

May-June 1985

# NORTH CAROLINA ARCHITECT



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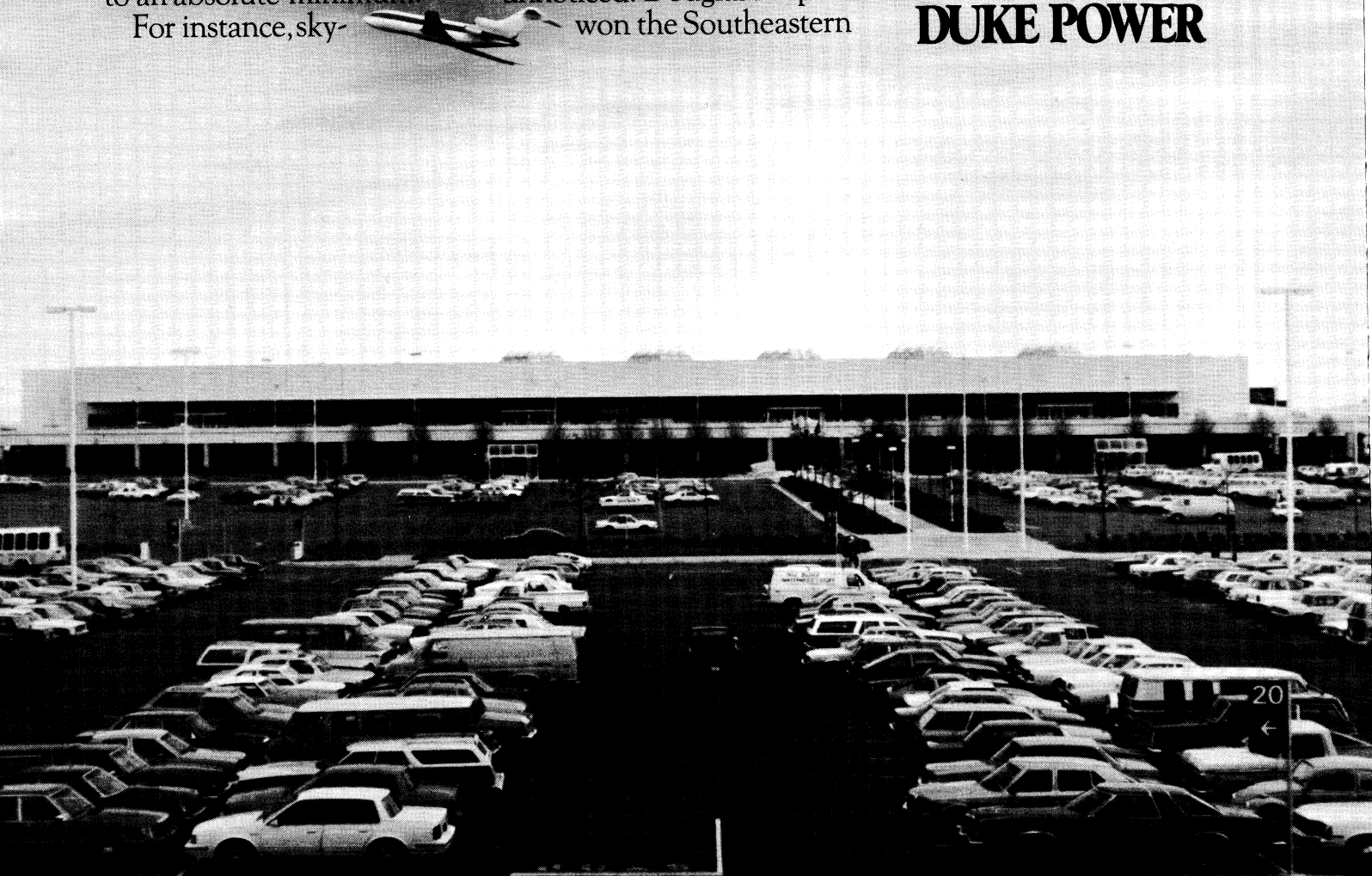
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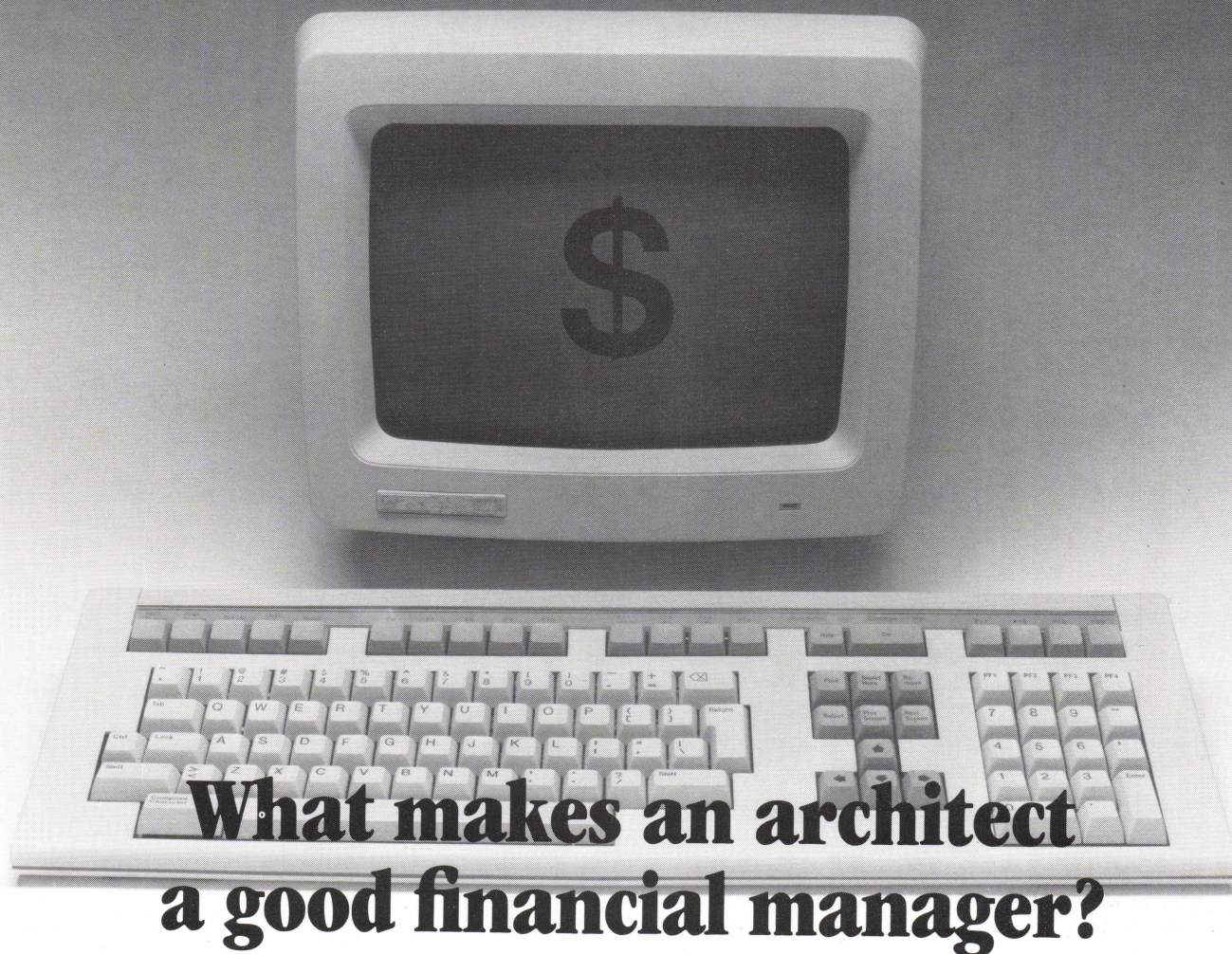
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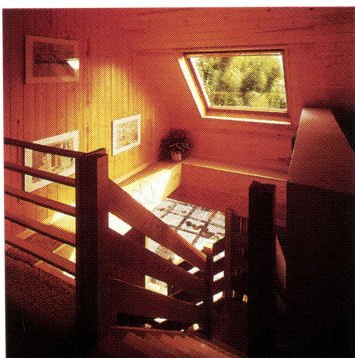
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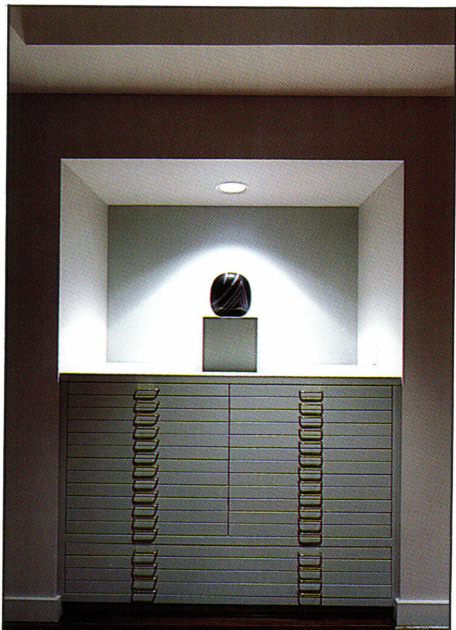






Photo by David Crosby

# "HOMETOWN" FIRM CELEBRATES ITS 50TH BIRTHDAY

*Hickory-based Clemmer Bush Sills Abernethy  
also has designs on the future*

By Ellen Grissett

In 1935, when the architectural firm of Clemmer Bush Sills Abernethy was founded, it wasn't unusual to discover that all of the members of a professional organization had grown up together or at least hailed from the same general area. Today, however, the fact that the firm's four partners and one associate all grew up in or around Hickory and have chosen to remain there professionally makes the firm an exception rather than the rule.

The firm is particularly aware of its "hometown ties" during this, the year in which it celebrates 50 years of architectural service to its clients. Fred

Abernethy, one of the partners, sees the common thread uniting him with his fellow workers as a real plus.

"We know our market," he says simply. "That's because we were all born, raised and educated around here, and we do business with people we know and people who know us. That makes for a special kind of working relationship."

He adds, "Another thing we all have in common is that we're all active in the community. To us, that's a big responsibility, and a necessity."

