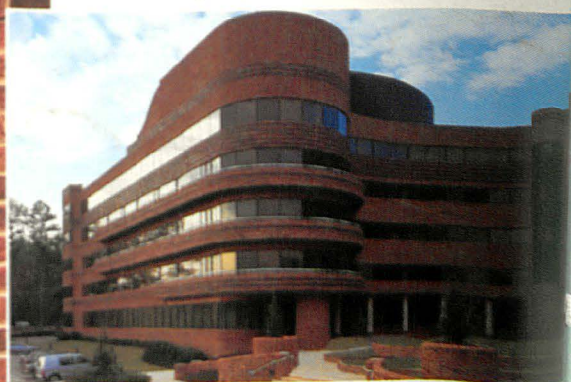




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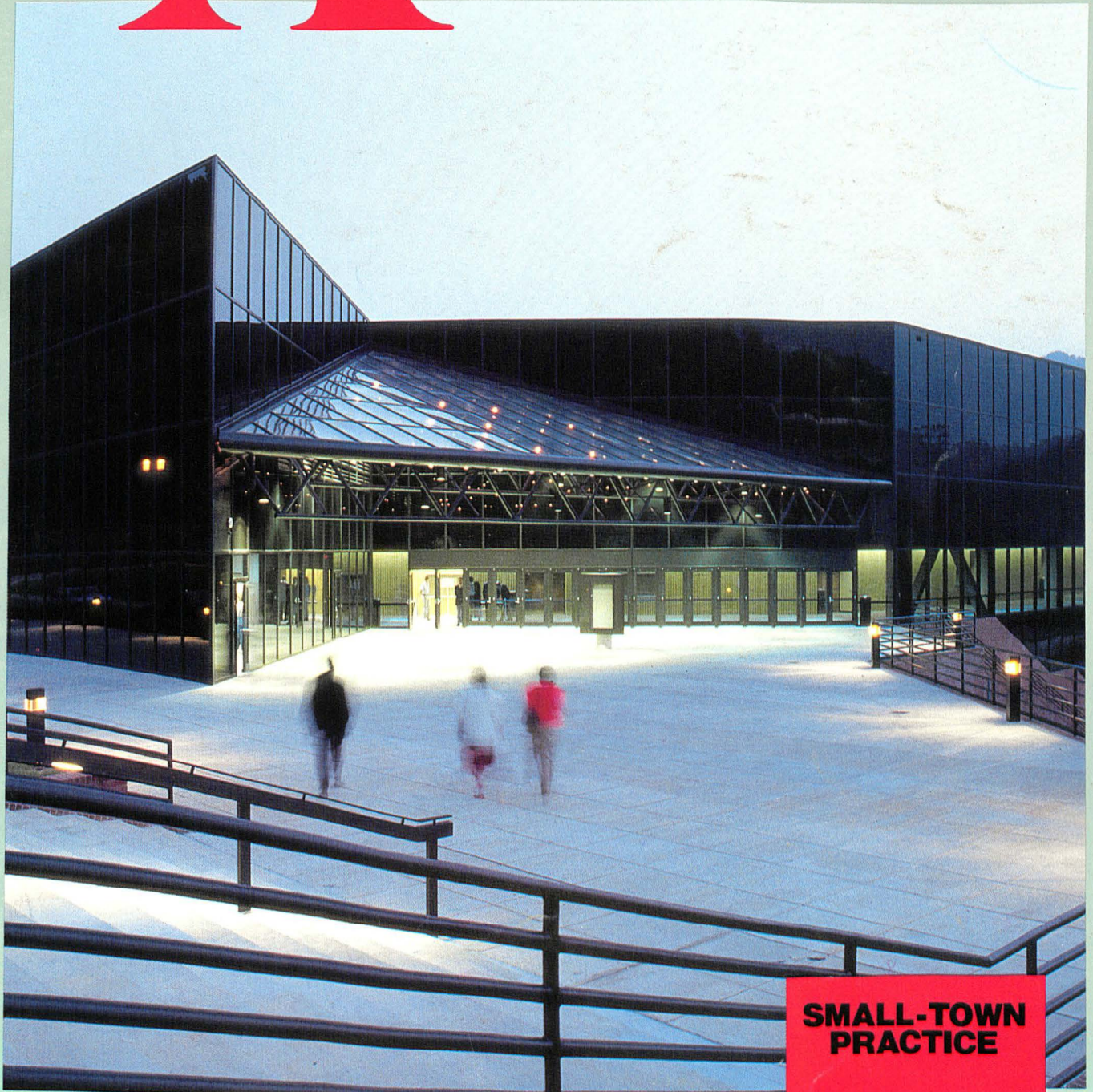
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## COVER STORY:

