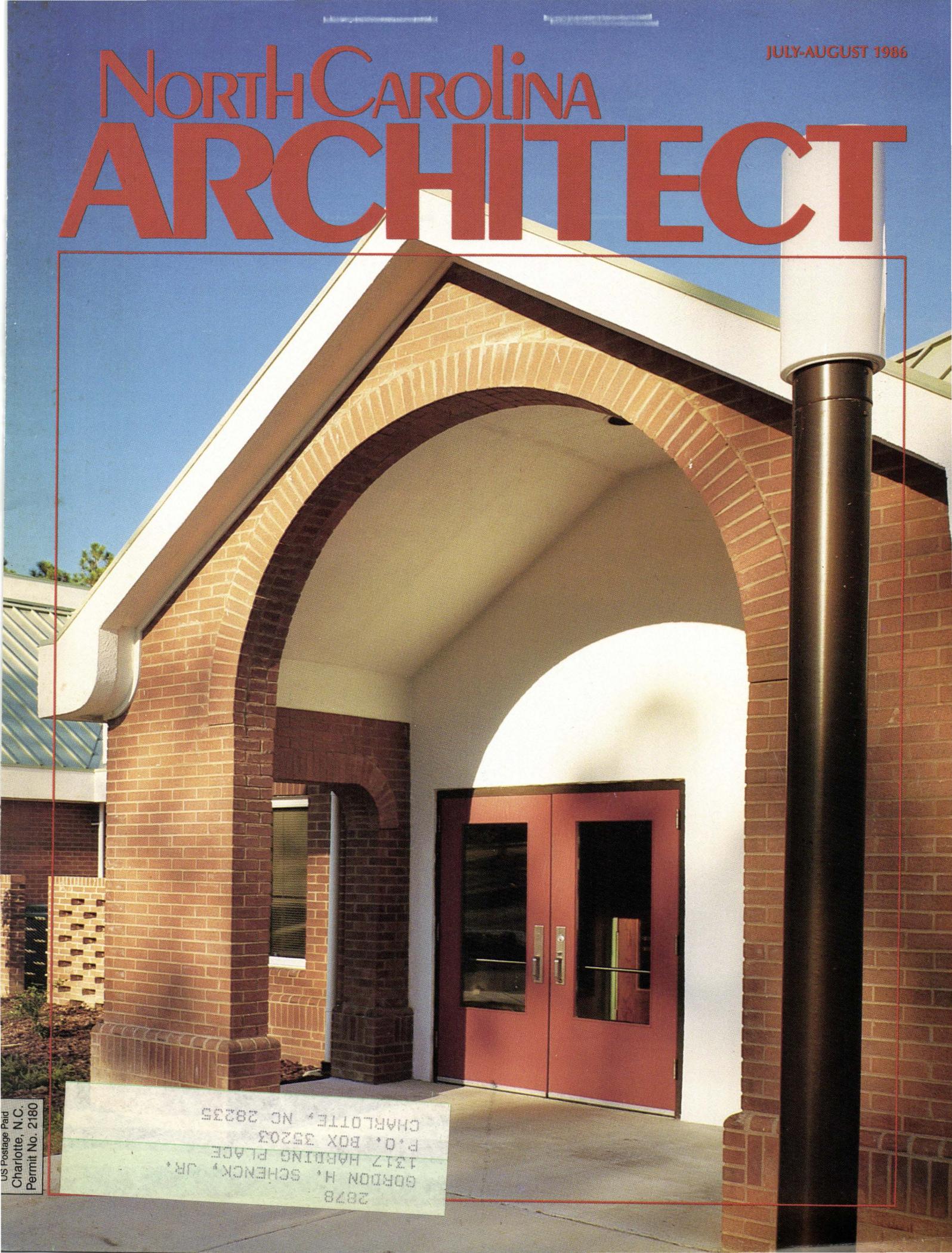


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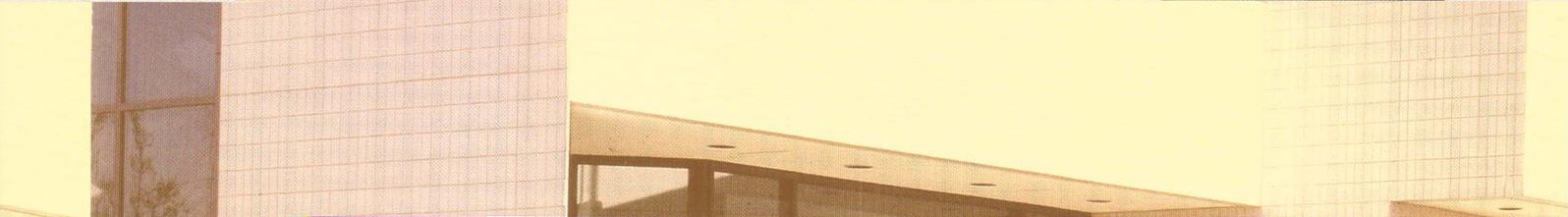
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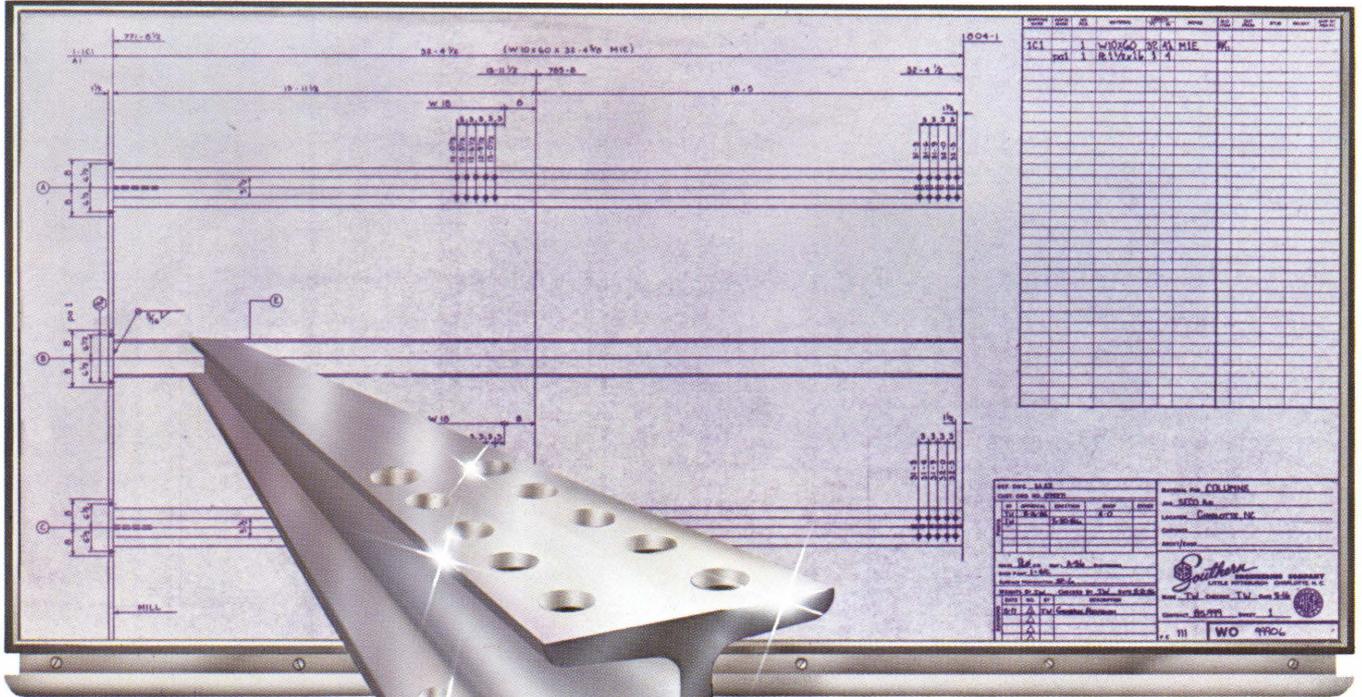
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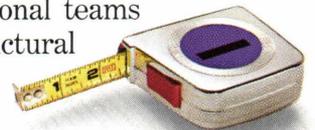
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COVER: The main entry from the spot where parents drop off their children at Fort Bragg's Rodriguez Child Development Center reflects the efforts by Charlotte's Ferebee Walters & Associates to retain a warm, residential atmosphere in a building designed to accommodate up to 170 children. Photography by Rick Alexander & Associates, Charlotte