Other partners in the firm are Robert E. Bush and Ernest K. Sills; founding partner Robert L. Clemmer recently retired. The associate is Scott Mitchell.

In all, 14 people work in the firm's office, which is located right off the square in downtown Hickory.

Abernethy calls the size of the firm "just about right. We want to keep it small so we can all have client contact. We might go to 20 people in the next five years, but the growth will be controlled, believe me."

Though Clemmer Bush has always occupied the same acreage in Hickory, the building itself has changed: an old house that saw the beginning of the firm was eventually torn down and the firm

(continued)

Architects Scott Mitchell, Robert Bush, Ernest Sills and Fred Abernethy, above, were all born and raised in the city where they now practice professionally.



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occupied its present unpretentious quarters in 1960. In the lobby hang drawings of the firm's projects; on the coffee tables are an assortment of architectural magazines and models of a few current projects. The offices themselves are fairly small and full of the paperwork, framed certificates and other paraphernalia accumulated from years of work. A visitor to the firm can look out almost any window and spot a building that was designed by Clemmer Bush: the First Union Bank building, the First Plaza building, Catawba Memorial Hospital.

Abernethy says over the years the firm has developed its own operations style, the project manager concept: "I'm responsible for this project, he's responsible for that one. But we all keep abreast of everything that the firm as a whole is doing, so when someone calls or is interested in a project, any one of us can answer his questions."

Clemmer Bush has never specialized in terms of the type of facilities it designs, though Abernethy says that educational buildings do seem to dominate the list of past and present projects. The firm is currently working on a \$2 million school facility for Avery



County; a chapel for Western Carolina University; a skill center for McDowell Technical College; and a master plan for facilities at Caldwell Community College. The firm has also designed numerous buildings at nearby Lenoir-Rhyne College. Despite the seeming abundance

of educational-design credentials, however, "We've designed single- and multi-family housing, hospitals, even residences," Abernethy says. "We think

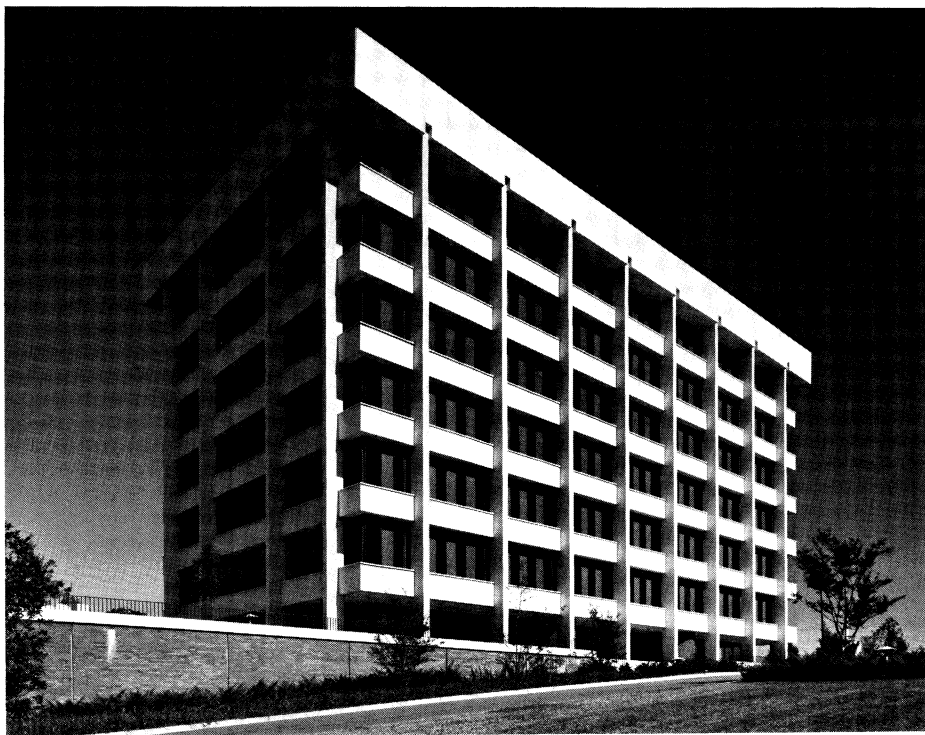
*(continued)*

*The Belk Centrum at Lenoir-Rhyne College in Hickory (above, below) is one of many educational facilities designed by the firm.*



*Photography by Joann Sieburg-Baker*





specializing would limit us too much."

Other projects currently under way include converting a 220,000-square-foot furniture market building into corporate headquarters for Hickory-based Siecor; \$1.7 million in renovations at Appalachian State University; renovations to the old Belk's Store building in downtown Hickory; and an industrial building for Watauga County. One project that is receiving a lot of local notice is the \$2.8 million remodeling of a 77,000-square-foot high school in the center of Hickory; it is destined to be the new gallery/administrative offices of the Arts Center of Catawba Valley.

Abernethy characterizes the current workload as busy, but not too busy. "We like to keep projects on time, after all," he says, then adds with a chuckle, "but we'll consider another project any time."

He says he and his associates would like to expand their projects into other parts of the state, as they are currently doing with a \$4.5 million elementary school design in Ft. Bragg. The idea of working with retirement housing is appealing. And a passive solar building currently being designed for an electrical membership cooperative in Watauga County—the firm's second such project—has reawakened the partners' interest in the solar concept.

"We'd also like to try designing and building our own 'spec' projects," Abernethy admits, "because we'd have so much more freedom on those projects."

The firm will have help achieving its goals, he feels, thanks to the new CADD (computer-assisted design and drafting) system now installed at Clemmer Bush. "That system has really been great," Abernethy says. "We're all learning how to operate it."

He says the architectural style of Clemmer Bush Sills Abernethy buildings is not easily defined or limited to one genre, as the firm works in both contemporary and traditional modes. However, "I guess you'd say we all lean personally towards contemporary, of course . . . the secret, I guess you'd say, is that our slightly different philosophies are very compatible, always have been. That's what has made the firm strong for all these years." □

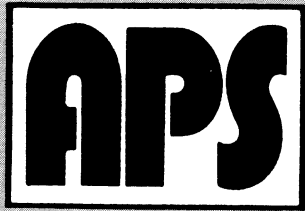
*Clemmer Bush favored clean, contemporary lines for the Superior Continental Corp. building in Hickory (left, above) and the student center at Appalachian State University in Boone (below).*

Photography by Gordon H. Schenck Jr.



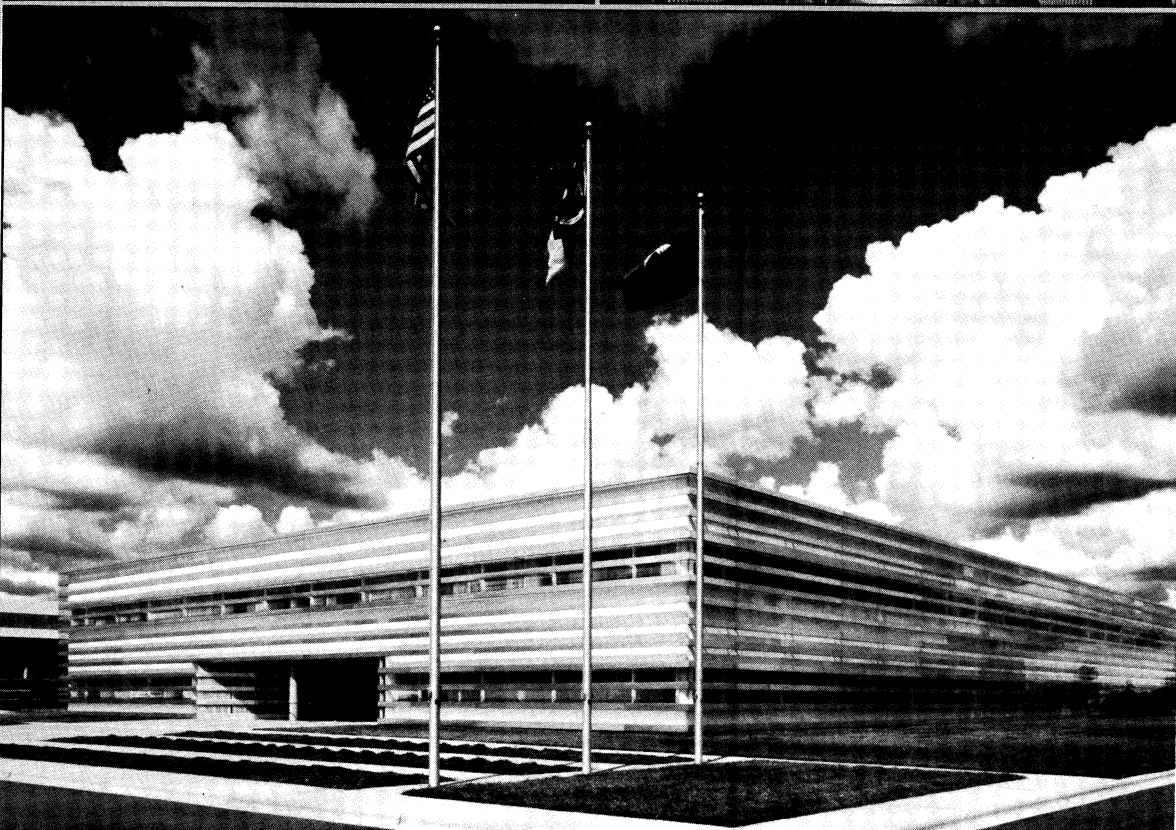
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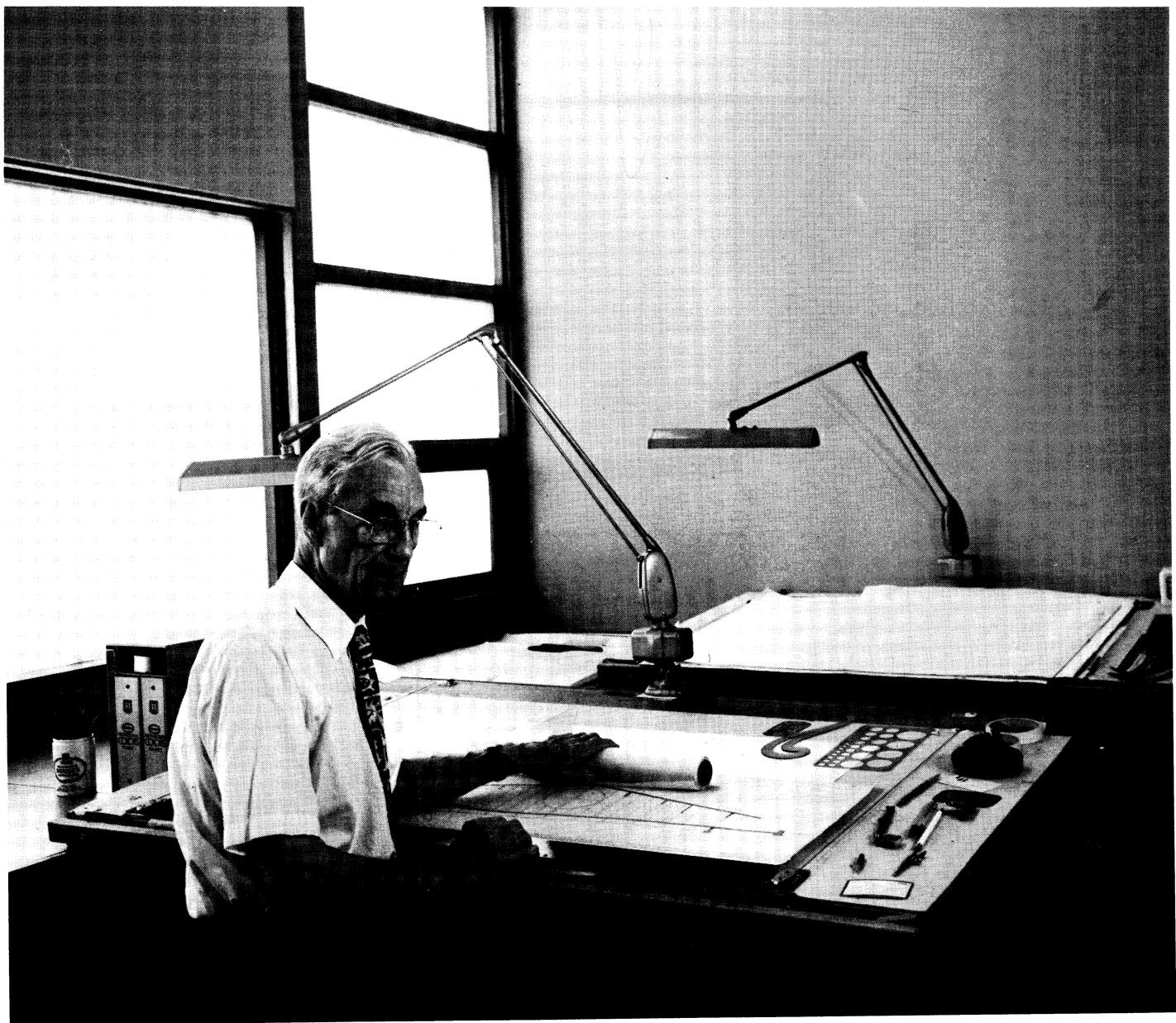