The principals of Ramsay Associates in Salisbury; Foy & Lee Associates in Waynesville; and Noel N. Coltrane Jr. Architect PA in Elizabeth City discuss the pros and cons of their small-town practices and display some of their most recent work.

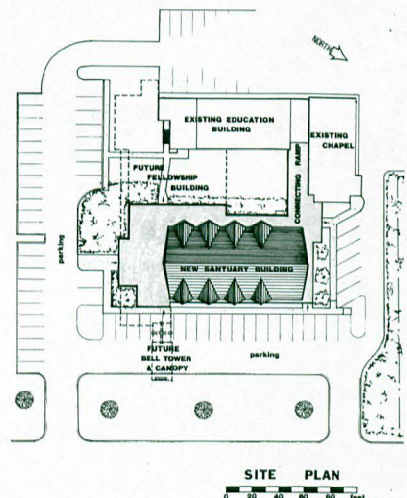
## FORUM:

Six architects from across the state speak out on the headaches—and blessings—of practicing in a small town.



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Who's designing what, where in North Carolina, plus names and changes among the state's design firms.



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# FORUM



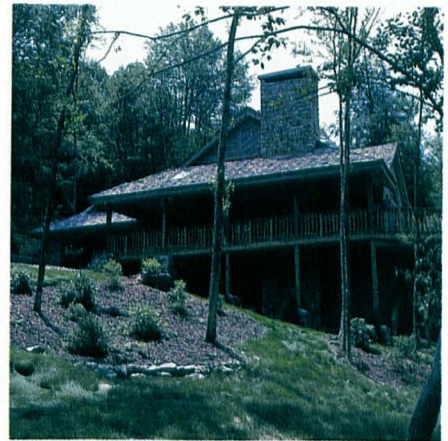
Marshall E. Caudle, Monroe



Darrell Carpenter, Beam & Yeargin, Gastonia



Raymond Howell, Boone



David Moses, Linville



Al Platt Jr., Brevard



Dennis E. Yates, Concord

*"Practicing architecture in a small town is never dull. One month you're feasting on pheasant; the next month you're eating crow."*

John E. Ramsay, FAIA, who has had a successful practice in Salisbury since 1946.

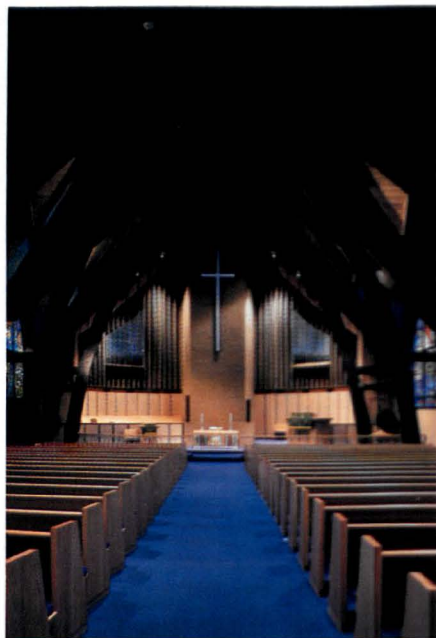
**EDITOR'S NOTE:** On Saturday morning, August 22, six architects agreed to meet in Charlotte for a round-table discussion on what practicing architecture in a small town is really like. The six were: Raymond Howell, who has practiced in Boone since 1976; Dennis Yates, in Concord since 1984; Al Platt, who has practiced in Brevard for 12 years, with a three-year hiatus; Marshall Caudle, who has been in Monroe since 1974; Darrell Carpenter, who has been with the Gastonia-based firm of Beam & Yeargin a year; and David Moses, who has practiced in Linville for six years.

