



# Skylines

**JUNE 1956**

**KANSAS CITY CHAPTER  
AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS**

# KANSAS CITY CHAPTER AIA

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# Skylines

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Volume Six, Number Six

June 1956

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The Last Chapter Meeting before the summer's hiatus will be Tuesday, June 19, in the Frontier Room of the Golden Ox.

The hours will be the usual

Business Meeting.....5:30 p.m.  
(sharp)  
Cocktail Hour.....6:30 p.m.  
Dinner .....7:15 p.m.  
Program .....8:15 p.m.

A very outstanding program has been planned for us by the Producers' Council. They have assembled a panel of experts to discuss Floor Coverings. This program should be of interest to all members. If you have any questions about floor coverings, be sure to bring them with you. This is your chance to try to stump the experts.

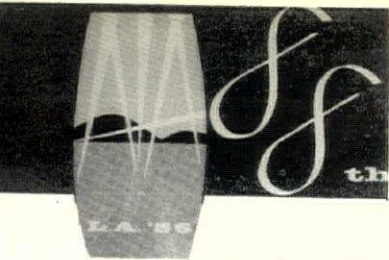
# *Lucky Springfield*

Yes, Lucky Springfield!

This June, in addition to the Ozark Jubilee, they will have the MEDAL AWARDS EXHIBIT of the Kansas City Chapter A.I.A. On Sunday, June 10, the exhibit moves into the Springfield Fine Arts Museum to stay throughout the month of June.

You readers who are in or near Springfield should plan to see this excellent exhibit while it is in your neighborhood. It is well worth your time. Or, those of you who are planning to drive to Springfield in June to see their major commodity, Ozark Jubilee, should plan to leave an hour or so earlier and pay a visit to the exhibit while you are there.





## **ANNUAL CONVENTION**

### *Architecture for the Good Life*

**By Frank Slezak**

The 88th Annual Convention of the American Institute of Architects, held in Los Angeles, May 15 to 18, was an outstanding convention. It was by far the most elaborate, and was probably enjoyed more by the delegates than any in recent years.

You all received a copy of the F. W. Dodge Corporation's Chicago Construction News, which covered the Convention, and you will receive copies of the principal speeches in future Octagon publications. I might add here that the theme of the Convention, "Architecture for the Good Life," certainly gave all speakers a good starting place, and no matter what their subject was, it seemed to help them greatly. I was amazed at how many tangents this one simple phrase had. These few remarks will be an attempt to give you some of the sidelights that you will not otherwise receive.

The Convention headquarters were at the Biltmore Hotel, where very adequate facilities are available to handle such a group of people. All of the functions at the hotel went very smoothly, and the service was exceptional for such a large place.

The Convention experienced some of California's "unusual" weather. It was very hot and humid, with the temperature reaching 100 degrees three days out of the four.

Members from our Chapter attending the Convention were Don Hollis, Lloyd Roark, Les Simpson, Joe Shaughnessy and myself. Also, in the group were wives of two members, Mrs. Hollis and Mrs. Shaughnessy. All chapters in our region had delegates in attendance. The Kansas, Oklahoma and St. Louis Chapters were very well represented, having considerably more members present than the Kansas City Chapter.

The business sessions were held to a minimum, and each session was extremely short. Probably less actual official business was transacted than at any convention in recent times. The most important piece of business concerned the dues structure. The Board had recommended that the reduced dues for members earning less than \$6,000 be eliminated and that the graduated dues for new members be changed from five to three years. After much heated discussion, the Convention voted to accept the board's recommendations. Last year's convention authorized the use of architect's portraits in advertising, and the Board recommended that this be rescinded following a year's experience with it. The Convention voted to prohibit the use of portraits.

No major political maneuvering was apparent at the Convention. Actually, only one man was nominated for each office, with the exception of Treasurer. In the case of the Treasurer, Mr. Raymond Kastendieck, of Gary, Indiana, and Mr. George Young, of Salt Lake City, Utah, were the nominees, and our delegates felt they were both good men and either would be very acceptable. Mr. Kastendieck was the winner. Our good friend, Leon Chatelain, was elected President. Other new officers are John N. Richards, First Vice-President and Philip Will, Jr., Second Vice-President. Edward L. Wilson was re-elected to the office of Secretary.

The Central States Regional Council held a meeting in Los Angeles. All chapters were represented. The principal items of business transacted were the selection of a depository for council funds, arrangements for bonding the treasurer and the appointment of a committee to investigate the possibility of incorporating. The plans for the next Central States Conference, in Omaha, were also reviewed.

