

SKYLINES

KANSAS CITY

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AMERICAN INSTITUTE

OF ARCHITECTS

SEPTEMBER 1958



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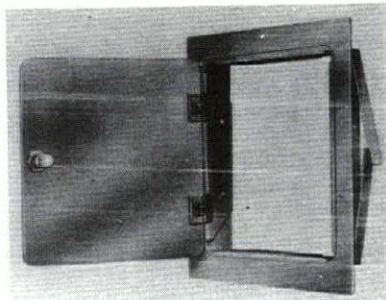


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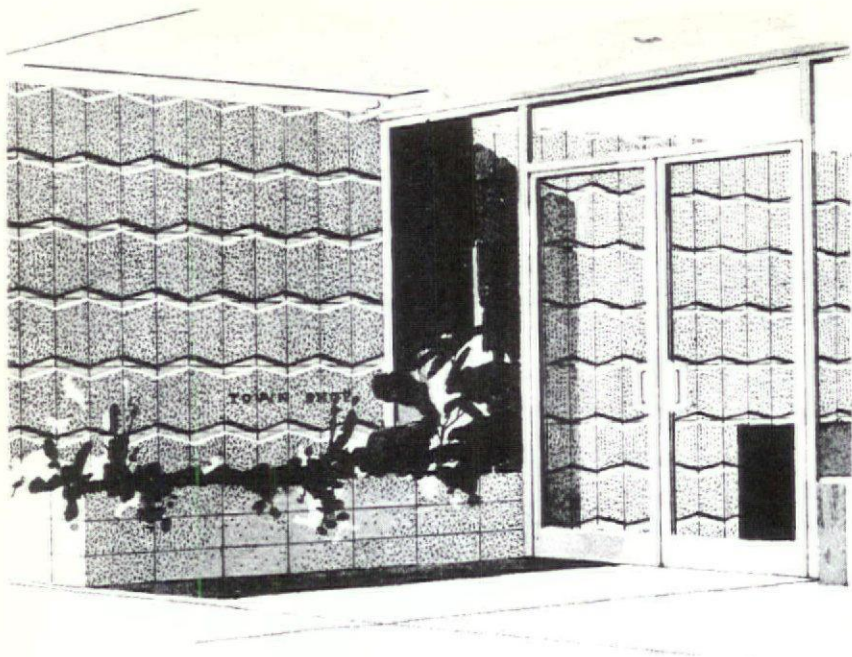
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'58 — '59 PREVIEW

an editorial for the new Chapter year

With the summer swiftly coming to a close, Chapter activities get back into full swing this month. The 1958 Central States Regional Conference will be the big task facing the Chapter this year. With the preliminaries completed and approved early this year, working drawings are nearing completion with the last few sheets of details remaining and the final push of tying the job together yet ahead.

The "fun night" affair on Thursday, October 30th, has been settled and is to be a Night-at-the-Theater (Resident) complete with a Cocktail Party and Buffet Supper.

The Friday night Banquet, October 31st, will afford an appropriate setting for our distinguished rocket expert guest speaker, Mr. Walter Dornberger.

And as previously announced in SKY-LINES, our list of Conference speakers includes such notables as: Charley Eames, Henry S. Churchill, Daniel Schwartzman, William Stanley Parker and Julius Shulman.

The Carl Milles fountain has been dedicated and is complete for its role in the interesting Saturday morning series of events.

Three advance flyers (one to the ladies) are being distributed to the entire region and work is underway on the special October SKY-LINES which is also to be sent to all Central States Chapters.

The highlight of last year's activity, KC/80, will receive due attention during the Conference and, incidentally, is receiving mention in a forthcoming issue of the AIA JOURNAL.

So here's to the year ahead—to a full year which will not only absorb the pleasures and duties of a large Conference, but will intensify the normal and new Chapter pursuits to even greater heights of accomplishment — to the benefit and growth of each Chapter member.

THE FASCINATING ADVENTURE

JOSEPH WESTON

Field Promotion Director

Douglas Fir Plywood Association

This article by Joseph Weston is a condensed version of his lecture to student architects at Texas A & M College and was featured in the June and July issues of TEXAS ARCHITECT. One of the frankest descriptions of the excitement of architectural pursuit to cross the desk of your Editor, it is reprinted here as an inspiration to the young in the profession.