The architects' practices are varied. Platt employs three people with architecture degrees and one full-time and two part-time support people; his practice is 80 percent residential, including multifamily. Caudle employs three draftsmen and a secretary, and says his practice is mostly industrial and commercial. Moses has one architect, three draftsmen and two support

people working for him in his practice, which is largely residential/resort. Howell employs three architects, four draftsmen, a computer director and two administrative people; his practice is 10 to 15 percent residential and the rest commercial and institutional. Yates has two registered architects, three with degrees, three draftspeople, two CAD operators and three clerical workers; his practice is 65 percent commercial and government, maybe 25 percent church work. Carpenter's firm has three principals, two draftspeople and a field inspector, and concentrates on schools and churches with very little, if any, residential work.

The following discussion has been edited for the sake of brevity. The participants discussed many other topics, such as liability insurance and the lack of regular contact with other architects in their area of the state. Comments on these subjects will be aired in a future issue of NORTH CAROLINA ARCHITECTURE.

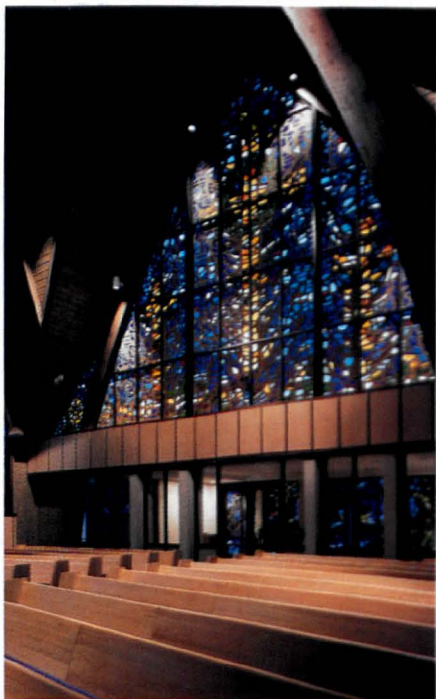




### Why did you all choose a small town?

**Caudle:** For one thing, I got tired of traffic. When I first got out of school, I worked in Washington, D.C. It took me an hour and-a-half, to two hours to get to work. I didn't like it, so I went back to school. Then I went to Spartanburg, S.C., which is a small town, and worked for a large firm there. Then I had a chance to go to a small town and found out there's just a much nicer pace of life.

**Moses:** I worked in Charlotte for four years. I went to Linville for many of the same reasons that you went to Monroe. I knew it was time for me to break out



on my own and do my own thing, and I couldn't do it (in Charlotte). There was just too much going on, and there were too many architects in a concentrated area, and I knew the people in Linville from doing a lot of work up there. In that particular area, they didn't have anybody to do a lot of the work, so it just seemed like a natural place and a very beautiful place to raise my kids. I just didn't want to have to live in a neighborhood with house, house, house in front of me and in back of me, and not the trees and openness that's up there.

**Yates:** I went to Concord primarily because I felt like there was a much better marketing opportunity for me over there than there would be in Charlotte. There were very few of what I thought of as total-service-type firms in the area or in the surrounding counties, except Mecklenburg, obviously. I felt like it was more a big fish in a small pond than a minnow in an ocean, type of concept.