Photo by Brian Shawcroft

# HARWELL HAMILTON HARRIS: A TRIBUTE

**T**he work of the architect Harwell Hamilton Harris begins with particulars: a client's desire for a special view, the need of a small church congregation to grow, the threat of dust storms to a Texas site. His architecture begins with the objective and moves towards the subjective. Starting with elements that are more or less practical, the result is lyrical. It touches our spirits. It causes us to pause and reconsider the significance of the everyday. All architects start with the facts. Few transcend them. The process of the

*By Frank Harmon,  
Associate Professor of Architecture  
at the School of Design  
at North Carolina State University*

familiar transformed into a new sense of wonder is illustrated by the drawings of Harris recently acquired by the University of Texas at Austin and exhibited there.

Harris designed more than 250 buildings in California, Texas and North Carolina during his career. The University

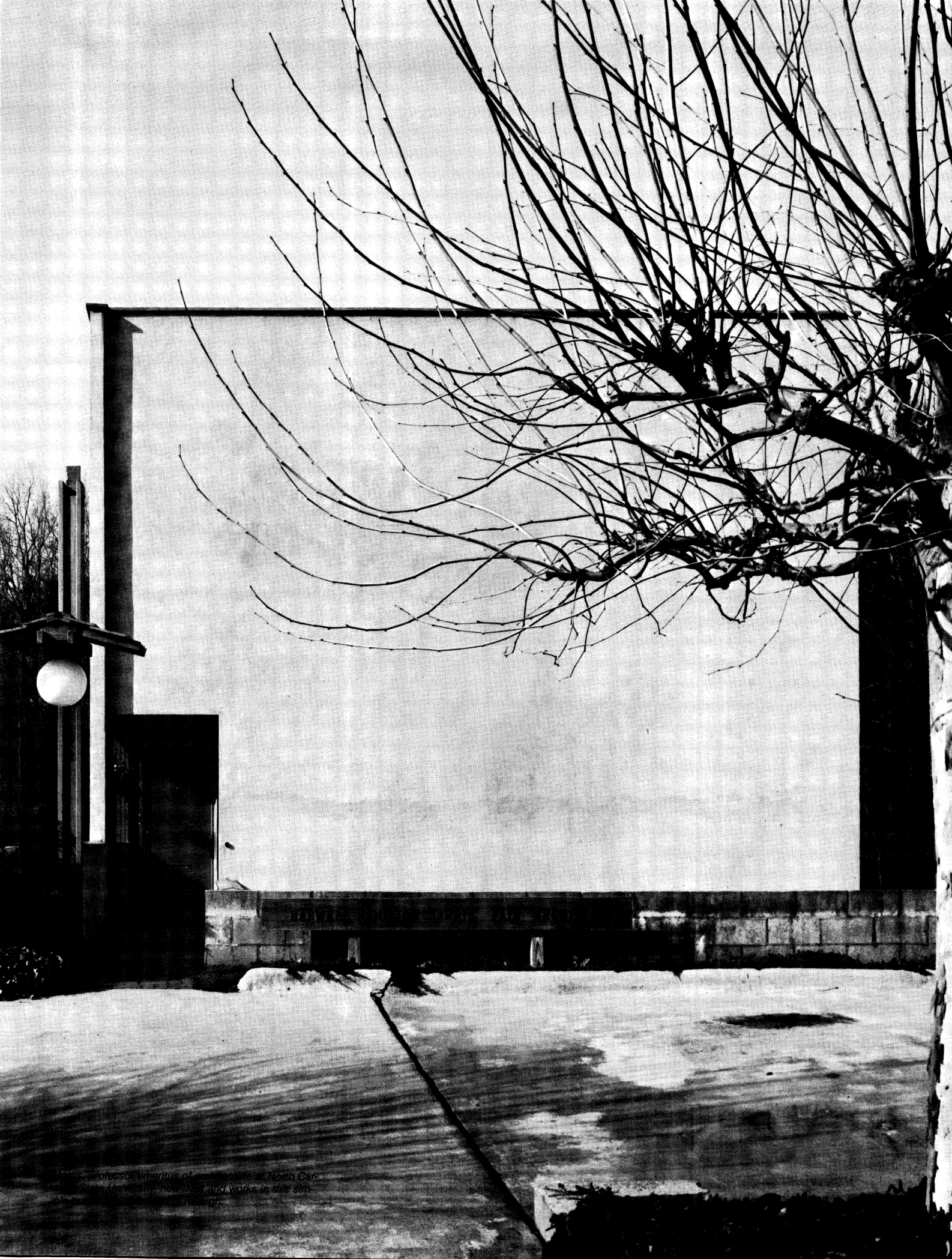
*Photography By JoAnn Sieburg-Baker*

of Texas has bought his entire collection of more than 9,000 drawings and photographs through a gift to its Center for the Study of American Architecture. Forty-five of these drawings were recently exhibited at UT and are scheduled to travel to other exhibit halls in the future. Wherever it is viewed, the exhibition of large colored drawings and sketches by Harris will be accompanied by black and white photographs, plans and models of his completed buildings.

Our first impression of the exhibition is of gorgeous, shimmering color. Seen

*(continued)*





James Professor Emeritus of Architecture at North Carolina State University, now lives and works in this simple, modern house.



next to the photographs, the color of the drawings is so daring and unexpected that it makes the heart leap. Harris uses color as an integral part of his drawings and buildings. His colored drawings suggest depth and warmth, harmony and contrast. A line forms an edge and then disappears in a band of color, only to reappear on the other side, suggesting distance.

Great richness of color is achieved by an imperceptible layering of several colors. Color chords predominate in parts of a drawing. In the J. Lee Johnson House the yellow orange tints of the house are seen against a background of trees drawn with a band of red violet. Each of these colors makes the other more vivid and at the same time reveals the balance between house and nature. The red violet is not realistic but gives a more effective representation—and it makes the drawing extraordinary.

The design for the initial three stages of St. Giles Presbyterian Church, built in Raleigh from 1969 to 1983, is composed of individual buildings. In the perspective drawing Harris shows them as a group of buildings sheltered and somewhat enclosed by a pine forest, which is approached by a road.

Cars arrive. Passengers emerge and

move toward the nursery school, Sunday school, fellowship hall, vestry, bell tower and sanctuary—buildings that are conceived of as a family, grouped around a clearing in the forest.

In Harris's drawing the pine woods are muted green, the buildings are warm tinted browns and shaded areas of grass in the clearing are picked out in clear blue.

Each building has its own purpose and character, yet each shares the gentle pitched roof and wood shingles of the other. A covered walkway connects them. Its roof and columns, joists and railings have the same unit pattern as the buildings. These elements accompany the visitor like music. They describe a promenade. They remind us that architecture can only be appreciated by a person walking.

Each building can be thought of individually or as part of a family. They will be built in stages as the congregation can afford them. The need of a small congregation to grow has been transformed into an image of a family of buildings, each with its own personality, drawing strength from the group.

