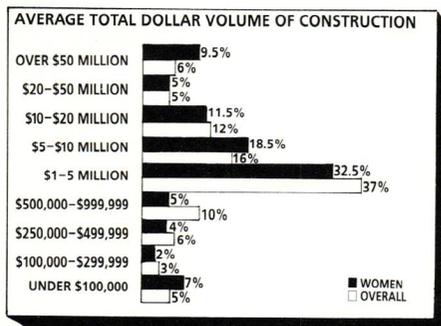
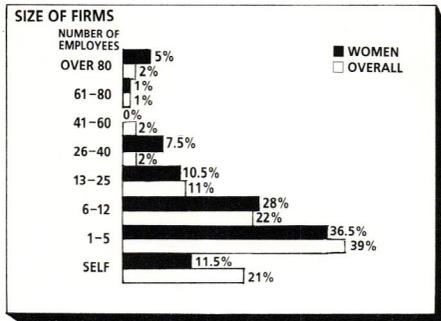
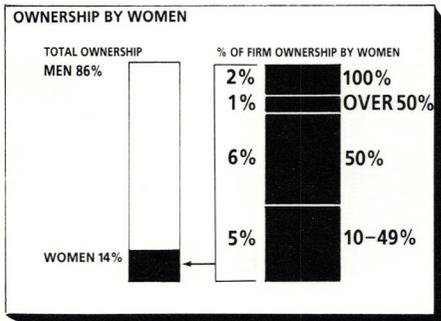
# The Low Spark of High-Heeled Architects

**W**omen are entering the profession of architects in growing numbers. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in 1984 that 12.7% of the nation's practicing architects are women. Architecture has been somewhat slower to assimilate women into its ranks than other professions, but the AIA and the nation's architectural schools are making efforts to rectify that. Now anywhere from 15-50% of the students enrolled in architecture schools are women. Since females in this country still are socialized through a different process than males, the influx of women into architecture adds a variety of experience and cultural and moral values that will enrich the practice as a whole.

The purpose of this issue is twofold: to find out how California's most prominent women architects got where they are today, and to display the work of a select number of women who are becoming recognized for the quality of their architecture.

The AIA lists 1,550 members of the College of Fellows; a mere 35 are women. Of the 240 fellows in California, only six are women (one of the six, Lutah Maria Riggs, FAIA, died late last year). This issue features a series of lively conversations with California's female Fellows. These women came to architecture from widely diverse backgrounds, and each has established a practice different from the others. Yet these women share common characteristics: an almost palpable intelligence, humanist ideals, strong personalities, a work ethic that eschews the time clock, and a sense of personal responsibility to the art of architecture.

Three of the architects whose work appears in the Portfolio of Women Architects have received national recognition. Readers of the architectural press are familiar with the Maoli Residence (Laura Hartman, Fernau + Hartman), the Antelope Valley Poppy Reserve (Pearl Freeman, AIA, The Colyer-Freeman Group), and the Suntech Townhomes (Rebecca Binder, AIA). Janice Batter, AIA and Betsey Dougherty, AIA are well-known regionally, in San Diego and Orange County, respectively. Pamela Donnelly is published here for the first time. All the women in the Portfolio are principals in firms recognized for their design excellence and attention to client service.



A look at the work and life of the legendary Julia Morgan rounds out our sketch of California's women architects.

The story of women in architecture is just beginning to be told, as the graphs on this page indicate. Data drawn from CCAIA's Profile of California Firms (*Architecture California*, November/December, 1984) appear here in a new light, with information from all responding firms compared to that of firms claiming some ownership by women. Only 14% of the responding firms register women in ownership positions, but the figures suggest that women are becoming owners of firms in far greater proportion than ever before.

A new generation of women is coming of age in the profession. Their work already has moved beyond the work traditionally reserved for women in architecture; their visions for the future are relevant to all their colleagues.

—JF



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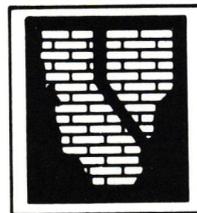
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## WHY CCAIA?

Not too long ago, a letter was received from the founder of a large, successful California architecture firm, who wanted to know, "What's the CCAIA doing for me, my firm and my employees?" He was concerned because the cost of AIA membership seemed out of proportion to the value he believed he was receiving, particularly in a slow economic period. His question is important and relevant, even though I have a tendency to chide him for not being active in statewide architectural activities for many years.

If we did not have a statewide architectural organization and wished to invent one, what would be its purpose? I can think of only two major purposes, each dependent to some extent on the other for success: representing architects and representing architecture on a statewide basis.

The practice of architecture has many unique characteristics which affect both practitioners and the public they serve in ways unlike other professions. Architects are the only professionals educated, trained, tested and licensed to engage in the design of buildings for human habitation. The adequate protection of the public's health, safety and welfare as it relates to our buildings is of paramount importance to everyone. A professional society of architects, the CCAIA, if it is to be taken seriously, must recognize these important responsibilities and respond to them in a committed, no-nonsense fashion.

No less important is the recognition of the positive impact well-designed architecture has on our communities and our quality of life. Architecture can and does make important contributions that advance our cities and society, making them more pleasant and productive places to live and work. The CCAIA has a special responsibility to encourage the appreciation of architecture and the awareness of the public and public officials concerning the many positive contributions that architecture makes.

The CCAIA, in years past, has organized itself to respond in both areas. And it has attempted to do so in the spirit of the Directions 80's resolution adopted by the AIA several years ago. The central concept of Directions 80's was and is to have each level of the AIA—local, state and national—provide only the services and programs that cannot be



*Virgil Carter, AIA heads CCAIA's Board of Directors. Council officers for 1985: Warren D. Thompson, AIA, First Vice President; Betsey Olenick Dougherty, AIA, Secretary; Harry Haimovitch, AIA, Treasurer; Ralph H. Bradshaw, AIA, Vice President, Governmental Relations; William C. McCulloch, AIA, Vice President, Education/Professional Development; Joseph L. Woollett, AIA, Vice President, Communications/Public Awareness. AIA Directors: Frederic P. Lyman, III, AIA; Paul Neel, FAIA; Robert Odermatt, FAIA; William E. Patnaude, FAIA. Associate Directors: Rick David Flansburg (North), John DeFrenza (South).*

provided better at another level. In other words, local chapters should only do what they can do best on behalf of their members and the public, as should state and national levels, thus eliminating duplication and costly, ineffective programs at the wrong level.

For 1985, the California Council Board of Directors has approved a program plan and budget designed both to represent and to advance the practice of architecture, as well as to help increase awareness of architecture and appreciation of its value in our communities.

Examples of priorities relating to the practice of architecture for next year include issues affecting the California Board of Architectural Examiners, the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, licensing and registration legislation including dovetailing of the Architects and Engineers Acts, and a continuing influence at legislative and regulatory hearings.

The CCAIA reviews some 3,500 bills per year, monitoring over 200 dealing specifically with architectural practice, and seeks or drafts amendments on 70 to

80 bills each year. In addition, we expect a substantial effort in the preparation and presentation of legislative testimony by members, and analysis of various ballot measures. For 1985, the activities of the 13 state and regional regulatory agencies that affect the practice of architecture will be even more closely monitored. A newly-retained building codes consultant will help CCAIA provide greater response in analyzing proposed changes in regulations, attending agency and committee meetings and preparing and presenting testimony at regulatory hearings.