**Platt:** I'm where I am for personal reasons, also. The particular small town I'm in, I've been in twice. The first time was by accident, in the sense that I looked for work during the recession right after the oil crunch in '74, and found some architects in this part of the state who were busy with retirement work and were pretty immune to the (recession). I left, went to a much bigger city, and then I chose to go back. It was much harder to go back the second time, to make the decision. I'm really glad I did it, and it was for personal reasons — the size of the community, family, all these satisfactions.

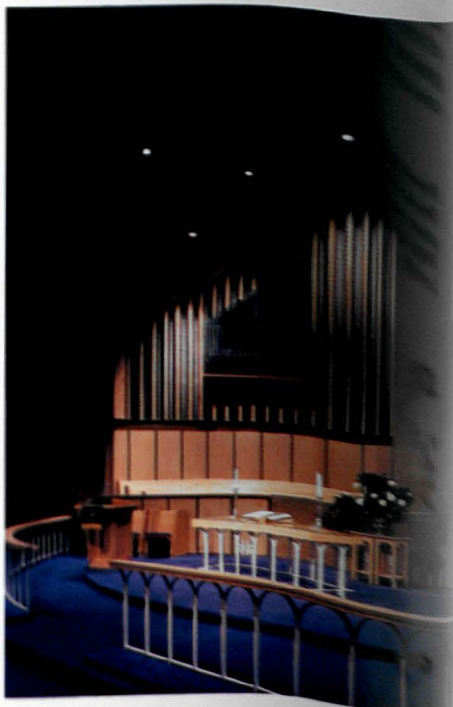
**Howell:** I was living in Richmond, Virginia, and my wife and I are both from small towns. She's from York, South Carolina, and I'm from Suffolk, Virginia. I was watching Richmond grow and I figured it was the time I wanted to move... We moved to Boone, North Carolina, didn't know a soul there, had no friends...(but) I saw it as a nice community. Again, it was a small town, up in the mountains and we sort of liked that idea. We moved from a 30' lot (in Richmond) to 40 acres... Much like David said, it's a great place to raise children.

It's interesting that so many of you are citing family reasons, personal reasons.

**Moses:** We all went, apparently, where we went for personal reasons, and for possibly a slower pace of life, and to be able to choose what we wanted to do

when we wanted to do it. But for me, right now, I have found that I have been busier and not as able to do what I wanted to do. Maybe it's by my own choosing, I don't know, but it's just circumstance, and maybe that's what happens in a small town.

**Caudle:** There's a lot of truth in that. When you're on your own, you have to try to start running a business, and if you're good at what you do, it starts growing. Then you get where you try to manage what you're good at, and it's a whole different ballgame. You have to draw the lines, start trying to decide whether you want to grow, or whether you want to stay small.



**Howell:** I meant to caution all of you on that one thing: We're here in this room, we're being recorded. We could be published. We don't want to tell too many people how busy we may be, lest we attract more to our areas. (General laughter). We don't have very much work, it's getting bad. I think David is kidding when he said he was real busy.

**Moses:** I didn't say I was busy, I just said that you get to the point where you can't do what you want to do.

**Carpenter:** I went from a small town [Greenwood, S.C.] to a little larger one, Gastonia... I worked for a firm in Greenwood that was primarily engineering. They had some architects on the staff, but they had an office in Greenville and one in Greenville and I found myself during the last year on the road a lot to Greenville. Also, even though



Greenwood is probably 15,000 to 20,000 people—it's really small—there are six architectural firms. Originally, I'm from Lincolnton and I wanted to get back closer to home.

**When you're with a big firm, there are people who are delegated to cover administrative matters. Now you're all running your own shops. How prepared were you for that?**

**Caudle:** Well, I felt like I was pretty well prepared, but I got really tickled the other day. When you get a call from the government, wanting to speak to your legal department, it's real funny, you know. I said, "You are talking to him." I've gotten a call from someone who said, "Let me speak to your purchasing department." "Well, you're talking to him. This is it." And some of these corporations have a hard time grasping that they are talking to the one person who makes the decisions.