The lack of members from this region elevated to fellowship was again very apparent. This region, with over 500 Corporate Members from six chapters, had only one man advanced to Fellowship. He was Mr. Donald McCormick, of the Oklahoma Chapter. McCormick, well entitled to the honor, will be remembered as a past president of the Oklahoma Chapter, chairman of their regional conference, and once, a member of the jury of our own Honor Awards Program.

Mr. Clarence Stein, of New York, was awarded the Institute's Gold Medal for the year.

The meeting of the National Chapter Affairs Committee was perhaps the most interesting single function to our delegates. Present at this meeting were all members of the National Committee, the national officers, chapter chairmen and chapter officers. At this meeting, the "grass roots" problems were discussed. Here our delegates learned that most other chapters have problems that are very similar to our own. The matter of procurement training and holding draftsmen, encroachment of other groups on the profession, dealings with government agencies, etc., were among the subjects discussed.

The seminars and tours were elaborate and numerous. Each afternoon the delegate was obligated to select one of four tours or three seminars, all of which started the same hour. The seminars were concerned with interesting subjects and had high-caliber panels, but they were probably poorly attended for such a large convention. Seminars at Regional Conventions still seem to be more realistic, worthwhile and interesting than those at the National. They, also, seem to me more of an integral part of the announced theme. The tours were very well organized and well attended. They left and returned on time, and they were well escorted. Everyone had high praise for the caliber of these tours around the area.

The product exhibits by the Producers' Council at the Biltmore were very interesting. The techniques employed in displaying the materials were unusual and made your visits to the exhibits very enjoyable. As usual, the firms tried to feature new materials and new uses of old materials which, of course, added greatly to the interest.



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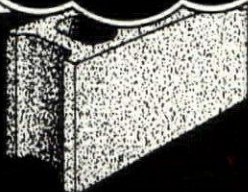
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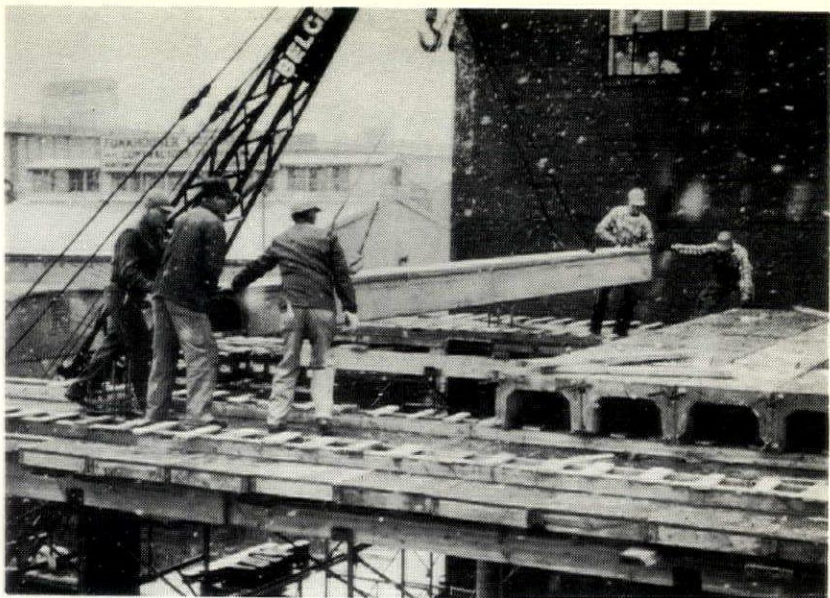
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Like all conventions, the social activities played a big part. The President's Reception was held on the Terrace of the famous old Ambassador Hotel, which is a large place, but still inadequate for 2,000 people. The most unusual and ambitious social function of the convention took place on the final evening when the Southern California Chapter entertained the entire Convention by taking the delegates in groups of 12 to 15 people into their own homes for a full evening of entertainment. Lloyd Roark and myself were fortunate enough to be included in a group that was entertained by Mr. Reiner Nielsen. We were picked up at the hotel, taken to his home and provided a genuine Hawaiian luau, with all the trimmings (more details and pictures upon request).

Complete plans for the 1957 Convention in Washington were unveiled at the annual dinner. This will be the A.I.A. Centennial Year, and no expense is to be spared to make it a real celebration. It will, undoubtedly, be one that many members will attend that would not ordinarily go to a routine convention. The events planned will have much interest for every practicing architect. More detailed information will, of course, be coming to you soon.