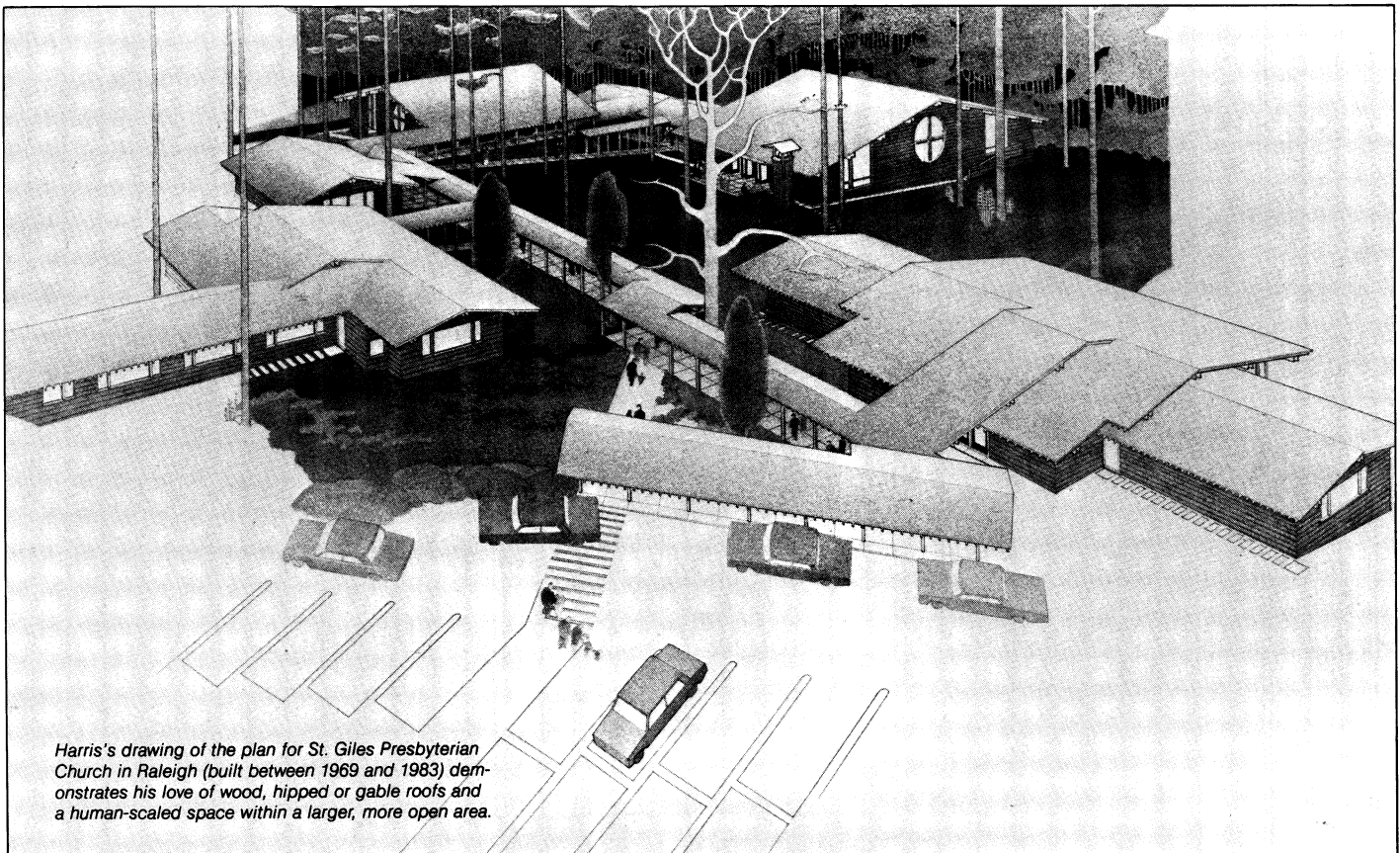
For several buildings in the exhibit, preliminary sketches, plans, perspectives and working drawings are shown,

as well as photographs of the completed buildings. These are drawings to make architecture. In the final plans we see furniture, trees, plants, paths, ceilings changes, roof overhangs, automobiles and paving patterns—all drawn with similar care.

In sketches for the project we see the same elements, drawn quickly but with a clear place in the conception. This preliminary care is related to the assurance and certainty of the completed buildings shown in the photographs. The working drawings are beautifully made and suggest the craft of the final buildings.

Where his colored perspectives represent what no one had ever dreamed of, Harris's working drawings describe things in terms that any builder could understand. A regular grid of lines shows the relationship between nails and pattern, boards and space, and illustrates how Harris's buildings grow out of individual elements to achieve intricacy and variety. A simple 2-inch by 6-inch board may hold up a roof, mark a unit in the overall rhythm, provide shade and a place for plants to travel, conceal an indirect light fixture, give a sense of shelter, suggest an impression of openness, give color and texture, pro-

(continued)



Harris's drawing of the plan for St. Giles Presbyterian Church in Raleigh (built between 1969 and 1983) demonstrates his love of wood, hipped or gable roofs and a human-scaled space within a larger, more open area.





*Flooded with light, the work area of Harris's office/ residence is both starkly efficient and, thanks to the rice-paper lanterns, whimsical.*



vide shadow and depth.

The Granstedt House was built in 1938 for a client who had a small budget and a dramatic site overlooking the Hollywood Hills. The perspective drawing shows the lush, colorful vegetation of southern California and, in contrast to the pine forest that shelters his North Carolina projects, a clear, open sky. Smoke drifts upward from the large chimney and appears to fix the house to its place between earth and sky.

In the ground plan Harris shows the walls, furniture and built-in equipment together with changes in ceiling height and the roof plan. The perspective shows a simple and ingenious hipped roof that now rises, now folds, now spreads to create appropriate spaces for entering, reading, painting or sleeping below.

Each of these spaces has particular requirements. A person using each space can sense an assured outline of the space, but with a minimum of walling in. He can be centered in what he wants to do or to be, with no walls encroaching. The house has a sense of spaciousness yet respects the client's budget. This centering without enclosure is made possible by the forms of the roof and ceiling. The roof beneath its folds has windows which admit views of the sky, and its edges frame and direct our attention towards the view. The client's house is open to the view of earth and sky, yet remains sheltered and protected, individual and private.

In the cross-sectional drawing of the house and studio built for himself in Raleigh in 1968, we see two interlocking large rooms: one a studio, the other a living area. The building, which has a flat roof, is composed of simple cubic forms. From the east the morning sun warms the building. To the west a view of trees and the horizon gives the dwelling a sense of repose. A squirrel perches on a fence near a stream.

The interlocking of work and life shown in this drawing exemplifies the attitude to architecture described by Harris in his commencement talk to the School of Architecture at the University of Texas in June 1955: "Because you are an architect you will not have to divide your time and thought into two parts: one part devoted to making a living and another part devoted to developing your person. In your case, there need be no division for it is possible to make life



*The "simple cubic forms" of Harris's office/residence are softened by a light-drenched, plant-embellished private terrace.*

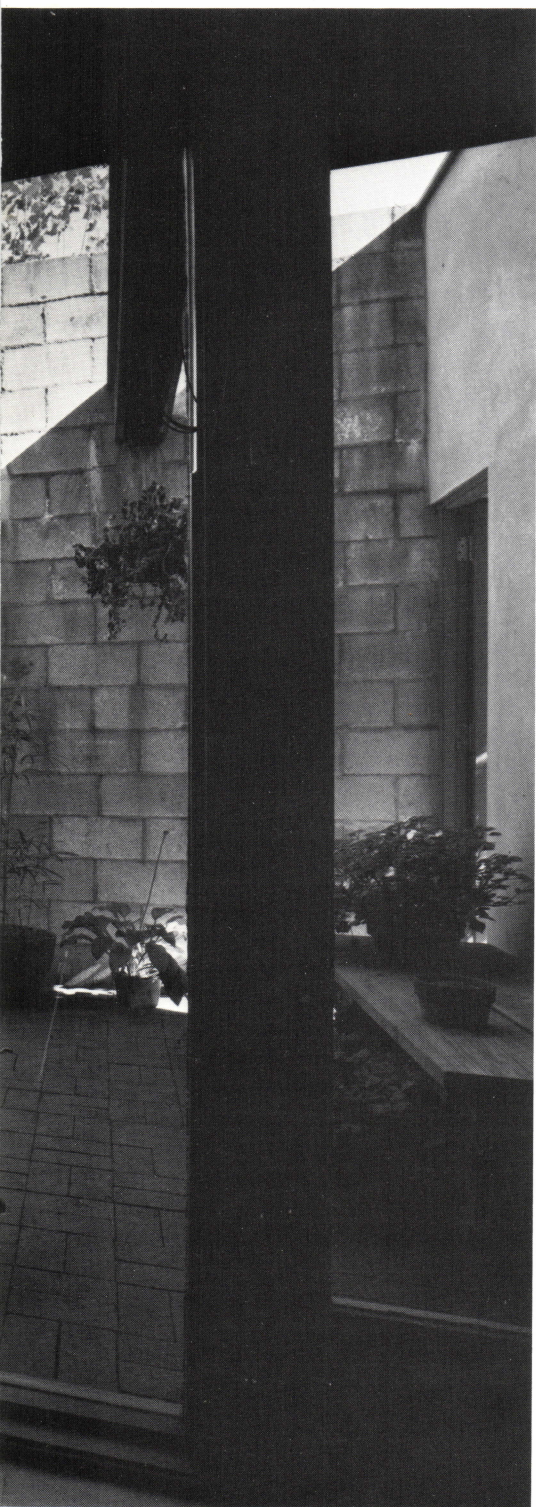
and architecture one."

In Harris's drawings we sense the skies of California, the hills and pine forests of North Carolina, the vivid wildflowers of southwest Texas and we sense a freshness and an independence of the trends and fashions of his lifetime. It seems appropriate to use his own words, written in appreciation of Frank Lloyd Wright, to describe the work of Harwell Hamilton Harris shown

in this exhibition: "These buildings express in their naturalness, casualness, amplitude and democratic acceptance of sun, wind, rain and vegetation, a quality singularly American. There is in them a Whitman's 'contempt for statutes and ceremonies,' 'a beauty of independence, departure, actions that rely on themselves.' There is in them an instinct for order and also an instinct for freedom. In a world absorbed with devices, these



# A PERSPECTIVE



buildings exhibit a singular clarity regarding fundamentals. Their pattern is the pattern of a free man, striding abroad in the open. Their spread is the spread of creation."