**How do you find new employees, and how do you sell them on the idea of going to Boone or Monroe rather than Charlotte or Raleigh or Greensboro?**

**Yates:** To me, I think that's probably one of the more difficult tasks that you really have in a practice like that. I'm sure anybody in this room would consider themselves as practicing as well as, maybe better than, they used to practice in a metropolitan area. I think I do, but getting people to understand that logic of being away from downtown Charlotte *per se* is somewhat difficult to do. Another thing that I was wanting to say is that I think most people, for the personal reasons of family, would also probably add that they enjoy an element of accountability, responsibility, and/or credibility that I guess you have in a (smaller) community. I know in the town that I work in, people know you by first name pretty well. They know that so-and-so did this building over here... It's kind

of fun. I don't think you get a lot of that in the Charlotte market or any very large market, so again, I think it's kind of a big-fish-in-a-small-pond concept, that people know who you are and what you do and I think your chances of getting better work than you would get in a larger town are much better.

**Caudle:** Most of my work is not in Monroe. I'm just now starting to get work in Monroe, because when I moved there I knew nobody. For ten years, I guess, I've been there and a lot of my work is out of town. Do you all do a lot of work out of town?

**Yates:** Sixty percent of my fee last year was in York County.

**Platt:** Your firm is not in York County?

**Yates:** That's right.

**Carpenter:** My situation is kind of

*Continued on page 6*

*Projects (left) by Beam & Yeargin Architects, Gastonia; project sketch (below) by David Patrick Moses/ Architects, Linville.*





unique in Gastonia. Mr. Beam started the firm about 40 years ago in Cherryville and practiced there for several years and moved to Gastonia. Mr. Yeargin has worked on and off for him for the last 20 years. They went into partnership in '84 and a lot of my business is repeat business. When I came to work they virtually had no marketing program because there was no need for it. So for this past year I've been trying to educate them that there's another world out there other than just around Gastonia.... But it's hard for them to accept because, you know, they are content in Gastonia.

#### **How much marketing do you all do?**

**Caudle:** My practice is somewhat different in that I have not gone after traditional markets, developer-type markets... Instead, what I am trying to sell is technical competence and deal with people who appreciate that. A lot of my work has come either from contractors or through contractors who realize that a good set of drawings will pay for an architect's fee, whereas developers are more interested in a slick presentation and slick marketing and don't realize what a good job will get them.

#### **Do any of you agree?**

**Carpenter:** There's a larger firm in a large city, who worked on a particular project, and they changed project architects three or four times. People were a little concerned about their ability to call this one particular person throughout the whole job with any problems they might have. That's the one thing I have to give credit to Mr. Beam and Mr. Yeargin for, the fact that there's a credibility that they've established over the last 30 or 40 years.

**Platt:** Back to your question about finding help, it's almost impossible to find help quickly, or to find help that you might need on a temporary basis. I assume that every time this need comes up within Charlotte or a bigger place, that you could pick people up fairly easily. And the other thing....if I bring somebody in I feel like I'm really making a commitment. I don't want to have to turn them loose. There's no place else for them to go to work and, in the five years I've been in business—until a young woman who works for me went to graduate school this month—I had never lost anybody. But I've never looked for anybody. They've all found me.

**Moses:** That's the same with me. I honestly got to the point that I just quit looking. I got so frustrated trying to find somebody. I spent money in the big-city newspapers and never really got any results. The people who did call me weren't qualified as far as what my ad said. Everybody whom I have hired, came to me.

**Caudle:** Were they referrals?

**Moses:** No, they just wanted the area and looked me up. The people I have tried to find through the newspapers and that I've thought could work, just didn't work out.