See you in Washington!





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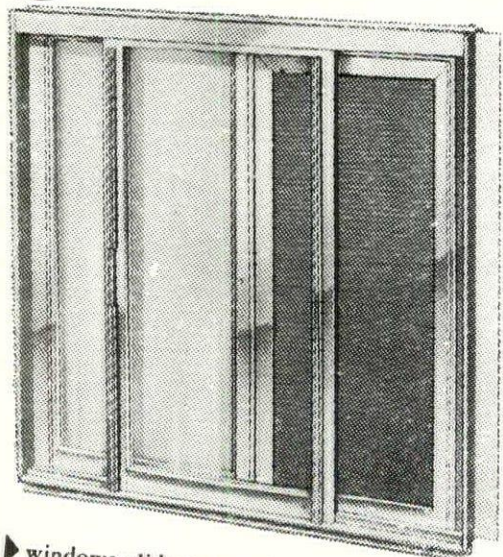
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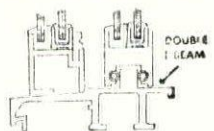
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# ARCHITECTS OF TODAY

by Richard Neutra

(This is the second part of Mr. Neutra's talk at the Honor Awards Banquet of the Kansas City Chapter, April 19, 1956).

I would like to say a few words about the architects in other countries. I am not talking about architects some hundreds of years ago, but this year.

(At this point, Mr. Neutra asked how many architects were practicing in Kansas City, and he was told that there were about 85 Corporate Members of the Chapter.)

Well, just for comparison, I may tell you that in the city of Tokyo, which is now six and a half million and is just a real mess, (I was there the first time in 1929, and, of course, it did not look as in 1860 when Admiral Perry arrived there) there are 5,400 architects operating in the metropolitan area; and I may say that most of them are having comparatively insignificant jobs. The real big jobs, like the International House, which has just been built . . . a big hotel with underground garage, etc. . . . are done by one or two of the biggest construction firms, which employ anonymous designers. Then, there are about a dozen big construction firms, which are not as gigantic as the other two, but which are also very important, and they kind of catch all the important jobs; so, the architects, who are very well trained and extremely diligent and hardworking individuals, have really a small influence on the total picture. They have a miserable relationship to what could be called the Planning Department, and the Planning Department is of a ridiculous character (I have visited it). Most architects don't even know where it is, and they surely need a planning department in Tokyo. These architects are in a position of competing with the construction business, which should not be in the design field. The situation in Japan, today, is very similar to what you would have found in Brazil not long ago.

In Brazil about fifteen years ago, there were practically no architects of name. Nobody counted there. All the big government jobs, all the school jobs, all the colleges were being built by big construction firms. At the present time, Rio has a population of two and a half million, and Sao Paulo is about the same. Sao Paulo is a fantastically developing city, very lively and it has great industries. Since all the rivers have been turned in the other direction, flowing now into a group of lakes which empty into the Atlantic Ocean at Santos, there is a great deal of electric power produced and industries are springing up all around Sao Paulo.



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In the city of Rio, I do not believe that I am wrong to say that there are about 16 or 17 bona fide architectural firms practicing at the present time. However, these 16 or 17 firms have made Brazil, as you know it, a famous country in progressive architecture. Sixteen people can do that. I have met and I am always interested to meet the people behind the architects, that is the people who give them the jobs, who are particularly top politicians, such as the man who gave out the job for the famous Ministry of Education in Brazil. It is interesting to see how one man, properly enthused by the work of architects who are imaginative, may all of a sudden change the whole course of events. Brazil became one of the leading countries . . . It is undoubtedly one of the leading countries. There have been more books published and magazines issued on Brazil than on any other country. I do not think that the architects there are particularly well equipped as to training. The schools are ridiculous, especially the one in Rio which is big, but ridiculous. In Sao Paulo, the school is even more ridiculous. The whole school is about one-fourth as large as this room, and they, I think, graduate two people a year.

Now, you compare this, for instance, with a country like Germany. I had not been in Germany for a long time, and had almost completely forgotten to speak German, until I was made a doctor at the University of Berlin and was a guest of the President of West Germany, who is very interested in architecture. I saw the whole country . . . a tremendous activity. Incidentally, an example not to put too much weight on the economic situation of a country, because the economic situation of Germany was simply terrible two or three years ago. At the present time, it has completely changed, and there is a building activity which is hard to compare with any other country, except, perhaps with certain parts of North Italy or, let us say, a place like Venezuela or Alberta, Canada, which have other reasons for booming. But, in Germany, there is a terrific number of practitioners. There is a great deal of quite commendable, but uninteresting work being done; and there are a few quite good things, altogether I would say better things than had been done in Germany before the war, but the tremendous number of practitioners surprised me.