In the areas of awareness of and appreciation for architecture in our communities, CCAIA's Board approved a pilot program to assist AIA chapters in organizing local architectural design charrettes, and mini-R/UDATs. These programs bring together community leaders, students and architects in an effort to demonstrate how architecture can improve communities and help them meet their goals. CCAIA, in coordination with the League of California Cities, will develop a workshop in 1985 to help local officials, councils, commissions and boards understand how to encourage architectural excellence in their communities, and how to improve their zoning ordinances, design review boards and the like. *Architecture California*, our statewide magazine, will be even more effective in its outreach to members and those interested in architecture in California.

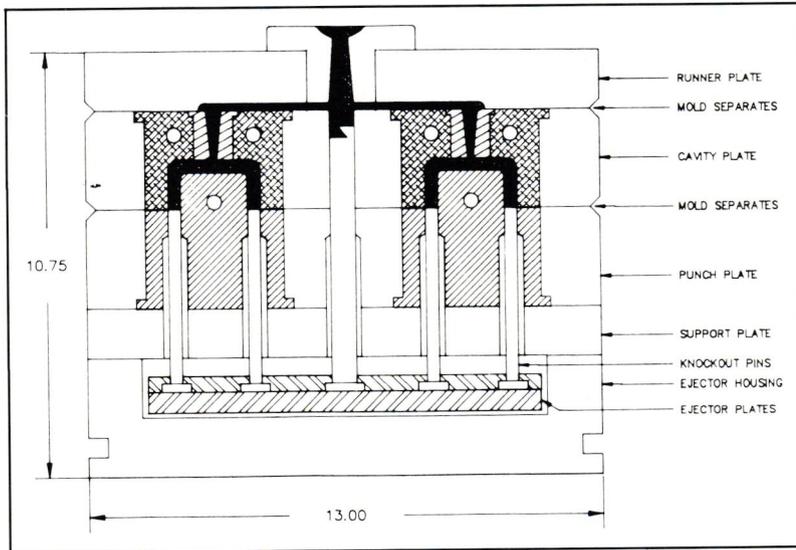
Finally, but by no means least, we are looking at a new approach to our members' professional development requirements. The Monterey Design Conference will be held in a new location, the Asilomar Conference Center, in a new and exciting format. Our annual convention will be changed to a "retreat" setting and format at Lake Tahoe, attempting to recapture the magic of the Yosemite conference of years ago. It will be scaled down and focused on important architectural practice issues, with limited and appropriate exhibits.

So, my old friend, when next you write or call to ask in an irate fashion, "What's the CCAIA doing for me?", you'll already know. But call anyway, because you are important, and your concerns and interests are critical.

And, by the way, would you like to chair a new committee we're forming? It's really important, you know.

—Virgil R. Carter, AIA  
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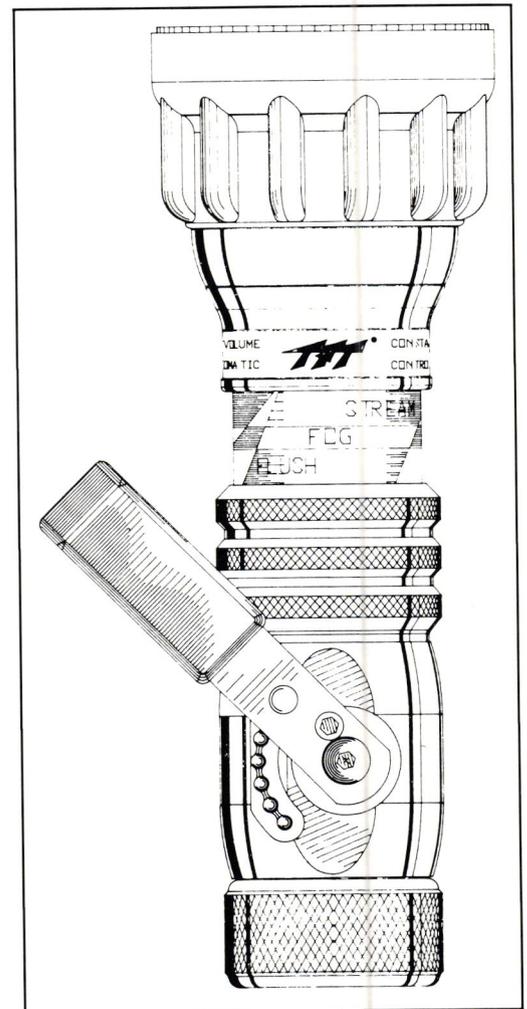
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# Elisabeth Kendall Thompson, FAIA-E



*The traces of a New Orleans girlhood still echo in the rhythmic lilt of Betty Thompson's speech as she reminisces about her career as the first west coast editor in our nation's architectural press. From her home/office in the Berkeley hills, Betty served for over two decades as a conduit of ideas, bringing the work of west coast architects into the world arena through the pages of Architectural Record. Betty has a fierce regard for the profession of architecture. Her keenly articulated views are expressed with innate graciousness and a radiant smile.*

## How did you get involved with architectural publications?

I was offered a job on *Architectural Record* as assistant news editor because I had been trained as an architect at Tulane and the University of California, and I had also worked as a reporter and feature writer on a major daily newspaper. That combination was rare then—maybe it still is.

Gender made no difference. In fact, I never knew discrimination—except in pay—because of being a woman, not in school, not in any aspect of my work.

At first at the *Record* I was assistant to James Marston Fitch. I became associate editor in about a year, and held that position until I resigned to be married and come back to California.

## How did you become Western Editor for *Architectural Record*?

After I had returned to California I was asked to initiate what turned out to be a unique venture in the field of architectural publishing: a section to be included in copies of the *Record* mailed to western subscribers only, carrying its own regional advertising and—this was the unusual part—its own editorial material. Magazines had had regional advertising sections before, but this was the first time that a magazine had included with the advertising specially written, regionally-generated articles and news.

The Western Section was published as a part of the *Record* for 17 years. During that time I did much more than edit the Western Section. I was eyes and ears and traveling reporter and writer on western architectural events. I remained senior editor on the staff of the magazine after the end of the Western Section, but with a heavier load of articles.

## Architects in California say that the national press doesn't recognize the work being done here. Do you agree?

Since the *Record* closed its western office in 1977, there hasn't been the coverage that there used to be. Editors can't always be traveling about, as much as they would like to. Having me here as a senior editor put the *Record* in close touch with work that was being done, the issues that affected architects and engineers. It offered a much better opportunity to see the work itself.

I think it's sad that better coverage isn't happening now. Architecture needs all the winds that blow—not just those from one direction.

## How have you seen architecture in California evolving?

Architectural practice as well as design has changed a lot. It's more self-conscious now. Offices have more complex problems to deal with. The proliferation of architects in practice out here makes for a competitive spirit which, although present in the "long ago," was never overt. It makes for a very different attitude among the members of the profession.

It seems to me that design is more "fashionable" now than it was in the '40s, '50s and '60s, when we talked of style with a small "s." Sometimes now the "s" is "S," and in some instances the word is spelled "c-h-i-c."

I like the differences that locality—geography, terrain, people, culture—generate. The West used to be much more independent than it is today. And California's architecture had a rigor and a vigor that I miss today.

## The press is often accused of ruining architecture by the work it chooses to promote through publication. What is your opinion on that?