A lifetime devoted to Architecture is a top-flight adventure. But the pursuit demands great devotion, and endless hours of enthusiastic, thoughtfully directed work. In other words, you will need brain, judgment and good plain sweat to accomplish your purpose.

I am inclined to ask, "Can you take it?"

I'm sure no place of importance awaits the esoteric lightweight who picks up a few clichés, thinks he has all the answers, and spends his years in argument. However, a wide open world of opportunity awaits the young architect with mental stamina, an unlimited belief in the need for his efforts, a readiness to unashamedly exhort to the world on the importance of beautiful surroundings, and who gets busy and applies himself.

Deep and gratifying satisfaction go with the profession of Architecture. The high ethical standards you must meet will leave your heart clean. You will serve one of the fundamental demands of humankind—the providing of shelter for all the tasks and pleasures of men. Your days will be bright and your life worthwhile as your dreams develop into structures of merit.

You are needed—satisfaction and opportunity are waiting for you. Now how about the training necessary to meet this demand? It would be interesting to dig into who young men choose to take up the study of Architecture.

Probably a few would like to be painters and have selected Architecture as a second choice because they have the idea an artist cannot make a living and maybe an architect can. Making a living depends more on the individual than upon the choice of painting or Architecture as a work. In any case, men in this category should be welcomed into the fold with genuine enthusiasm. In this day of engineers, cost accountants and lawyers, we must always put high value on sensitive men in the great scheme of things. I urge that in these materialistic times our greatest hopes lie in things of the spirit. To these

gentlemen, I say, "Have faith in your inner talents, but remember—structures must be well done, they cannot be turned against the wall—like paintings—if they do not turn out well."

A second category of students might answer, "I've been looking at home magazines and thought I would like to do houses." This view is very limited architecturally. Specializing in houses is at the bottom of my list for the Architect of aspiration. Much like an orchestra leader with no instruments to direct but second fiddles.

Then there is the third group. Well rounded chaps who like to read, and have some facility with a pencil. Men who have had some contact with Architecture and have an idea of what they are getting into. These men are mentally prepared to accept all phases of training with understanding. Men determined to wade through courses they find difficult, knowing that when they become practicing architects—acting as chairmen of boards of experts, if you will—they will be called upon for opinions and decisions covering the widest variety of subjects. They will want to study materials, methods, function, and above all, delightful appearance.

Architects should early acquire the ability to express themselves with a pencil. An active sketch book will not only help with this attainment, but when a man looks at any subject carefully enough to make a thoughtful sketch he will have fixed something fresh in his mind. He will become more aware of his surroundings, will see more clearly the effect of light, air, shade and shadow upon buildings.

Every architect should have enough physics to understand the amazing and basically simple physical facts that cause endless trouble if left unconsidered in his buildings.

Water is an example. Water may be gaseous, liquid or solid. Water defies all rules. It swells when it freezes, it can run uphill. Condensation is a bother. I suggest a big sign in every drafting room "Water Hazard."

Answers to problems of insulation, acoustics, refrigeration, electricity, and several other common architectural demands are found in Physics. Don't neglect it.

Imaginative thinking is necessary, but I agree with Bertram Goodhue, that before a man can be fully competent to design on his own, he must have a firm, broad base on which to build his personal expressions.

I hope you are not inclined to turn up your noses at buildings of the past. I urge you also not to confine yourselves only to the inspiration provided by contemporary archi-

tectural magazines.

I hope you will use all sources, develop a universal taste, in which you come to realize that the style of the Architecture is not what counts, but the artistry and competence of the architect. Incidentally, I don't believe in "Fountain Heads." Architecture is a thousand men deep. Draw from them all, then design your own.

After leaving school, an internship in the office of some practicing architect is mandatory. A summer or two out on the job will pay dividends. This is the period which not only trains you in the realities of architecture practice, but often leads to permanent positions with existing firms.

In the larger office, where varying degrees of specialization are normal, you may not gain as wide an experience as you might find in the office where the boss is "in" on everything, and the draftsmen are likely to be also.