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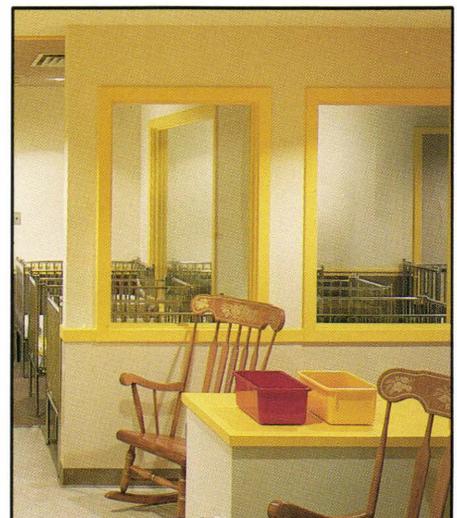
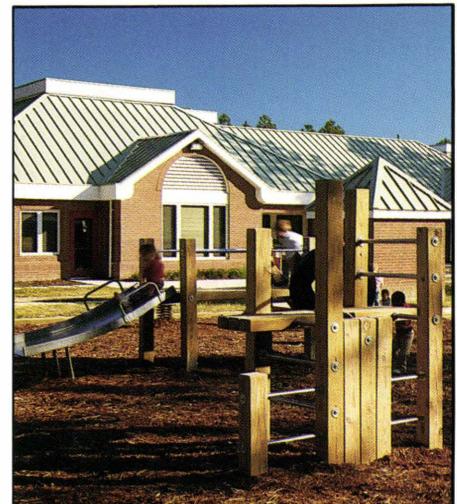
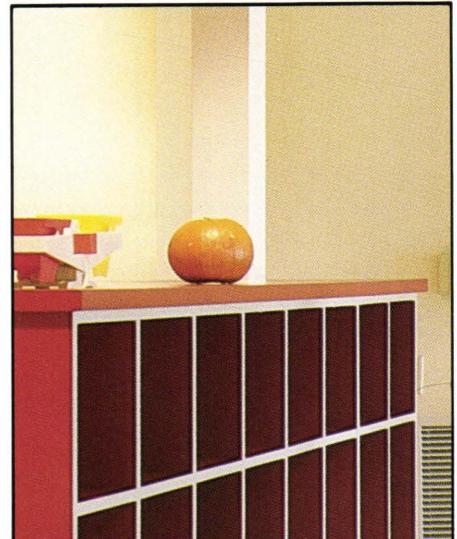
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A Scaled-Down Prize Winner

Charlotte's Ferebee Walters & Associates takes honors for a Fort Bragg child-care center.

*By Steve West
Photography by Rick Alexander*

The building itself is scaled to the needs of a small child, with miniature swinging doors and 18-inch-high counters to hold a toddler's fingerprints.

But the innovations and scaled-down thinking that went into the design of the Rodriguez Child Development Center in Fort Bragg won Ferebee Walters & Associates of Charlotte a big prize — the sole honor award in the architectural category of the 1985 Army Chief of Engineers' Design and Environmental Awards Program.

Designing the \$1.3 million facility to meet the needs of its infant-to-12-year-old clientele presented difficulties on a number of levels, says project architect J. David Parke. Interior fixtures, for instance, had to be designed on a reduced scale to accommodate smaller hands and shorter bodies. But the real challenge, he says, came with trying to retain a warm, residential atmosphere at a facility designed for 170 children.

"Our idea was to develop a child-scale throughout the center to make the chil-

Bright colors accent the trim and fixtures in each of the center's six care modules and allow children of different age groups to identify their areas.

dren as comfortable as possible, give them a sense of identity with where they were and isolate them from the sometimes harsh Army base environment that was all around them," Parke says.

That attention to the residential atmosphere of the facility impressed the judges in the Army Chief of Engineers' competition, which drew 47 entries from Corps of Engineers' projects around the world. In its comments, the panel, which included officers of the American Institute of Architects, praised the center for its "wonderful residential scale and character for expression of a child-care center The architectural expression reduces the scale to an intimate 'homelike' space."