Two things need emphasizing in connection with that. First, the press doesn't, can't, "ruin" architecture. Architects do that. Second, the press doesn't "choose to promote" anything.

The problem is not with the press, it's with those who read the magazines. Because a newspaper reports a murder does not mean that those who read the report must go out and commit murder. No more must any architect feel impelled to do "ruinous" design because a magazine has published some "ruinous" buildings.

And the press isn't promoting, it's reporting. Magazines and their editors look for what is being done—that's reporting. Within that scope, they look for what is well done, and they hope to find what is exceedingly well done. Would anyone subscribe to a magazine that did not find the new, the stimulating?

But for some reason, a magazine gets regarded by architects—especially students and young architects—as some sort of Bible, some kind of rule book, to which they must adhere, from which they must copy. At one point, I felt compelled to write an editorial about it, imploring readers to take the magazine for what it is: a means of knowing what's going on, what "all the winds that blow" are wafting about.

## What was your reaction when you received your Fellowship?

Being made a Fellow was a humbling experience, amazing because I felt myself in an ancillary part of architecture, not on its front line. It was a thrilling moment, too.

## Beverly A. Willis, FAIA



*Beverly Willis is a thinker whose fondness for the arts has given direction to her own form of artistic expression, architecture. A dynamic personality lends strength to the humanistic concerns that motivate Beverly's work. She wastes little time getting to the heart of the matter, whether she is negotiating in a corporate boardroom or contemplating the harmony of a brush stroke in a Chinese painting.*

**You have said that the story of women in architecture is a story of the '70s, not the '80s. What changes in the profession make that the case?**

When you have as many women graduating from architectural school as you have had for the last number of years, it's no longer a phenomenon.

I was chatting at a cocktail party with a gentleman who boasted that his daughter was graduating from college as an architect. That has an impact for those of us who are older. Fathers with daughters who are architects are able to look at their own peer group—the women who are practicing—a little bit differently.

**Have the attitudes of your colleagues and your clients changed toward you as a woman architect?**

Male architects have responded very much like the general public has responded. They work with a number of women in their own offices. It's typical rather than atypical.

Essentially, it's what one is accustomed to that one feels comfortable with. If working with women or minorities is a new experience, you're not really quite sure how you feel about it. You hold judgment until you know. The male architects of my generation had that experience. They were the first to begin to work with women architects, and it was a new and different experience for them. For the younger architect who shared architectural classes with a substantial number of women, working with women colleagues is a business-as-usual experience.

**How does your career differ from those of your male colleagues?**

Because I started working for myself at such an early age and prior to the feminist movement, my career probably parallels a

typical male career. I have never really been conscious of differences. I didn't benefit from the feminist movement, because I already was fairly well established. It is easier for me now because of all of the women architects, and I have certainly benefited by the influence of women in architecture.

I hope I'm looked at as one of the better architectural firms in the country, not as one of the better *women* architectural firms. I always wonder when somebody writes articles about *women* architects, if it doesn't imply that women are not equal with men.

Of all the firms owned by males, how many have the reputation, have done the work, that Willis and Associates has? Sure I've got some tough competition out there, but that competition is a relatively small percentage of all architectural practices.

**Why did you become an architect?**

I love the problem solving, the challenges of design, function, economics, and all that has to merge together to provide a design that will withstand the test of history and yet, at the same time, serve public and human needs.

**You did not come to architecture through the formal architecture school but by challenging and passing the architecture exam. Did you ever feel the need for a more structured education in architecture?**

How does a person learn? A person is always learning whether through a structured environment with a given course or task, or at leisure, through conversation or travel.

I have traveled extensively and am a great history buff. I've read Vitruvius, Alberti and many of the classics. I may perhaps have learned more at a younger age if I had studied directly under some of the great architects. But fortunately those teachings are available in written material, and I have probably read much of it.

**How does your personal interest in art influence your practice?**

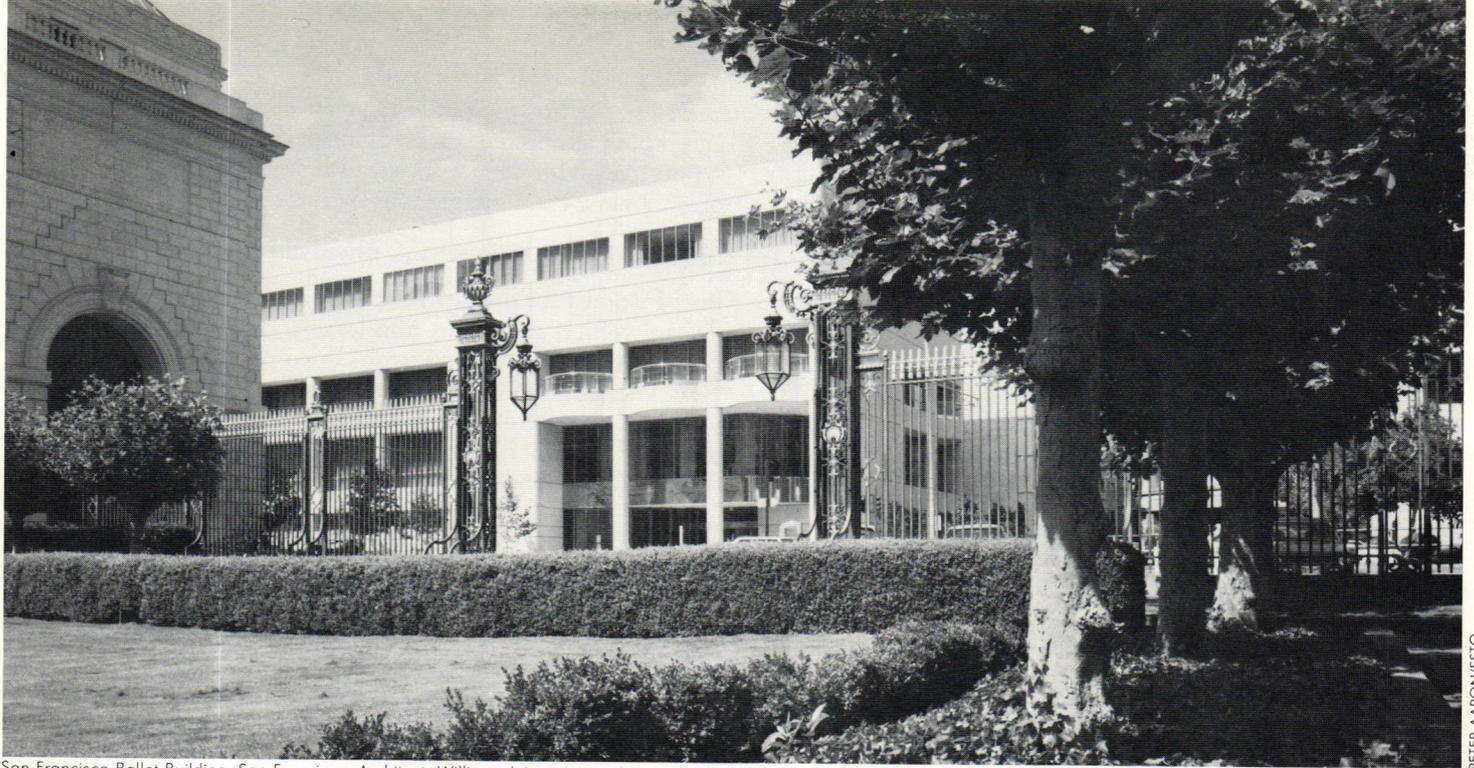
Most of my work is either done with art groups or performing art groups, or with developers who believe that creativity is a good marketing tool and feel comfortable with the creative process.