By its good judgment in acquiring the complete drawings of Harris and by making them available in the future to all of us, the University of Texas has preserved an important legacy in the tradition of American architecture. □

For over 50 years Harwell Hamilton Harris has, in the words of Lisa German, author of a book about him, "created a modern architecture particularly suited to traditional American values." Inspired by the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan, Harris blended their concepts with his own design style to create a unique body of work.

The University of Texas at Austin, which recently acquired the complete drawings of Harris and subsequently mounted an exhibit there of the drawings, plans to take the exhibit throughout the country. According to Susan Hoover, who coordinated the project for UT-Austin's School of Architecture, "We will be announcing places and dates for other exhibits soon."

Harris, who at the age of 82 lives and works in a studio in Raleigh, is once again receiving the national attention he received back in the '40s and '50s, when he was influential in the American Modern Movement. But public acclaim has not always accompanied Harris's work, according to German. "... Certainly by the time of (Frank Lloyd) Wright's death in 1959, Harris's career and those of the other California Modernists were eclipsed by the growing fame of the Bauhaus architects ... (but) through Harris and his many elegant designs, it is now possible to reestablish a continuity in American architectural thought that hitherto was submerged in the great excitement of the early Modern Movement."

Highlights of the Career of Harwell Hamilton Harris

1903—Born in Redlands, California.

1921—Enrolls in Pomona College, Pomona, California.

1923—Transfers to Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles, where he completes two years of study in sculpture, painting and other mediums.

1926—Frank Lloyd Wright having, in Harris's words, "decided me to be an

architect," Harris begins work as an apprentice to architects R.M. Schindler and Richard Neutra, who were major proponents in America of Europe's Modern Movement.

1933—Leaves Neutra and Schindler to work as assistant instructor without pay at the Los Angeles College and Architecture and Engineering and to work on his own projects.

1936—Accepts first design commission, a house for Pauline Lowe in Altadena, California. Continues to work on commissions for other clients.

1936—Fellowship Park House, his own residence, wins House Beautiful Small House Competition and first prize in the Pittsburgh Glass Institute competition, his first national awards.

1937—Marries Jean Murray Bangs, who becomes an authoritative writer on such subjects as cuisine and architecture, and who obtains a decorator's license in order to help her husband with his professional projects.

1938—Fellowship Park House wins Honor Award from the Southern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

1943—Moves to New York City to lecture at Columbia University, undertake private commissions.

1944—Returns to California, continues to design.

1952—Moves practice to Austin, Texas, where he assumes the duties of director of the University of Texas School of Architecture.

1955—Resigns from UT-Austin to practice in Ft. Worth ('56-'58) and Dallas ('58-'62), doing residential design as well as commercial projects for Trammell Crow.

1962—Accepts teaching job at North Carolina State University in Raleigh. Continues to design.

1985—Exhibit of Harris's drawings opens at the University of Texas at Austin; exhibit to travel throughout the country in the future. □

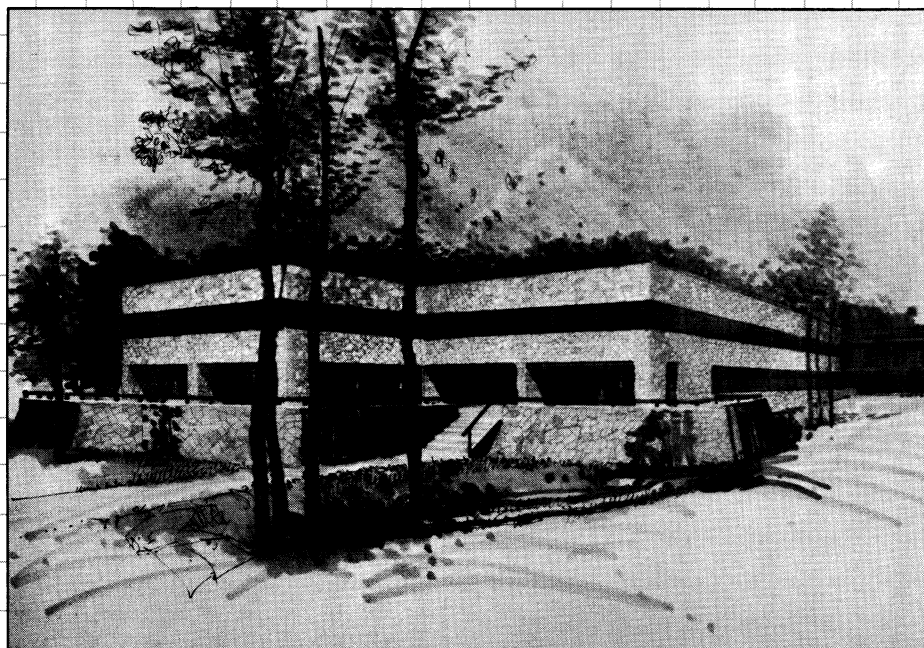


# Off The Drawing Board

## GROUND-BREAKING HELD IN GREENSBORO

Ground-breaking ceremonies were held in late spring in Greensboro for an expansion at the Center for Creative Leadership, a non-profit research and educational institution.

Construction is now under way on a 15,000-square-foot addition to the Center's existing facilities; the new wing will contain office space, work areas, a simulation lab and control room, seminar rooms, a fitness center and kitchen and dining facilities. Occupancy is projected for Nov. 1.



*Artist's rendering of the new Center for Creative Leadership.*

Design of the new wing is by Little & Associates Inc. of Charlotte; construction is being handled by Rentenback Constructors of Greensboro and Knox-

ville, Tenn. Project development and construction management has been handled by Corbett Associates of Greensboro.

## ENERGY GRANTS OFFERED TO NON-PROFIT GROUPS

Grants of up to \$100,000 for solar space heating systems and up to \$5,000 for energy conservation measures are now available to North Carolina non-profit organizations through the federal Solar Energy and Energy Conservation Bank.

The program is being administered on a state level by the Energy Division of the N.C. Department of Commerce and is being offered to non-profit organizations through the Energy Conservation Fund (ECF), a project of the non-profit North Carolina Alternative Energy Corp.

Two other projects offered by the Energy Conservation Fund for non-profit organizations are the Energy Services Program, in which medium to large agencies are able to put an energy management system in place for their facilities, and the Low-Cost Weatherization Program, which helps smaller organizations implement energy conservation measures using their agency's volunteer labor.

For information on how to apply for the energy grants or to learn more about the ECF's other programs, contact John Manuel at the Energy Conser-

vation Fund, North Carolina Alternative Energy Corp., P.O. Box 12699, Research Triangle Park, N.C. 27709, telephone (919) 549-9046.

## CHAIR MANUFACTURING FIRM GOING UP IN HIGH POINT

Brayton International Inc. of High Point, which produces contemporary European-design furniture and textiles and has showrooms in 22 cities across the country as well as in High Point, is constructing a contemporary chair manufacturing facility in High Point.

The facility was designed by Martin Senell, AIA, of Jamestown and should be completed by September. The structure, of natural gray brick and mirrored reflective glass, is a twin facility to the company's headquarters located nearby. Total cost for the project, including significant site preparation and additional parking for 200 cars, will be about \$1.8 million.

## CHARLOTTE FIRM HELPING WITH CADD SYSTEM

The Charlotte-based architectural firm of Dalton Morgan Shook & Partners Inc. has been selected by SKOK

Systems Inc. of Boston to assist in the development of architectural software for its Computer Aided Design Drafting (CADD) system.

Dalton Morgan Shook & Partners will not only help design software to be marketed internationally but it will also act as a laboratory for evaluating new architectural software developments, according to firm vice president Terry Shook. "We will be working on SKOK's latest generation of CADD—a system with a broader range of features, new Hewlett-Packard hardware and an option allowing users to design their own software," he says.

## N.C. FIRM WINS PRESIDENTIAL AWARD

The firm of Middleton, McMillan Architects Inc., which has offices in Charlotte and Charleston, S.C., recently received one of 13 Presidential Awards for Design Excellence.

The awards were presented at a ceremony held in Washington, D.C. The jury for the awards program was chaired by internationally acclaimed architect I.M. Pei.

Middleton, McMillan's winning entry involved the planning, design and construction of 113 public housing units on



14 sites in six different Charleston neighborhoods. The traditional "side house" design used centuries ago in Charleston was once again utilized, as it was easily adaptable to lot configurations, was expandable in floor-plan layouts and was energy efficient.

The awards were made as part of the first government-wide Federal Design Program, which will provide national recognition for professionals in the fields of architecture, engineering design, landscaping and other related disciplines.

## RESEARCH TRIANGLE PROJECT PLANS ANNOUNCED

Plans have been announced for a new major office park, called Central Park, to be built adjacent to the Research Triangle Park.

The developer for the project is Teer Enterprises Ltd. of Research Triangle Park; architects for the projects are members of the firm of O'Brien/Atkins Associates, which will move its offices from Chapel Hill to Central Park when the project is completed, in early spring 1986.

Central Park is being developed on approximately 51 acres located at the intersection of I-40 and South Miami Boulevard in Research Triangle Park; access to the park will be enhanced by the construction of an interchange at that intersection (contract to be let by the N.C. Department of Transportation). Plans call for construction of four office buildings ranging from 90,000 to 240,000 square feet, plus space for parking.

Work was expected to begin in May on the property.

## ARCHITECTS WIN NATIONAL AWARD

The R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. corporate headquarters, designed by architects Hammill-Walter Associates of Winston-Salem and Croxton Collaborative of New York City, was the only corporate headquarters singled out for recognition in 1984 by the American Institute of Architects (AIA).

The renovation and restoration of the Reynolds Building lobby in Winston-Salem won the 1984 AIA Honor Award for Excellence in Design.

According to Lloyd G. Walter Jr., AIA, president of Hammill-Walter Associates, "Reynolds asked us to create a series of new and restored spaces to enhance the original beauty of the 1929 Reynolds Building, a showplace of Art Deco style and the prototype of the Empire State Building."

There were 13 national winners of the 1984 AIA awards, among them the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.; the High Museum in Atlanta, Ga.; and Fragrant Hill Hotel in Peking, China.