Probably, the best guide to you as to selection of office, is to find your place where you have the greatest respect for the work of the firm—a place to which you can go as a learner without reservation.

The attrition, from the time you enter architectural school to the notable day on which you hang up your shingle, will be heavy. For those who have reached this critical point—who have received their wings, and are ready to pilot their own craft—immediate questions arise. You are reasonable well trained esthetically and technically, but,

"How do I get commissions?"

"What do I do for business?"

Well, you might as well face it. Every producer must dispose of his wares. You have a fine service to offer, but you've got to sell.

I suggest you sit down and figure out just what an architect has to offer that is so all, all fired important—from the client's viewpoint. Study the subject backward and forward. Put your conclusions in your own words. Prepare yourself to sell the profession of Architecture. Then, get some practice at it. Starting right now! Remember—your first jobs will come from friends.

Your tongue is ready with answers to the difficult questions. You are sold on Architecture yourself, with the background you have. So—drag out your number one list, and your number two list and add an additional one. This is to be of the fifty most important and the most influential men in town.

Rework your architectural story around your own expe-

rience and your own intentions — ask yourself what features of your set-up are of particular interest to the buyer of architects' services?

The outline might read like this:

1. Prompt, clear headed solutions to planning problems.
2. Professional handling of aesthetic requirements.
3. Ability to meet reasonable budgets.
4. Clarity of working drawings and specifications.
5. Competence of supervision.
6. Integrity.

A story like this is too good to keep! So, get out, and circulate—during business hours.

Announce the opening of your office. Tell your architectural story, and ask if the person you are talking to knows of any jobs in the wind. Perhaps you had better have a short version of your presentation in mind if you catch a man at an especially busy hour. Follow every lead like a hound dog, and when you really get a prospect treed, for Heaven's sake, don't be afraid to "ask for the order."

I wonder how many of you are saying to yourselves, "Gosh what a lot of work." I remind these folks of my early question, "Can you take it?" Sure it's work, and worth it in a thousand ways.

Every building, all buildings, every structure with floors, walls and roof belongs to the architectural profession. Your field of work has been nibbled at from all sides. It's time to reverse this trend—time for some righteous wrath—time for concentrated, well organized educational effort. It's time to be sure of yourselves, and it's time for selling. Indeed, it's time for work!

Now, you have a nice job or two on the boards. Beware of a trap. You are determined to give your client the best services possible. You become engrossed in the most interesting chore man can name—designing and preparing plans for buildings. This is fun, it's exciting, it's next to impossible to get your nose away from the drafting board. That's the trap.

I say, devote at least eight hours a week to the promotion of further work. If you do not have a flow of jobs into your office, all of a sudden you have nothing to do—draftsmen to pay, or let go. Office overhead and demand for food at home keep rolling right along. You've got to sell. Particularly at first.

I have mentioned only direct calls on individuals to develop new business. Obviously many other courses

exist for getting your name before the public. These are important too, but often not really effective until you have some worthwhile buildings behind you to publicize specifically. Generalities don't get you very far.

Also, I wish to mention residential practice again because I am firmly convinced that you should not start your professional career on smaller houses. It's the hardest thing in the world to get the man who has some real money to invest, to believe you can handle a half million dollar bank if your practice has been on \$15,000 houses.

If you were job captain of a larger building in some other architect's office, and you tell the prospect client of this experience, he is likely to consider your appeal for work in your own name as valid. He knows that you have everything to gain by doing his job, and will give effort and personal attention to the commission that cannot be purchased from the "big" architect. He might even be the kind of man who likes to give a boost to well prepared young men.

So—keep your door open by pumping gas at night if you have to—but hold out for the larger commissions to stake your future on.

If you are offered a \$75,000 house—take it of course, but that is the minimum figure to consider. People building houses of that cost will expect to pay you a proper fee—and assuming you do a good job—you can use this as proof you are an architect able to produce satisfactorily at a higher money level.

It has been said, "You want people who are going to build to desire your architectural service." True enough, but that's only part of the story. I have rephrased the comment of an important advertising firm:

"Marketing is a business function that concerns itself with creating desires rather than with the far more limited area of serving clients needs. Also, in today's stiffening competition the health of your venture will be judged by your ability to capture an increasing share of the potential market for the services you offer."