I have had a life-long interest in things that are Asian, Chinese predominantly. I have a sort of spiritual alignment with the East. My culture, of course, is Western. There are some very divergent differences between Eastern and Western culture.

In our Western culture, for example, we deal with symmetry; the East deals with asymmetry and balance. One of the design criteria for the Ballet building was that it relate to the Renaissance buildings in the Civic Center. I applied classical theoretical elements to the building, but if I had applied symmetry, the building would have faced directly into the blind rear wall of the Opera House, and would have had no relationship to the Beaux-Arts design axis that runs east/west using City Hall as its pivot point. Instead, the entry relates the building to both the Opera House and the War Memorial building and the garden. I used the Eastern concept of balance. Given all of the elements involved, that was the perfect balance. A critic whose background is Western culture and modern theory has a difficult time recognizing that balance and describing that building.

**How would you characterize your practice?**

The majority of my current work is major downtown urban buildings. I prefer the large scaled projects because the larger



San Francisco Ballet Building, San Francisco. Architect: Willis and Associates, Inc.

PETER AARONVESTO

projects have a major effect on the ways in which people live in our cities. The challenge of creating a humane, liveable city is, to me, the most interesting challenge.

**What is your philosophy about taking a major urban area, such as the Yerba Buena project, and doing long-range planning that's going to impact countless people?**

This is a complex and rather lengthy discussion. A large scale development like Yerba Buena is a many layered, many splended experience. There is no one predominant philosophy, but levels of theories that are interwoven into a fabric that responds to a wide range of human and functional needs.

The project needs to be organized with a very strong central design axis and with minor design axes that reflect and continue the grid of the existing city—if not in fact, such as continuing one street through the block, at least by continuing the pedestrian path through the block so that the total fabric of the city is maintained and not destroyed. The scale and the massing of the buildings should be in harmony with existing buildings and with what will be built.

Making a project a magnet means making an environment in which people feel comfortable. There must be enough attraction to keep people occupied, to give them diversity. It cannot be a stagnate environment. People are known not to walk further than a 1,000 feet from one shop to another. Clearly, you have to keep their minds thinking: here's something new and interesting.

Another overlay is visual diversity so that as you meander through the space, the overlays delight and amuse you. Placing objects or buildings to protect the views not only *of* the buildings but *through* and *around* the buildings gives great diversity and visual activity to a project. The evolution of a design of a major project gets involved with the very smallest types of experience that a person has.

I want to make it clear that Zeidler Robert out of Toronto is the lead architect on the project. I work on the project as a designer. I have a certain amount of influence but, unfortunately, not the complete say. For me, it has been my opportunity to be intimately involved with a range of very large scale projects and major individual buildings.

**Do you think it's responsible for an architect to design solely for the site without considering the larger fabric of the city?**

Let me tell you a story about the responsibilities of architects that I learned while working on the Ballet building. Originally on the corner was a Union Oil station that refused to sell the land to the Ballet. So the Ballet approached Union Oil for air rights. Our first design kept the gas station on the corner with the building around and over it.

I was chatting to Allan Temko and he said, Beverly, the responsibility of a good architect is to get rid of Union Oil. I said, But Allan I'm an architect; how can I get Union Oil to sell?

The problem, in fact, was solved. It took getting the mayor involved, getting the attention of the City. At one point, Union Oil threatened to take action against the City. The mayor stood her ground, and ultimately Union Oil sold the site to the Ballet. It delayed the project for a couple of years, but a suitable site was created. I personally did not make it happen, don't misunderstand me. But I lent whatever weight I could muster to convincing both the Ballet and the City to take appropriate civic action. It was a very valuable lesson for me. Creating a building sometimes involves more than simply designing it.

**You are the only woman to serve as president of CCAIA. What programs did you advance?**

We had our first annual Monterey Design Conference when I was president; I planned the conference as vice president. We established the foundation and did the legal work for the Political Action Committee. And we discussed the concept of a publication.

**What was your reaction when you received your Fellowship?**

Receiving your Fellowship is probably one of the greatest thrills in your professional career. To me, getting a building built and being able to stand back and think "I did that" is the most tremendous thrill. That, for me, makes all of the work that goes into architecture worthwhile. The thrill of receiving my Fellowship is very similar to that. It is a milestone, a very special honor.

## Zelma Wilson, FAIA



RICHARD BILLINGS

*Zelma Wilson has moxie. Risk fails to intimidate her; rather, she sees it as a necessary element for personal and professional growth. Zelma is an honest person, and applies the strictest standards of design excellence when evaluating her own work. Her involvement with her architecture does not stop when the dust of construction clears. She continues to study her buildings, to assess their usefulness over time. Zelma admits to detouring around certain streets in her hometown to avoid being reminded of design solutions that fell short of her expectations. But those streets are few and far between. Zelma is committed to improving the quality of the built environment at a grassroots level.*

### **Why did you become an architect?**

My interest in architecture goes back to grammar school days. My sister and I used to play games about buildings. We thought they were posturing and making faces, which we imitated for each other's delight or puzzlement. Later in high school, when I showed an aptitude for both art and math, architecture seemed a natural career aspiration.

### **When you decided to become an architect, did you get support for that career choice?**

My parents were both immigrants from Eastern Europe. Neither of them was educated beyond elementary school, but they believed that in this great country their children could become whatever they wanted to become. It was simply assumed in our family that my sister and I would be college educated in a career field, no matter what the sacrifice.

My father died young. When I was about 13 my mother, a businesswoman, decided to build a house, and she called a local architect. In retrospect I think, what a sophisticated act for an immigrant! That same architect was surprisingly encouraging several years later when I asked him how to become an architect.

### **Where did you get your architecture degree?**

After a year at UCLA as an art major, I transferred to Berkeley into the school of architecture. Three years later, I transferred to USC and finished there.

### **Were you treated differently in school because you're a woman?**

I'd have to give a subjective answer to that, since I don't know how the men were treated. Often a woman student was either

treated as a pet by the rest of the class or was isolated. I experienced both at different times. Some of the instructors were very supportive and some not. In my fifth year our instructors were practitioners. I was offered jobs by two of them.

### **After graduating from school, where did you work?**

First I worked for the Los Angeles Planning Department, then for large offices in the Los Angeles area. I worked for DMJM, Neutra & Alexander, and Victor Gruen Associates. In the summers when I was in college I always worked. I selected architects who I thought were unusually gifted and worked for them whether they paid me or not. Among others, I worked for R.M. Schindler and Rafael Soriano.

### **When you were in the larger firms, what sort of work came your way? Do you think that the fact that you are a woman influenced the sort of work you did?**

Yes, I believe it did. In one of the large firms where I worked, I started as a draftsman, as we were called then. Then they promoted me to color consultant. That job was reserved for a woman because there's some myth that women have a sense of color which men lack.

Even though it was a stereotype position, it demanded a great deal of responsibility and exposed me to an experience denied most young draftsmen. I had the opportunity to do construction supervision during the finishing work on the job sites.