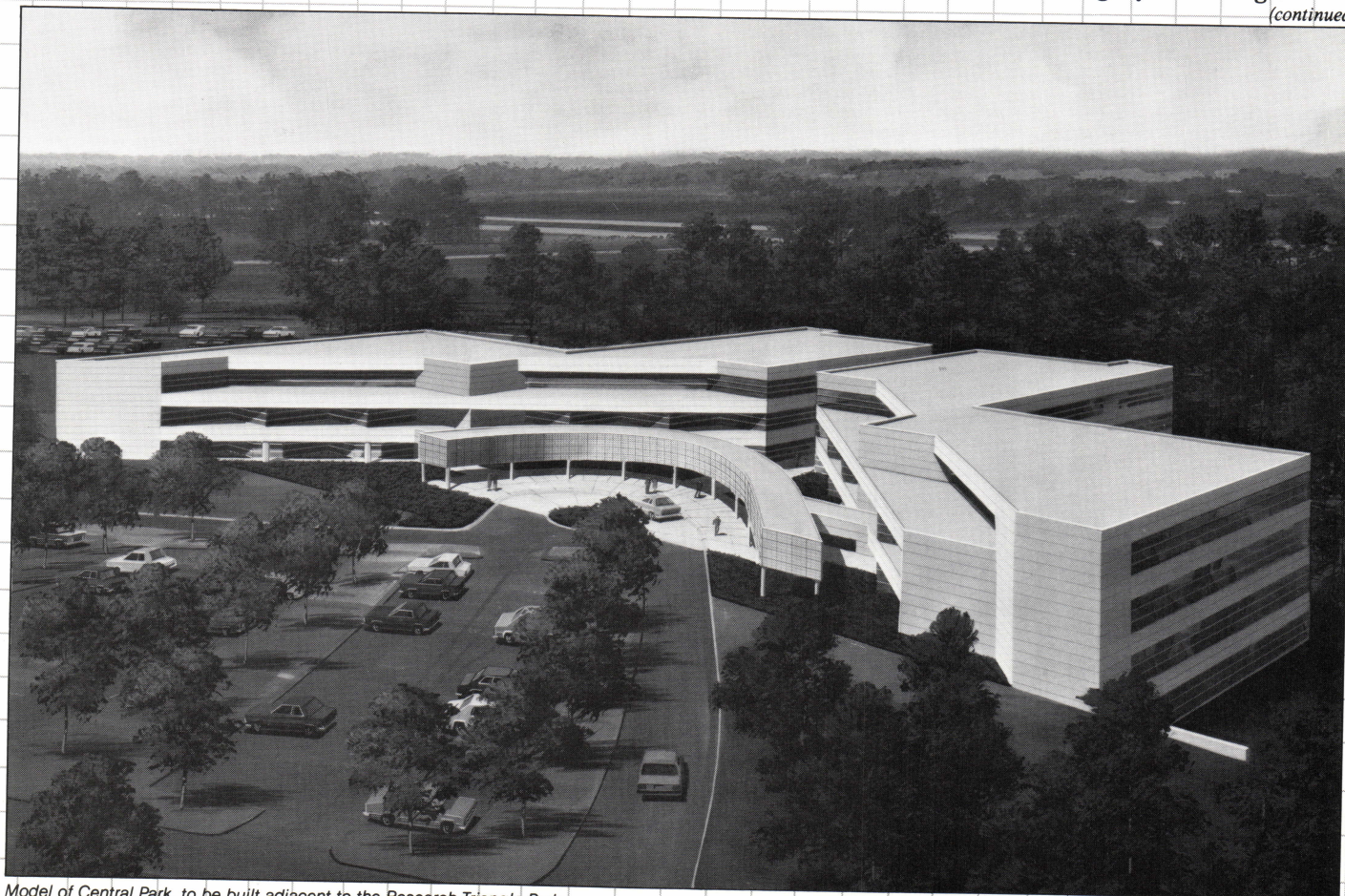
## PHASE FOUR OF FRANKLIN SQUARE BEGINS

Construction has begun on Phase Four, the final phase of the \$5 million office condominium project in Chapel Hill known as Franklin Square.

The complex, which was designed by City Planning and Architectural Associates of Chapel Hill, will contain 70,000 square feet of office space when the final phase is completed, in late fall 1985.

Phase Four will encompass 23,000 square feet divided among three Colonial Williamsburg-styled buildings.

*(continued)*



Model of Central Park, to be built adjacent to the Research Triangle Park.



Development has been handled by Consolidated Ventures Corp., with construction by CVC Construction Services Inc., one of its subsidiaries.

## Appendix to Building Code Accepted

The Building Code Council of the State of North Carolina voted recently to accept appendix "Q" as an addition to the Building Code.

Appendix "Q" may be used by the local authority having jurisdiction in lieu of requiring a building to conform to the Code requirements for new buildings and is based on provisions which were approved and added to the BOCA Basic/National Building Code in October 1984.

The request to accept appendix "Q"

was made by Norma DeCamp Burns, AIA, of Raleigh representing the AIA Historic Resources Committee. According to Burns, the committee wanted to permit alternative methods of Code compliance for renovating existing and historic buildings that could be "more sympathetic to the special character of those buildings" than Code requirements based on new construction.

## CONSTRUCTION COURSES To Be Held in State

The American Estimating Institute announces a new series of courses for construction industry professionals to be held in North Carolina during June. Subjects to be covered include Estimating

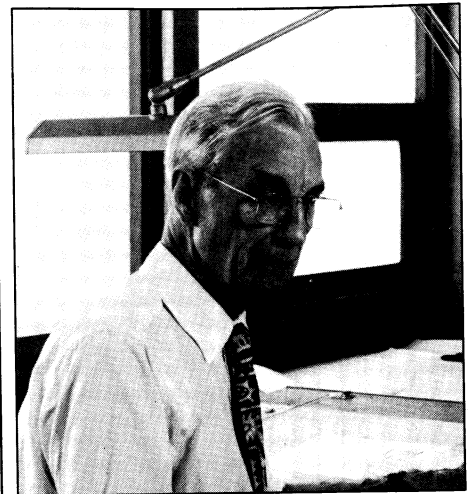
and Bidding Techniques That Work; Construction Cost Estimating for the New Estimator; and Construction Field Supervision. Courses will be held either at the Holiday Inn-Woodlawn in Charlotte or the Ramada Inn-Crabtree NW in Raleigh; classes may be either one day, two days or a week in length.

The Institute, a national non-profit organization, schedules approximately 300 seminars and courses per year in major construction market areas throughout the United States. Programs meet requirements for nationally accepted Continuing Education Units, or students may choose to earn an Associate Degree in Construction offered by the Institute.

Advance registration for courses is required. For more information on dates and times for the North Carolina courses, call the Institute at (800) 237-2315 or write to 1950 Landings Blvd., Sarasota, Fla. 33581.

## NAMES AND CHANGES In N.C. ARCHITECTURE

Architect **Harwell Hamilton Harris**, who is profiled in this issue of *N.C. Architect*, received an honorary doctoral degree from North Carolina State Uni-



Harwell Hamilton Harris

versity in May at commencement exercises.

Harris is professor emeritus of architecture at NCSU. Before coming to NCSU in 1962 as professor, Harris was the first dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Texas at Austin, where an exhibition of his architectural plans and drawings was held this spring.

During his career he designed pri-

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marily private homes. In North Carolina he has designed homes and churches in Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill and Hendersonville. His work has been exhibited at a number of museums, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York City, the San Francisco Museum of Art and the National Gallery in Washington, D.C.

Harris is a resident of Raleigh.

**Judith K. Perry** has been appointed director of development and research for Little & Associates Inc., architects, engineers and planners based in Charlotte.

Perry will be responsible for the planning and implementation of marketing services for the firm's Southeast operations.

A graduate of Shippensburg State College in Pennsylvania, she has participated in the Greater Charlotte Chamber of Commerce Leadership School. She has also served as the director of financial development for the Charlotte Opera Association and the North Carolina Opera as well as account representative for Green, Smith & Crockett mar-



Judith K. Perry

keting firm in Charlotte.

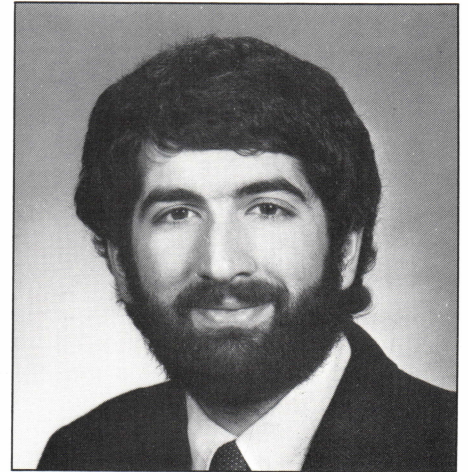
Little & Associates is an affiliate of the Little-McMahan Group.

Jenkins-Peer Architects in Charlotte has added two new employees: **Brad Gianulis**, director of the new department of Computer Aided Design and Drafting (CADD), and **Mary Kathryn Noble**, project designer in the interiors department.

Gianulis, who graduated from the University of Tennessee School of

Architecture in Knoxville, was formerly with the Chicago office of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill Architects.

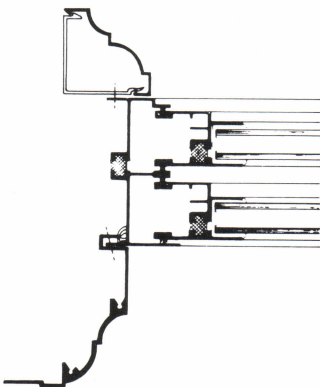
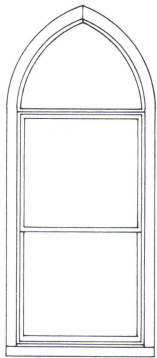
Noble was formerly with Ferebee, Walters and Associates in Charlotte as interior architect/designer. She is an architecture graduate of the University of Texas at Arlington.