Here is a check list to implement the capturing process:

1. Direct Personal Calls. To make yourself known, to explain architectural practices, to develop leads, to ask for the order.
2. Prepare a booklet that is a nicely arranged and well printed statement, to leave behind on your calls, and to mail out as occasion offers. It might be titled, "Architectural Practice, What It Is, What It Can Do

For You," or something like that. It should clearly state the nature and value of architectural services from the reader's standpoint.
For example:

- a. Ethical Standards. The owner's interests are the architect's interest—the fee is the only compensation.
- b. Thorough Training — Examined and licensed to practice.
 - Planning ability
 - Aesthetic competence
 - Knowledge of legal requirements—the handling of contracts.
- c. Steps in a typical commission.
- d. Architectural charges.
- e. Your photograph and a statement of your academic and working experiences.
- f. Your name, address and telephone number, of course.

The brochure could well be 8½ x 11 inches in size. This can be folded for mailing, and fits a business file.

3. Newspapers are your most effective publicity tool. Make acquaintance with editors and reporters who might have an interest. Write articles, enter architectural, art, and planning controversies, but don't be a fanatic who pops off without thinking. This may get you publicity but no work will accrue. Consider your words, use critical judgment. You are a professional and what you say should make sense and be worthy of adult consideration.
4. Exhibits generally come a little later in your professional life when you have some buildings to show, but if you really know how to make fine presentation drawings or models, put your bait out for public view. And incidentally, a blown-up photograph of a model is often more effective than the model itself.

This material can be shown in bank lobbies, at the library perhaps, in insurance company windows, and so on. Be choosy of location, however. Go where the traffic is. Also, be sure the drawings or photographs are clean, and carefully mounted. Don't show anything that is shop worn.

5. Lectures before adult groups make sense. This is indirect selling, but builds up your name and your

profession. You might talk on the History of Architecture, and wind up with the Architecture of today—good and bad. Your "commercial" about what the architect of today does for his client can certainly be included. If you do undertake talks, be sure to prepare carefully, but play smart and don't let it appear that you take yourself too seriously. A smile is a wonderful thing.

6. Group promotion by the local Chapter of the AIA, or any other interested group should be supplemented—and led, if necessary—but in doing this, keep in mind always that two very important things are at stake:
 - a. Your very existence as an architect.
 - b. Control of architectural design by qualified professionals.
7. Other promotional possibilities could be listed, but have obviously been omitted. There are two reasons for this. A person can get so busy with general promotion that he forgets to sell. Secondly, group activities help you only if you personally get busy and take advantage of the opportunities so developed.

Architectural ability in the broadest sense is assumed. It is a must. It is the base upon which your life's work will be built, and the foundation of your whole promotional story. Without professional competence of high order your words are nothing—the noises of a two-penny medicine man.

The organization of your office—partnerships, legal situations, accounting, overhead, net profit—are subjects which will demand attention. This is true in a small organization as well as in larger groups. One book which considers these earthly things, as well as job getting, is worth your reading, "This Business of Architecture," by Royal Barry Wills. It is pointed mostly to residential practice but many of the principles he outlines may be applied to other work.

The designs you generate, the contract documents you produce, the supervision you give, constitute your practice as an architect. If your designs are thoughtful—meet the demands of the problem—recognize the limitations of material and money, and never become static—cliches that is—you will improve as you grow, and are off to a running start on the Fascinating Adventure.

Your contract documents interpret your designs, and are for this purpose alone. Your working drawings must be sharp, and well detailed, with accurate dimensions and

legible notes. Your specifications amplify the drawings. They must be clear and tight. Complete and accurate plans and specifications tighten competition, thus reducing costs. They also prevent the trouble of extras and misunderstandings. Finally, supervision costs to the architect are reduced by them.

Supervision is a must. Be darned slow about turning your drawings over to anyone to build from without your supervision. The thought and care you have given to scale, and to the details that make the difference, are likely to be wrecked if you do. Every jack carpenter knows a "cheap" way to do the job, and he has the ear of the owner when you are not present to defend or explain. Also, where special structural problems are to be met, or you have made a selection of some new material or method, it is up to you to see that the ultimate building meets the goal envisioned.