### **Why did you start your own firm?**

I opened my own firm in the small community of Ojai in 1967. Oddly enough, I think there is a tendency for a woman to start her own firm earlier than a man—perhaps because it's easier to run your own firm than to try to win the battle in an office to gain the experience you need. The flexibility of time, particularly when you have young children, is an advantage. Also, people come to you because they want your services. Those clients who may be prejudiced don't come to you at all.

### **Were other women architects practicing in Ojai?**

No, I don't think they were at the time. There are several now. I believe that precisely because I was unique in the community, I got very interesting work, unusual kinds of jobs.

Naturally I started out doing houses, but then some of the philosophical groups hired me to do some rather large projects. It launched me into a kind of career I did not anticipate: institutional work, churches, and eventually private schools.

I also did a lot of work for the City of Ojai and the County of Ventura. My office became known in the county. Articles were written about me in the local press.

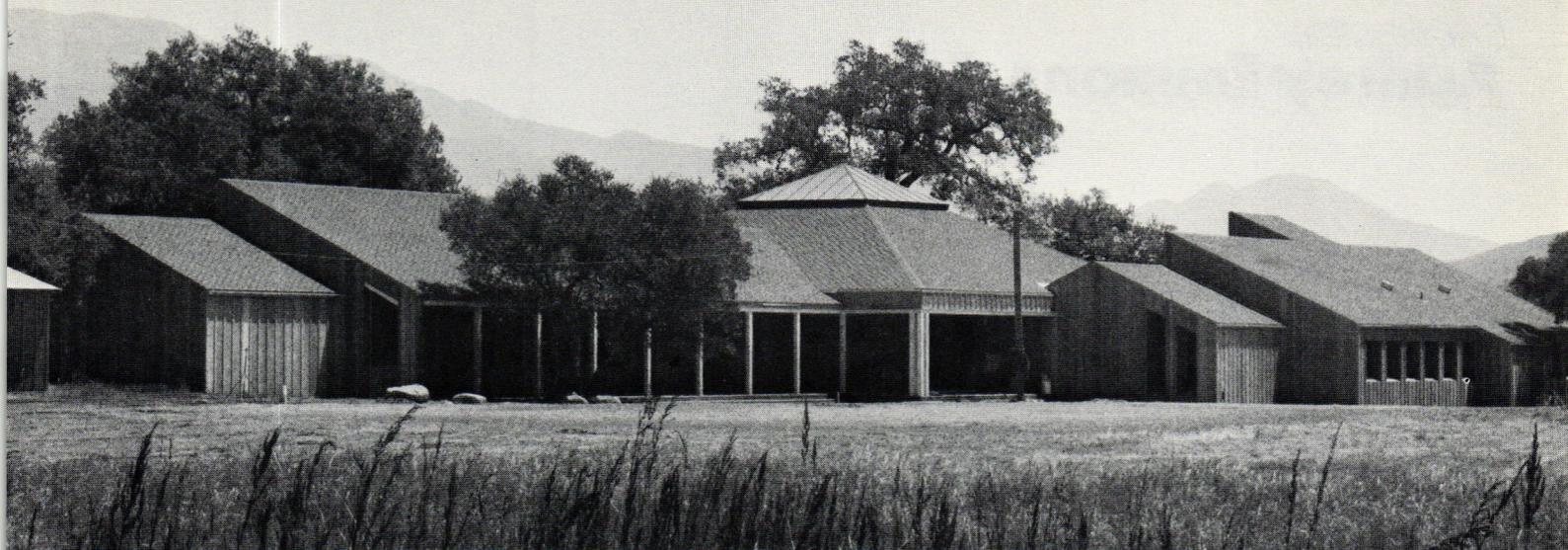
### **Now your firm is a partnership?**

Yes. In 1979, Richard Conrad became my partner. He's now the very capable and honorable mayor of Ojai. We both have been active in community affairs for many years.

Recently, Richard Willebrand has become a partner and our name is now The Ojai Group. We want to attempt a collaborative or cooperative multidisciplinary structure. I already have attracted several very competent and talented young architects to this concept. It is too soon to know if it will work, but we have high hopes.

### **Does it matter whether your partners are women or men?**

It was not my goal to make a point about The Woman Profes-



Oak Grove School, Ojai. Architect: The Ojai Group, Zelma Wilson, FAIA with Richard Willebrand.

sional: that she should have her own firm, that all her associates should be female. I select the people to work for me on basic qualities, not on whether they are male or female. But it pleases me when a woman shows that she can function as well—if not better in some cases, depending on the talent—as a man. Several very capable women have worked in our office over the years. It is very satisfying to see how much improvement there has been in the status of women in the profession.

#### **What advice would you give to a woman architect?**

Get as much varied experience as possible. The basic problem that's faced by women in architecture is the reluctance of some employers to give them the kind of experience necessary to be a fully functioning architect, experience which covers all aspects of construction. There might be a tendency to place women in production rather than design or on-site observation. Perhaps all that is changing too, but it was, in general, my experience in offices.

The best time I ever had was working for myself, because I was able to control my own education as an architect, and to select the projects that gave me the broadest experience. I really have enjoyed the practice.

#### **Do women bring to architecture concern for issues not addressed by men?**

My inclination is to say yes, that because women are by nature nurturers, they may have a more empathetic view of their clients' needs. But I know many empathetic male architects. A good architect, male or female, is very conscious of the users. If you can mesh making the architectural statement with concern for the users, you've really achieved architectural heaven.

People occasionally say, "It's great for a woman to be an architect, she really understands the home." If a man knows how to design a laundry or a kitchen, that doesn't demean his masculinity. I don't agree that highrise buildings are some sort of masculine image. If somebody hired me to design a skyscraper, it wouldn't demean my femininity. After the building is finished, you can't tell if it's designed by a man or a woman. Buildings just don't have any gender.

#### **Did you have to sacrifice other areas of your life to have a successful career?**

Any career woman might miss certain aspects of the pleasure of

watching her children grow up. But I think it is possible to combine a career and a family. When you talk to a man about his work, it doesn't even occur to ask if his children suffer because he is an architect. But it's a natural question to ask a woman. I'm trying to give an honest answer. I don't think it's easy to be children of parents who are both high achievers.

Did I lose something of my femininity? I don't think so. I really enjoy the company of men as well as women. And I certainly had a very entertaining marriage. My husband was a well known screenwriter. His credits were impressive—*Bridge on the River Kwai*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Friendly Persuasion*, *Place in the Sun*, and *Planet of the Apes*. My husband and I had a similar relationship to our professions in the sense that we both had a certain distance from the finished product. We shared frustrations because so much could happen to our products before completion. If a producer or director changed the scenario, it was painful to him; if the client or contractor changed my design, it was painful to me. So in that sense, my husband and I were mutually supportive. As we both were creative people in creative professions, it was a very lively relationship. My husband died about six years ago.

#### **What was your reaction to receiving a Fellowship?**

It was one of the most thrilling things that ever happened to me. My chapter did a very good job on the submission. I received the Fellowship on several different levels: design, education, and community participation. Our office had garnered AIA chapter honor awards and other design citations from other sources, and I have been lecturing at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo since 1973. I think that the College of Fellows looks for architects with a broad spectrum of experience.