Brad Gianulis

**Karen Huffstetler** has joined the Raleigh firm of Holloway-Reeves Architects PA as director of marketing. She

(continued)



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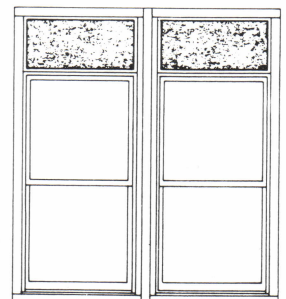
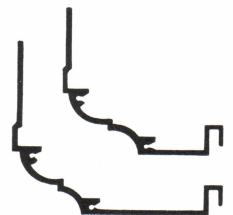
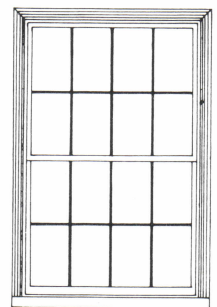
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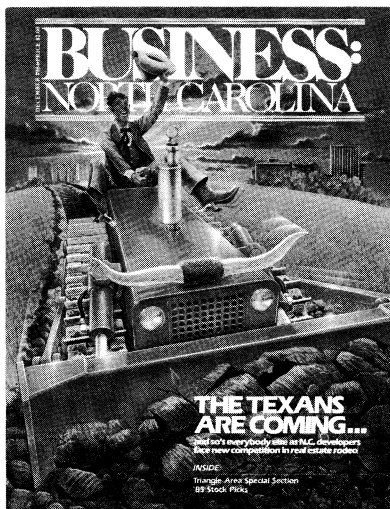
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**Brian J. McMerty** has joined the architectural/engineering firm of CHR Associates PA, based in Chapel Hill, as controller. He is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and is a licensed CPA. He was formerly with Arthur Andersen & Co. in Dallas, Texas.

**A.G. Odell Jr.**, chairman emeritus of the architectural/engineering firm of Odell Associates in Charlotte, has received a Special Citation Award from the American Institute of Steel Construction Inc. (AISC), the national trade association representing the fabricated structural steel industry.

The Special Citation program recognizes those people in various professions who have made outstanding contributions to the advancement of steel-framed construction.

In selecting Odell, John Berry, a member of AISC's board of directors and president of Southern Engineering Co., noted that Odell "has been responsible for the design of over 200 buildings . . . and has been described as 'the Carolinas' most prolific and influential modern-day architect.'"

Among Odell's buildings are the Charlotte Coliseum/Ovens Auditorium complex (which was, at the time of its construction, the "world's largest domed structure") and the NCNB corporate headquarters in Charlotte, tallest building in the Carolinas.

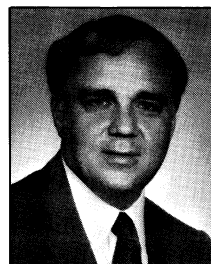
Odell Associates, which Odell founded in 1940, is one of the largest in the state and has additional offices in Richmond, Va.; Greenville, S.C.; and Tampa, Fla.

The board of directors of Ferebee, Walters & Associates, which has offices in Charlotte, Research Triangle Park and Hilton Head Island, S.C., has elected three new vice presidents: **William E. Foust II**, **Stephen A. McCall** and **Trudy A. Williams**.

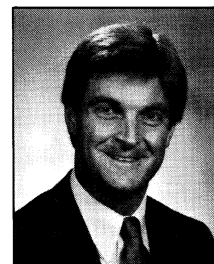
Foust joined Ferebee, Walters in 1972 and is currently a project manager. McCall has been with the firm since 1978 and is also a project manager. Williams joined the firm in 1979 and is director of marketing.

**Connie R. Guild** has joined the Chapel Hill-based architectural/engineering firm of CHR Associates PA as an interior designer.

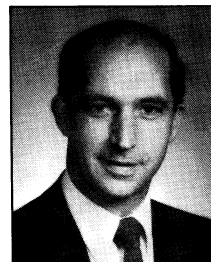
Guild has a degree in interior design from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and is an associate member of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID).



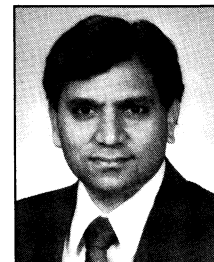
Reed



Kellner



Fake



Nerurkar

Six new associates have been added to the Charlotte-based firm of Odell Associates Inc. They are: **Marley P. Carroll**, licensed architect, Charlotte office; **W. McCabe Fake**, licensed architect, Charlotte; **Robert G. Kellner**, licensed architect, Charlotte; **Atul Nerurkar**, licensed mechanical engineer, Charlotte office; **Charles Harmon Reed**, licensed architect and principal of the Tampa office; and **John Stevenson**, licensed engineer in the Charlotte office.

CHR also announces that **Michael Hallasy**, AIA, has joined the firm as a project manager while **Edward G. Hamm**, ASLA, has joined the landscape architecture and planning group of the firm.

Hallasy, formerly with CRS/Sirrine in New York, will assist in the development and direction of the CADD facilities, while Hamm, formerly landscape planner for the Salvador Dali Museum in St. Petersburg, Fla., and planner of multifamily community projects in West Palm Beach, will assist the firm in landscape and site design.

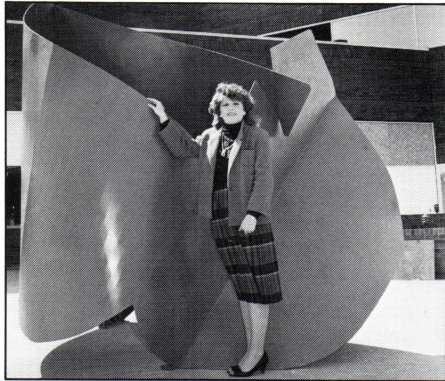
J.D. Sims & Co., a Dallas-based real estate investment firm with offices in Charlotte, has named **Tracy Livingston** the winner in the first sculpture competition at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Livingston, a junior from Hickory, will receive a full year's tuition at UNCC



from J.D. Sims for her sculpture design, "Paralox."

The sculpture, which is 10½ feet tall and weighs 2,170 pounds, is of painted steel fabricated by Davis Steel & Iron Co. of Matthews. It was installed in the entryway of Westchase, J.D. Sims's new



Tracy Livingston

office building located off I-77 in Charlotte.

More than 40 entries in the competition were judged on "appropriateness for the site as well as resilience of the materials to withstand the elements," according to officials at J.D. Sims. □

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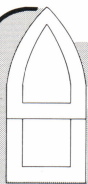


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# PURSER WOOD FLOORS

*Charlotte firm designs floors  
to "stop people in their tracks"*

*By Ellen Grissett  
Photography by Joann Sieburg-Baker*

“The funny thing about my company,” says David Purser, president of Charlotte-based Purser Wood Floors, “is that my brothers and I all used to work for our dad some during the summers and we all said, ‘No way am I going into this business!’” He laughs. “Now all three of us are in the floor business in some way, not working for my dad but involved in the same field.”

While Purser’s brothers have concentrated on the refinishing of wood floors, Purser has taken the business a step further and focuses on a floor-related service that is still considered pretty unusual: he custom designs, makes and installs exotic-wood floors.

“This is a fairly new field,” he admits. “To my knowledge, there’s only one other company in the country that does what we do, and it’s in Texas.”

Though what he does may not be understood by everyone he deals with, Purser is finding that his services are in great demand by those architects, con-

tractors and homeowners who want something quite unusual in the way of wood floors. As he says, “We meet the needs of those few who are so discriminating or exacting that they want what we do. I won’t go to the Outer Banks to install an oak floor, for example, because number one, there are already plenty of people around who can do that well, and number two, because that client couldn’t afford us.”

Purser is more interested in using exotic woods and in combining them in intricate, one-of-a-kind patterns than in simply laying a one-wood floor. “My goal is to make people literally stop in their tracks when they see our floors,” he explains. “I like to combine woods for contrast, to do unusual designs or borders. The floors have to be visibly different from what everyone else is doing.”

One example is a floor Purser recently finished at the Pineville office of Aeronca Inc. Wes Ballenger of that company came to Purser’s showroom, which is located in the Mecklenburg Design Center on Providence Road, and asked Purser if he could design a floor

that incorporated the company’s logo. Purser, of course, said yes. The floor he designed and installed is basically of Brazilian walnut with Aeronca’s logo inlaid in curly maple, providing a striking color and grain contrast.

Another floor designed and installed by Purser features a grid of quartered oak, ebony and padauk.

Purser says he doesn’t like to use stains, preferring to let the natural color of the wood show through. “There are enough different kinds of wood out there to give you almost a whole color spectrum to choose from without having to stain,” he says, though he will use stains if a client insists. Some of the woods he likes for their unusual colors are Brazilian cherry and purple heart, a wood that is a lavender shade.

Purser buys his wood from brokers around the country. Some of his wood choices are easier to find than others, he says, pointing to the rare pink ivory as an example. “Pink ivory is the dens-

*(continued)*

*David Purser (above, in his studio) designed a breathtaking floor for his Charlotte showroom using Brazilian walnut and cherry, purple heart and brass.*











*Not content to lay only quartered red oak in the foyer of this private Charlotte residence, Purser also used padauk and Brazilian cherry to form striking patterns in the floor.*

est wood there is, and the rarest. There are only 12 trees left in the world, and only two people in the U.S. have them. They sell it to people like me by the pound, so you can tell it's a rare item."

One of the U.S. owners of a pink ivory tree recently received a call from the Rolls-Royce company in England. It turned out that they wanted to buy some small blocks of wood from him. Being fond of his tree, he naturally

inquired as to how small blocks could be used in the dashboard of a Rolls Royce and was told, "Oh, they're not for a car, they're for Prince William," referring to a gift of baby blocks the company planned to make to Prince Charles and Princess Diana, parents of the future heir to the British throne.

While Purser has not yet been commissioned to make baby blocks for anyone's child, he has worked on jobs as

small as a residential foyer and as large as a corporate office. And although he continues to receive requests for his services from across the Southeast, and even beyond, Purser insists that his is a small company and will stay that way. "I'm willing to go elsewhere on jobs, but my goal is not to saturate the Southeast with brokers and installers."

He says he has been surprised by the amount of work he has done in Char-



lotte. "I grew up here, and my dad has been in the floor business here for 40 years, so I wanted to operate out of Charlotte. But quite frankly I didn't think the work would be here. I've been surprised and pleased to be so busy."

One reason, he believes, is that the city's architects are beginning to be aware that his company is a possible resource for them in residential design. "They design a house with one of my floors in mind, and then I am usually contacted by the contractor or the homeowner to do the work, which is what the architect had in mind in the first place."