I asked an architect in Cologne, Cologne is a town of 750,000, very much in the throes of reconstruction, and I was told there are 800 architects practicing in Cologne. I said, "Well, that is amazing. Where do they all learn?" The man who explained this to me was one of the best men they have, and he said, "These people just get a license to practice architecture without any qualifications whatsoever. There are perhaps 60 of them who can be considered as really qualified architects, and they are not doing good work. There are really only three, perhaps two, people who are good." I was highly surprised about this, because I had known and had always thought of Germany as a country in which only very qualified people could practice a profession. Evidently this has changed very much since the totalitarian state broke down. Under the totalitarian state there was a very strong protection of any profession. Of course, people had to belong to the Nazi party, but in addition to that, all kinds of qualifications were required. At the present time West Germany is in the throes of a great reaction against this and, therefore, anything goes. There are lots of people doing all kinds of things there which do not speak for German thoroughness or German understanding of a trade or craft. Compare this with Spain, which is exactly the contrary.



In Spain the architects have a six-year course, and they are wonderfully trained as engineers. I may say that in Germany the architect has nothing to do with the engineering phases of his work. He does not hire any engineers. The owner makes the contract with engineers, and there are no engineers in most fields. There is not one electrical engineer in the whole of Germany. There is, recently, one mechanical engineer, who I hear is actually free-lancing; but he is always hired by the owner, not by the architect, and the architect becomes something of a beautician. However, it seems to work in many cases. There is a sort of voluntary co-operation between the architects and the engineers. There is a similar thing, incidentally, in Sweden.

In Spain, it is entirely different. The Spanish architects are not very good designers, although I have seen some excellent work just recently. At the present time, these architects have the complete control of all building work. The only gripe which they have is that sometimes a highway bridge is done without an architect, but every single building you can see in Madrid . . . which is also booming, and so is Barcelona, but Madrid very much more than any other town . . . are all done by architects. Their engineering capacities are wonderful. I was quite impressed by all kinds of thin shell construction for which they themselves figure out the reinforcing. There is one man, and I would consider him perhaps the best architect in Spain, who is just constructing the Institute of Agronomy at the University of Madrid, and he showed me plans which looked to me extremely difficult to understand structurally. I said, "Well, you must have a good engineer," and he said, "I did this all myself." There were certain of his assistants around, and I looked to see whether anybody was grinning, but nobody was. Actually, he did it all himself.

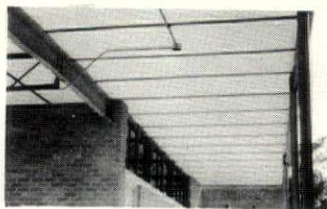
Well, I could go on and tell you about the difference in our profession in different countries, and I believe that we can learn from the activities in other countries, as well as from other professions, and we shall have to. We certainly have to build up a very much greater confidence. There is a greater demand than for 80 architects here, but the question is whether this demand is really a conscious demand of the public. I would say that I can see a wonderful future for our profession, and I certainly congratulate any young man who is an architect. I wish I were myself a young one.



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## NEW OFFICES

Two new offices have recently been opened by members of our Chapter.

A few months ago, **Herman A. Scharhag** opened his new office in Room 200, of the Pioneer Building, 1830 Swift, North Kansas City. His new telephone number is BA. 1-9297.

Recently, **John Lawrence Daw** announced the opening of his office here in Kansas City. His new address is 5509 Brookside Boulevard, and the phone number is DE. 3-9933.

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## ● ● in the news

Andy Wise, of the Zonolite Company, is leaving us. He has been transferred to Traveler's Rest, South Carolina, where he will take over the duties of Assistant to the Executive Vice-President. The new representative in the Kansas City area will be John McCan, who is being transferred from New Orleans.

May 26th, Ralph Kiene represented our Chapter as a panel member on the program at the Masonry Home Builders Luncheon. Seventy-five people were present for an open forum on problems of masonry home building. Other members of the panel were George Colvin, City Bond and Mortgage Company, Charles Coleman, Federal Housing Administration and Weldon B. Royse, who is a masonry contractor.

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