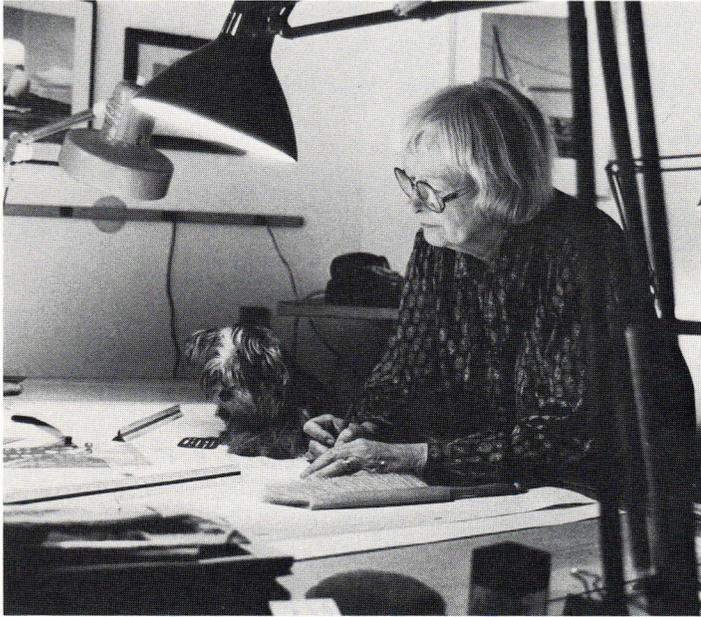
#### **Do you feel that the profession recognizes the work that women are doing?**

They are trying, but they didn't for a long time, until the women asked for it. Julia Morgan was discovered a long time after she died. It's too bad you have to be dead before anybody knows that you existed.

Women are not accepted in any profession totally, except those fields where females predominate in the profession. My acceptance outside the profession often has been more satisfactory than within the profession. But I'm not angry about it. I've had a good time.

Conversation:

## Audrey Emmons, FAIA



*The muted strains of classical music pervade Audrey Emmons' sunwashed studio in a building which she co-owns and manages near the Embarcadero in San Francisco. Audrey has found her niche in architecture. She has a comfortable practice, doing precisely the type of work she prefers. The highly articulated detail that typifies Audrey's work has earned her the consummate compliment from her colleagues: she's a pro.*

### **Why did you decide to become an architect?**

My father was on the faculty of the Engineering and Architecture school at Kansas State University, where he eventually became Dean. He wanted me to be involved in some phase of engineering. I was not at all excited about engineering, so I decided to be an architect.

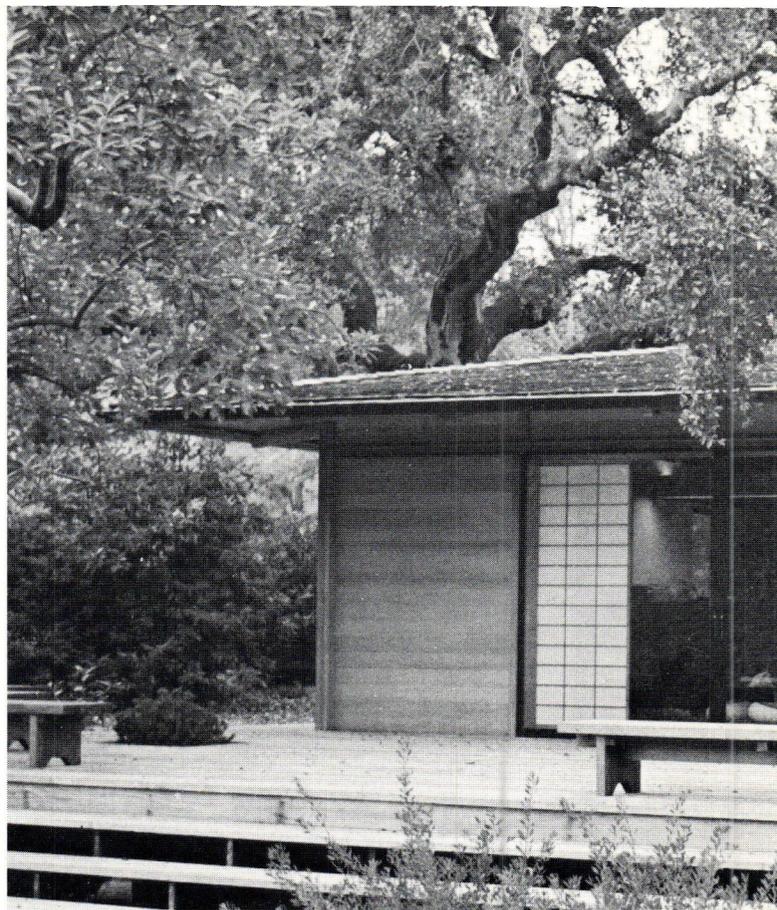
### **Were there other women in your architecture classes?**

There were no women in engineering or architecture. I grew up in a neighborhood of boys, so I was oriented more toward the masculine society. All of my father's friends were young engineers and they eventually became my teachers. I only had one woman teacher and she was head of the math department. So it was all very male-oriented and I felt comfortable in it.

### **Has the acceptance you experienced in school with your colleagues been your experience in the profession?**

Yes. And I think it goes with a person's attitude toward her co-workers. There's no defiance or hostility if you work together to solve things.

Architects accept me as an equal. The people that often do not are contractors. But I find that after I work with them, they realize that I know what I'm talking about and they accept me.



Ludwig Poolhouse, Woodside. Architect: Audrey Emmons, FAIA.

### **When you came out of school, how did you start to practice?**

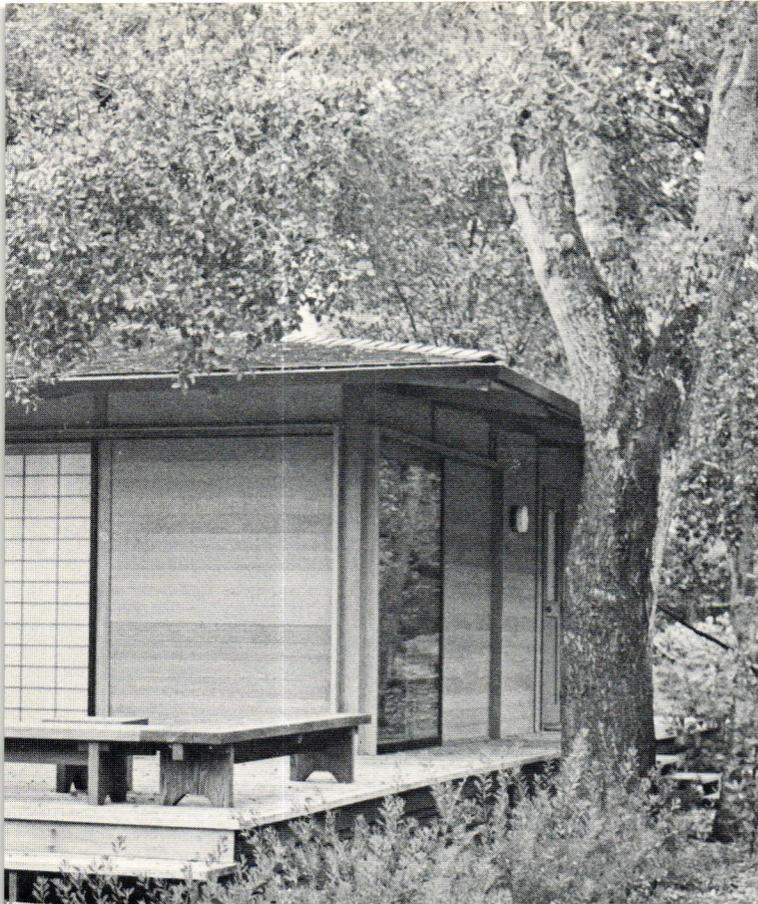
It was in 1943, and no architects had any practice. I was accepted as a junior naval architect in Washington, D.C. I had never seen a ship or the ocean. That's my first working experience.