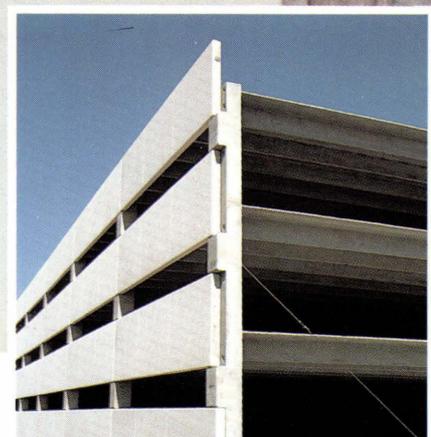
The award-winning center, near an elementary school on Fort Bragg's Knox Street, was completed in the summer of 1985, and a sister facility on the other side of the sprawling Army base was finished a few months later. (The firm entered the Knox Street facility in the award competition because it was smaller and had been completed before the Sicily Drive center, which can accommodate as many as 285 children.)

When the Savannah, Ga., District of the Army Corps of Engineers commissioned Ferebee Walters to design the two facilities in late 1982, the firm had



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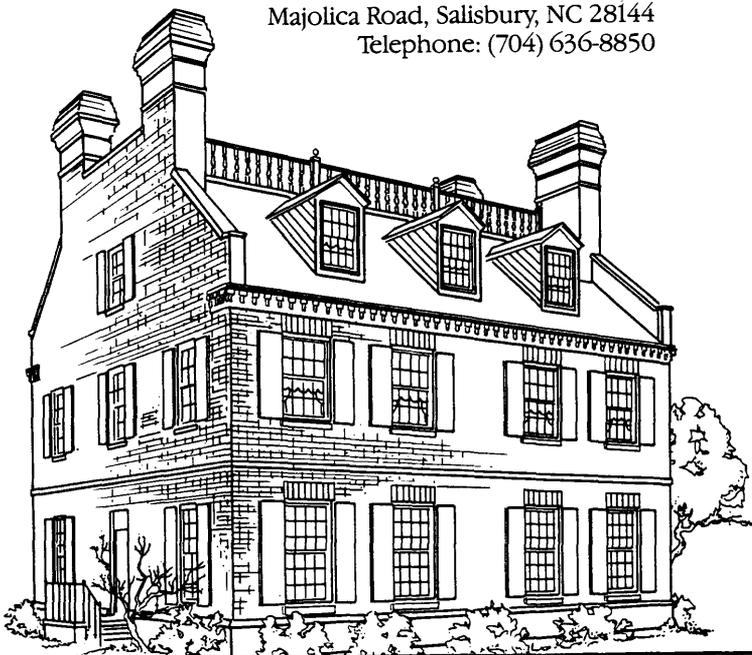
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never done a child-care center on quite the same scale.

"We had done child-care facilities and a lot of educational facilities, including kindergarten-type spaces and lower elementary work," says S. Harold James, project manager for the Fort Bragg centers and a vice president at Ferebee Walters. "We had that expertise in design, but we had never done a child-care center on this scale."

The Fort Bragg centers were the first in a program to upgrade the quality of child-care facilities on military bases nationwide. The Department of Defense had completed guidelines for the program in the early 1980s, specifying types of facilities for different age groups and recommending that fixtures be scaled to children's proportions.

"They did give anthropometric information about what height counters to use for what age group . . . and the square footage and general shape of areas," Parke says. "Most everything in the building is sized or shaped in some way to the anthropometrics of a child — counters are smaller, toilets are smaller, ceilings are lower and residential in scale."

"One thing that really startles you is when you walk in and see an 18-inch-high counter," adds James. "They're designed so a child that height can work and play on them, but (an adult) can walk in and step over the top of it."

The Department of Defense guidelines also contained information about the general layout of the building, mandating that each child-care center be divided into "care modules" — areas with play, rest and educational facilities where children of the same age groups can be cared for together. Each center developed under the program follows the same modular pattern, with modules repeated to accommodate the number of children.

The Knox Street center contains six modules, and the children are grouped according to their age and the length of time they spend at the facility.

"During the day they have full-time children who arrive at 8 in the morning and leave at 5, and they have others who are dropped by after school is out," James explains. "It's also geared for a single parent who might be called out on a practice mission or something and need to bring the child in and