An architect is not just a drawer of plans, a maker of "blueprints." The Greek meaning of the word architect is "Master Builder." Be just that!

Probably every commission you ever do will be more important to the client than it is to you. It means a commitment of large sums of money — his money. The contract arrangements between you and your client should therefore certainly be clear. If you have the idea the owner thinks more of you — trusts your professional judgment more completely—if you are willing to work without pay for sketches, or go ahead with working drawings without an agreement, or end up without profit—get the idea out of your head. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

If you don't believe me, go to your banker and ask what banks think of people who take heavy responsibilities, produce prodigiously, are needed in the world, but who are inclined to work with loose contractual arrangements. I'm sure of his answer, and this opinion should be enough to convince you, too, because those who control the money of the world and thereby exert the greatest single influence on architecture, assume contracts to be normal business procedure; further, they respect the man whose profession produces profits.

An agreement with your client therefore should be an automatic thing with you. The explanation of it to him not only proves your business judgment, it also makes clear your fee and the services behind it.

People with untrained eyes are unobservant, more or less blind to appearance values in buildings. Habit is strong, but you can lead them, train them that Architecture is an art. They go, perhaps unknowingly, to the show window which is well composed, well designed. Most everyone

will admit the Thunderbird at the curb is good looking. But—how about the block of buildings that serve as background to the window and to the curbstone display? I doubt if most folks think much about it.

Is it not time to change this indifference into critical demand for architecture of the highest quality? Should you not undertake this task?

Jack Dionne has said, "The world makes way for the man who believes in his mission. No matter what objections may be raised, no matter how dark the outlook, he believes in his power to transform into reality the vision which he alone has seen."

Enthusiasm will steady the heart and strengthen the will; it will give force to the thought and nerve to the hand, until what was only a possibility becomes a reality. No barrier however formidable, no obstacle however insurmountable, can bar the way to any man possessed of enthusiasm for a high ideal. Never before in the world's history has the man fired by enthusiasm had such an opportunity as he has today.

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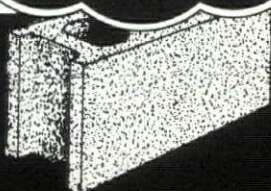
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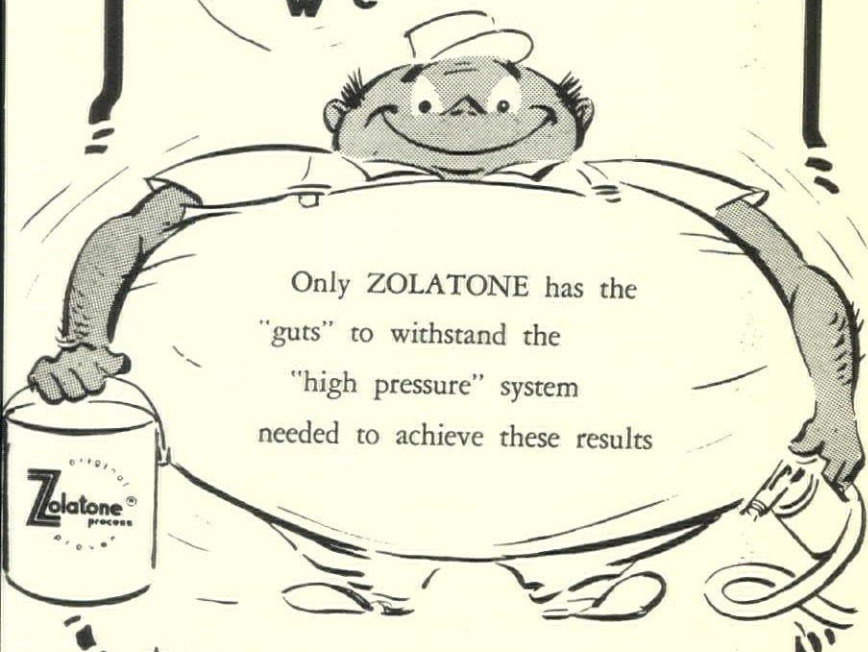
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