I got married to a nuclear physicist and decided that I didn't want to get into architecture, so I took a job teaching drafting to G.I.s at the National Art School. Then I went to work as an art director for the *Washington Star*, which had its own ad agency. Eventually, I realized that I was really fed up. One day I saw an ad an architect had placed for a draftsman. I didn't have anything much to show in the way of drawings, but I went in and talked to him. He had come to Washington with a lot of the New Deal Democrats, and he got some wonderful houses to do. I learned much that I know from him. It was good experience, as it was only a two person office.

When my husband was transferred to California, I applied for a temporary six-week position at Wurster, Bernardi & Emmons, and stayed for five years. I got a very good education there. WB&E wasn't a large firm. It was an old fashioned firm where you got to do everything. They let you sit in on client meetings. You got to meet the clients, you got to experience the design review, and see how you solve problems. You got to work with the landscape architect and deal with specifications.

I joined the firm of Malone and Hooper. Adrian Malone left and eventually Richard Olmsted and I became partners, and the firm became Hooper, Olmsted & Emmons. I got bored working with developers and doing commercial jobs. So I went out on my own, not knowing if I would have any clients.

I've been doing a lot of work, mostly remodeling which I find very rewarding. All my clients are referrals from other clients. You get to know the clients very well, you don't have to write a long book of specifications, and the jobs come very easily. No headaches about it.



TOM GLASS

**For quite a few years you have been married to an architect. Do you work together?**

We aren't in practice together—I want my own identity—but we do work together on properties we buy and remodel. The only problems we ever have are on details that get stalemated, until one person modifies the design so it is acceptable to the other. We had one house that had a 14 foot drop off the deck. We couldn't agree on a railing, so we didn't have one for a couple of years.

**Do you think that women architects get different types of projects than men?**

Mine probably are. I've done loads of kitchens. I'm pretty good with kitchens. I like to cook and I know what the client needs as far as the pantry and storage; where the spices go; countertop materials; how to serve from one area to another. If they have animals, I always try to recess the dishes and bowls so you don't step in them.

I often go to jobs on weekends and early in the morning or late in the afternoon because many of the clients work during the week. On remodeling work, I often use contractors that I've used before. A lot of the questions can be answered on the phone because they understand the way I like to detail. So I don't have to go out to the jobsite a lot.

**What is your philosophy of architecture?**

I don't have one. It's just a fun career. It's stimulating. I prefer working with men because I grew up with them and dealt with them professionally more than with women. It's much easier to be level with men.

Architecture is an exciting career. It's fun. I think this is why architecture is such an underpaid profession. Since it is fun, architects hate to bill for our services, we hate to talk about

money. We'd rather do the job for practically anything than not do it.

**A popular myth holds that, in order for a woman to be successful, she has to give up her private life. What is your reaction to that?**

Architecture isn't different from any other career as far as time demands, because the woman still does the cooking at home and usually does the shopping and housework. In any career, there will be that problem. But once you start work, you get it sorted out pretty fast and become twice as efficient. I don't think architecture has any more commitment to it than any other career for a women.

**Do you have advice for women entering the profession?**

Several women have come to me for advice. The colleges send a lot to see me. I tell them that architects don't want to hire anybody that's an apparent oddball. They want somebody that's more the norm to fit into the office. A professional image is necessary even in this age of individuality. An office hiring a female doesn't want some oddball because there are so few of them and they call attention to themselves. Men can get away with wearing a weird outfit or long hair because they merge into an office more easily than women.

I usually tell women to get a job in a small office because they will get a lot more experience faster. If you get a job in a large office you'll be put drawing exterior elevations for two, three or four years and just be lost in the heap.

**You received a Fellowship and your husband and brother-in-law also are Fellows. What was your reaction to the Fellowship?**

I was very pleased, but more than that, my husband was. He was very proud of it and thought I deserved it. It is an honor.

**Is the AIA an "old boys club?"**

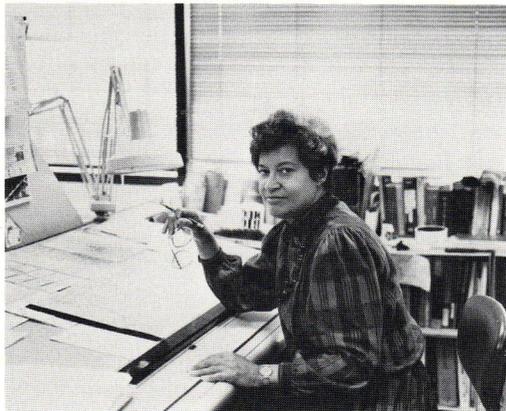
I don't think so, particularly not in the San Francisco chapter. Some years ago I had a female come to me to ask if I would sign a letter stating that San Francisco architects were unsupportive of female architects. I said that I wouldn't sign such a letter because I thought San Francisco was one the most progressive towns I'd ever been in. There was only one firm at that time that would not hire Chinese or Blacks or women, but that's changed. Nobody wanted to work for them because they were just so reactionary. Our chapter also had a great program to promote women in the field of architecture.

**You seem to have arranged your career to suit the way you want to live.**

I think it's wonderful the way it's turned out. We took off three weeks in August and went to Europe. It seems to me that it can always work out if you plan ahead. I hope it goes on like this for a long time.

Conversation:

## Norma Sklarek, FAIA



*Soft-spoken Norma Sklarek is the stuff of which history is made. She is the first Black woman to become a licensed architect in the United States and to be made a Fellow in The American Institute of Architects. As a vice president in one of California's largest architectural corporations, Welton Becket Associates, Norma has achieved a position of prominence few of her contemporaries will match. Norma's success is due to neither her race nor her gender. Her piercing intellect and genuine kindness certainly paved her way, but Norma reached the top of her profession by the most difficult route: years of hard work. Inevitably cast as a role model for aspiring minority and women architects, Norma's competence, self-assurance and modesty personify the profession at its best.*

### **How did you decide to become an architect?**

From the time I was very young, I knew that I would have a career and be self-sufficient and self-supporting. The typical professions such as medicine and law did not interest me. My parents suggested architecture because I had a very strong interest in art and exceptionally high capabilities in mathematics and science. They thought architecture would encompass my talents as well as my interests.

I knew absolutely nothing about architecture when I applied to the school of architecture at Columbia University. I thought: if I get accepted I'll be an architect; if not, I'll become a mathematician or physicist. But I got accepted and the die was cast. I just followed that road ever since.

### **How many women were in your class at Columbia?**

It started out with about 10, but after the first or second year, they cut down to two. I think this was deliberate. At the end of World War II, the men had started to come back into the classroom. I think the school's dean regretted having admitted so many women, and decided to get rid of them to make room for the men. At that time there was a definite quota against women in the school of architecture. The only time more than two were ever admitted in one year was during the war period.

### **How many minority students were in your class?**

The school appeared to have the same quota, two per year.