Purser's work is not restricted to Charlotte, however; he has done floors in the resort areas of the state, such as Pinehurst, Linville and coastal developments, as well as work in other states around North Carolina. He has a staff of two installers who work for him, but "I do most of the work myself."

Purser's wife, Deborah, is often a client's first contact with the business. She works for her husband in his Charlotte showroom, which Purser says he conceived four years ago and actually built two years ago. He's particularly pleased with his showroom because he believes it embodies his goal to "tell people 'you can expect something different here.'"

The showroom, which was designed by architect Sammy Greeson, AIA, of Charlotte, is quiet and elegant. Columns at the entrance give the showroom a neo-classical air; lighting is subdued and artistic and the walls and ceiling are painted in various muted pastels. Purser designed a special cabinet that holds pullout drawers of wood samples. "I didn't want anything vertical, because gravity finally takes its toll on wood and the wood samples start to crack and break, which isn't good for a client who's already not sure about what he wants or how the floor is going to hold up. These drawers allow the client to see the samples in a horizontal position—

as the floors will eventually look—and preserves the samples at the same time."

Special lighting in the niche above the drawers also illuminates the samples, giving the viewer a clear idea of the color and grain of a particular kind of wood.

Purser admits that one of his former occupations may be responsible for his love of the dramatic, which is exemplified by his showroom. He grew up in

Charlotte, attended East Carolina University and spent time fighting in Vietnam. One of his jobs when he returned to the States was with a Charlotte advertising agency as art director. "I used to oversee photographers and artists, so I guess I am very aware of the visual impact my floors and my showroom make," he explains.

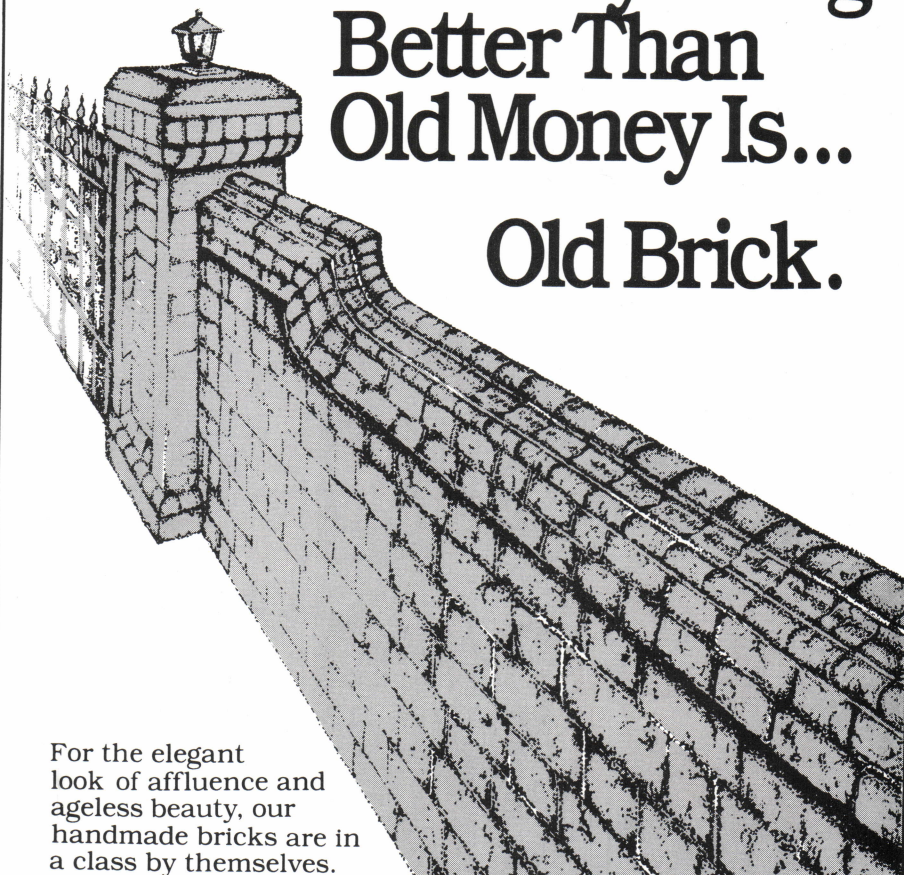
The showroom floor is calculated to take a potential client's breath away. It is made largely of Brazilian cherry, with inlaid borders of purple heart, Brazilian walnut and brass, and cost somewhere

in the neighborhood of \$25-\$30 a square foot to install.

Purser says most of his floors average about \$25-\$30 a square foot, depending on the intricacy of the design and the availability of the wood, but "I really hate to say. I've had some start at \$15 a square foot, and some that were much more complex and therefore more expensive." To save money for clients, he may lay the bulk of the floor in readily available wood such as oak or cherry and then use less-easily-obtained exotic woods as inlaid borders or other

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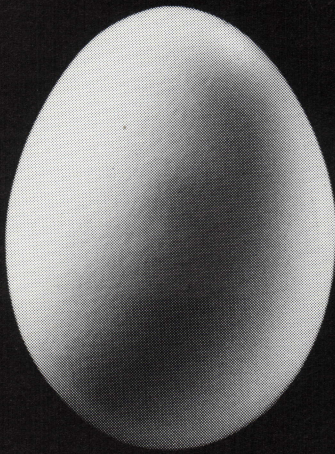
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designs.

Most of the wood Purser uses in his floor designs comes from South America, with Africa and then India running second and third. "Common woods are still in good supply," he says, "although we can't get the best mahogany, which is in Cuba."

While Purser is ready and willing to work with architects, interior designers, contractors and/or homeowners to achieve a certain kind of floor, he cautions that it does take a little time to come up with a suitable design for a client. "I've walked in a house for the first time and had the homeowner and the interior designer just sure that I would immediately know what they needed," he recalls. "I always say, 'Just give me a little time!' I've got to figure out what the client wants, what budget he has, how long before the floor needs to be done, all those things before I make a design suggestion."

He laughs. "People always seem surprised when I tell them I'm involved in every aspect of the job. They seem to think I should be sitting in an office overseeing a bunch of installers around



Custom-designed drawers hold wood samples.

the country. Well, as long as I'm owner of this company, there will be no dealers and distributors. I think a small foyer deserves as much respect as a corporate headquarters, and for that reason we're only going to grow as we can justify it." He adds, "I guess you could say we'll let demand dictate supply. I intend to add some people, but no way am I going to overextend myself and then go beating the bushes for some business." □

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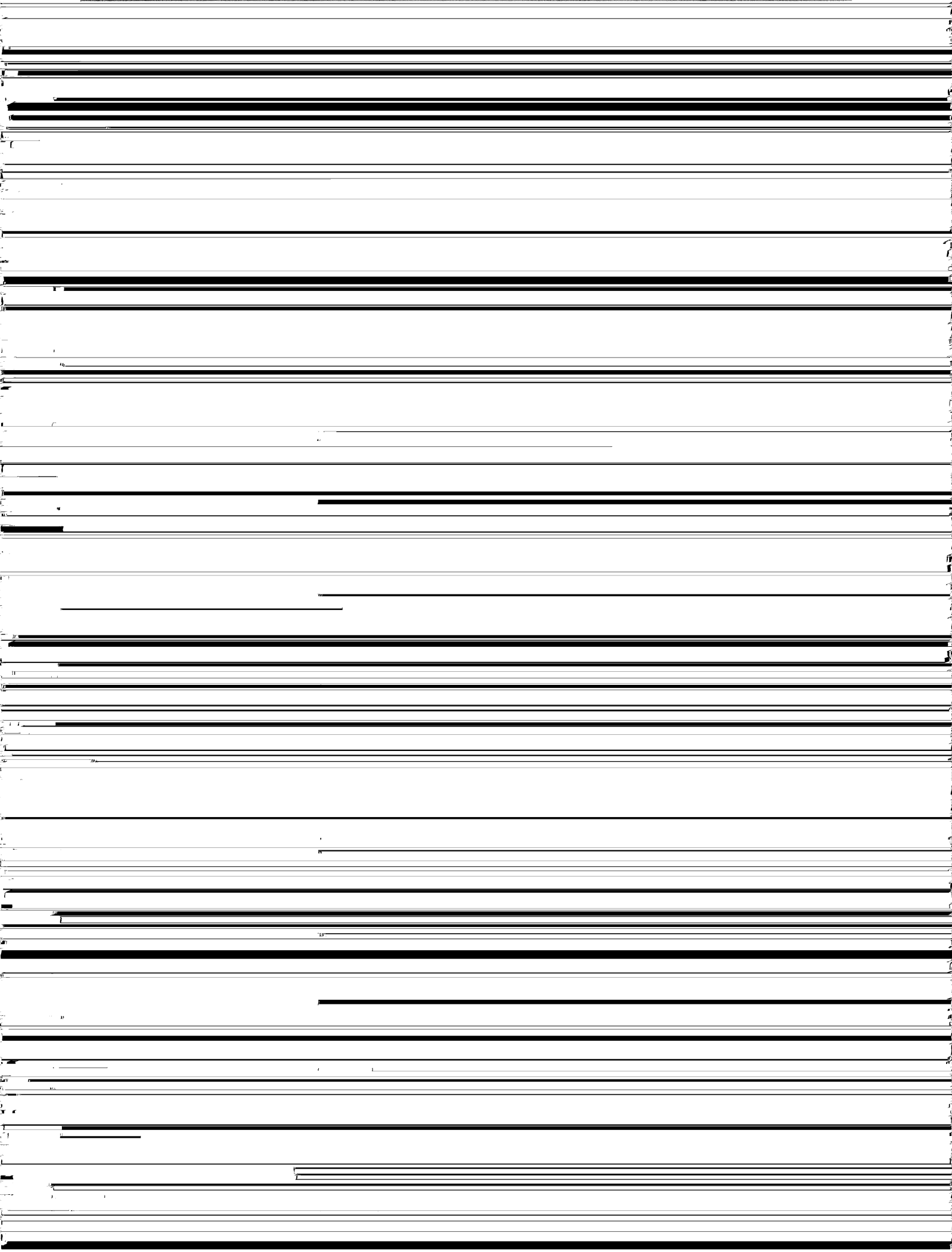
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