**Educators claim that architectural education has made great strides in opening the profession to women. What is your observation of that?**

I've been on the faculty at UCLA's School of Architecture. I know they were actively trying to recruit more women and more minorities. They were successful in recruiting women, but not as successful with minority recruitment.

Many women who desire a profession are attracted to architecture. Today school admission policies do not exclude women. Some architecture classes have from 30 to 50 percent women. Teaching at UCLA, I saw a larger percentage of talented women in the top, say, 10 percent of the class. This does not mean that all of the women were exceptional students.

**Do you feel it's appropriate for a school to recruit women and minorities into a profession?**

Yes, I believe that affirmative action is necessary in order to obtain a fair proportion of minority and women students in order to correct the discrimination of the past.

**The first woman anything is evitably asked this next question: what is it like to be the first Black woman who receives a Fellowship?**

I was elated—absolutely ecstatic—and very happy about it. As a human being.

California has very few women Fellows considering that we're the largest state, and have a population and a number of architects that exceeds many entire countries. So I think we have a meager representation of women in the College of Fellows.

**Where did you go from Columbia? Did you open your own office?**

No, I have never opened my own office. I've always been part of a team in very large offices both in New York and Los Angeles. As a result, I've always worked on large scale, multi-million dollar projects.

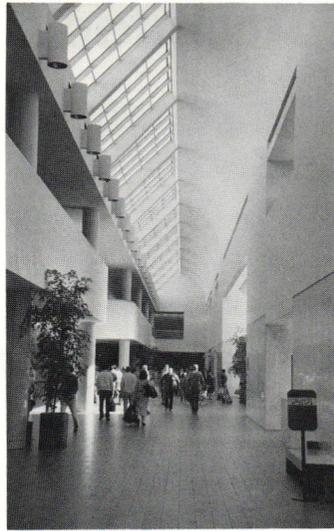
**What prompted you to work in an architectural corporation, rather than opening your own firm or working in a smaller firm?**

The biggest obstacle against opening one's own office is that the person has to be able to market her abilities and skills in order to obtain contracts. This very often entails developing social and political contacts which can take up a lot of one's free time in the evenings or weekends soliciting work. Also, in order to establish one's own office, a person has to have enough capital resources to exist financially without a steady income. I always needed a steady, continuous income that I could depend upon.

**You are one of the few women in the state to achieve a prominent position in a major firm. How did that happen?**

From my very first job, I was aware that I had to produce more and be more efficient, better qualified than any of my co-workers. Over a period of time this became recognized and I was rewarded for it. This extra effort was motivated by an inner drive plus the fact that I felt that I had to. I was more highly visible than anyone else.

For example, back in New York, when I was very young, I realized that if two men were talking together in the drafting room, everyone assumed they were talking about work—business projects. But if anyone was talking to me, people assumed it to be social, and that not only was I not doing my own work, I



KELLY COLLINS

Terminal One, Los Angeles International Airport.  
 Architect: Welton Becket Associates; Norma Sklarek,  
 FAIA project director; Warren Dahl, AIA project designer.  
 Associate Architect: Margo Heybald Heyman, AIA and Associates.

was preventing someone else from accomplishing his work. When I first moved to California, a co-worker who lived in the same neighborhood was driving me to work. He was late every day for the previous two years. It only took one week before the boss came and spoke to me about being late. Yet he had not noticed that the young man had been late for two years. My solution was to buy a car since I, the highly visible employee, had to be punctual.

**What are your job responsibilities at Welton Becket?**

A project director oversees major projects from earliest inception all the way through construction. For the past three and one-half years, I've been working on the commuter terminal, Terminal One, at Los Angeles International Airport.

I'm involved in all of the decisions that concern a specific project. In a large office, the project directors assume a role similar to that of the principal in a small office. We have eight project directors here. I'm the only woman ever to fill this position.

**Have you encountered jealousy in your co-workers as you have advanced up the organization?**

I'm not aware of it, if it exists. I've become rather thick skinned. I always figured I'm not in a popularity contest. I don't expect everyone to like me, but there are enough people that are friends to make the work enjoyable.

**In the offices where you've worked, do you see any networking among the women or do they go into competition with each other?**

I've never been in competition with other women in a firm because there were few, if any, women at the same level. You're usually in competition with co-workers who are at approximately the same level. When I first started out, there was one woman at the same level and we became very good friends. In fact, we're still good friends after a couple of decades.

**A stereotype claims that career women give up a great deal in order to have their career. Has that been a case with you?**

I've never felt that I've given up anything. I'm always busy or getting involved with various organizations. I must like it or I wouldn't be doing it! So I haven't thought that I've given up anything. I have two children that are now grown. I've had a family. I've enjoyed my life and my work.

**Do you feel that women and/or people from a minority cultural experience bring to architecture understandings other than what the mainstream white male brings?**

Many women are more sensitive to human needs. Some male architects—I would not say all, but some—are more concerned about architecture in regards to fostering egocentric concerns, rather than architecture for the ultimate user or for people. There are architects who designed closets that clothes cannot fit into, a stairway or balcony with no safety railing, dining rooms that no standard table or chairs could fit into. Some of these architects get a great deal of publicity and I think they're more concerned about publicity than they are about people. It's difficult for me to comprehend how someone who designs in a way which seems inappropriate for the site and for the users' needs can still continue getting large commissions.

**Does architecture offer the same opportunity to a minority professional as it does a woman professional?**

No, I think they're quite different. There's a greater acceptance of minorities than of women today.

**What advice do you have for women or minorities who are entering architecture or are in the profession and struggling to maintain their position within it?**

Not to get discouraged, but to have perseverance, to stick with the profession. A lot of tasks in architecture are not very exciting, not creative. Many portions of the work might be considered dull and routine. Naturally that type of work is going to go more to someone who is just entering the field than to one who is more experienced. Some people, when faced with this kind of work, become discouraged and drop out. They never get to the more challenging, more exciting work.

Everyone who enters the profession gets that kind of work. If a person has another means of support, that person will tend to drop out faster than someone who has the financial necessity or an emotional necessity to work. I think that's unfortunate.

**What motivates your strong commitment to the profession of architecture?**

I've always felt that I should do what I can to justify my existence. It's important to make a contribution to society. I enjoy the benefits of society, and I'd like to do whatever I can to make a personal contribution to making life better. I've always felt that architecture is a very honorable profession.

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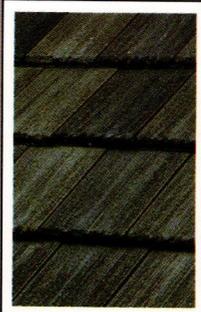
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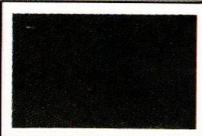
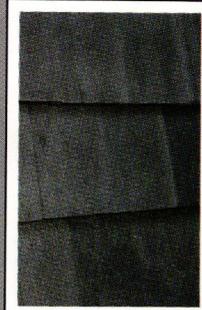
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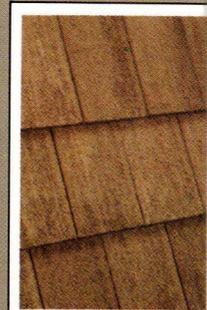
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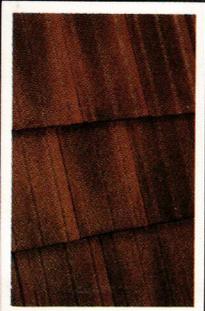


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