**Howell:** Something about finding people... When I was in Richmond I experienced that roller coaster of where you are trading draftsmen and production room [personnel] back and forth between one firm and another depending on who was busy and who wasn't busy. I think it's important in a small town that when you do bring somebody into your firm, you've got to bring a real commitment because there's really no place for them to go, no roller coaster there. So...you try to maintain a more stable practice, and you don't seem to be running after the hires when they do come, but rather try to keep the clients that you have on a more stable basis, so you can keep the staff because it is difficult to find good people. On David's remark about newspaper ads, the two architects that are with me as associates came through newspaper ads.

#### **What would help this hiring process?**

**Caudle:** One thing that would help me...I have a hard time defining project architect, job captain, draftsman level I, II, III. I don't really know what those mean. I need somebody who can just literally do whatever needs to be done, and I have a hard time. Maybe you guys could help me. Is there a set definition?

**Howell:** That doesn't exist, because for the two people that I did find through the ads, I must have had a hundred people who applied. Many of them said, "I've been working for the last five years in a grocery store, but I've always been interested in architecture."

**Yates:** Another very common problem is that you interview someone from out of state or someone from in town and they've worked for big firms... They've got two or three or four years' experience and they want to own the company. That's a common thing. "I will come with you if in six months I



*Marshall E. Caudle, Monroe*



can own 62% of the stock." I mean, that is their attitude.

**Moses:** Or kids fresh out of school who want to start right out doing brand-new design work...

**Yates:** One of the quotes I've always remembered... I think it's correct, that one of the things Julio Bell said was that architecture is 80% business and 20% art.

**Howell:** I want to correct you. He said 90% business and 10% art.

**Yates:** That's a quote I absolutely agree with. That's one thing that (architecture) school is so slack about. Not only do they not teach you, but they don't even make you aware that that's the way it really is.

**How prepared are the people you interview in terms of education? What do they really know about what you do on a day-to-day basis?**

**Caudle:** Nothing.

**Yates:** They have no concept, because like Marshall was saying, you have to be able to do everything pretty darn well. If you're not the best designer in the world, that's all right, but you'd better know, if you have someone designing, when to start and when to stop and when you are headed down the wrong road. If you don't, you are going to exhaust your fees, you will alienate clients, etc. You just are going to get hurt.

**Carpenter:** I agree. The previous firm that I worked with, they were very conscious about if you spend x number of hours in the schematic phase, x number of hours in design/development, as you get to that point and you are 40 hours over, someone says, "Well, we're having a problem."

**Howell:** What I think is that we have a five-year degree program and you can't teach architecture in five years, but no one is willing to go ten years to school. So it's got to be done in the workplace. So architectural education has got to continue after school and as practitioners, we have to accept that. I know several architects I worked with, I'm sure that at the end of the day when I left the office, they went back and looked at my drawings and said, "My God, I'm paying this guy's salary."

**Caudle:** But that's the difference between big firms and small firms. Big firms can probably absorb some of that.

**Howell:** I've never worked for a big firm. It was always a small firm. And even in small firms, sometimes I've

really felt like, "I know I've done this four times and I know it's not right," but in the process you learn with patient people. And I think we have a responsibility also to be patient.

**Caudle:** I had that same experience. I worked for a small firm and worked with [architect] Fred Schmidt, and he took infinite patience with me when I first started. I've always been grateful for that. And I don't know why he did it, because I get to that point now when I try to hire somebody and train them. It's a big, big expense. I've got one guy who's just out of school, but I couldn't absorb five or six people like that. I've got to have somebody who knows how to put a building together.

**Howell:** For my staff, I've gone through three times as many people as I now have. It just didn't work out. I'm very fortunate with a very fine staff now, but it didn't come easy.

**Yates:** One of the things I considered doing a year or so ago was going back and getting an MBA, for fun and/or for help on how to run a practice. I finally came to the conclusion, after talking to a lot of people who had them, that when you first go out and you've got two or three or four or five years under

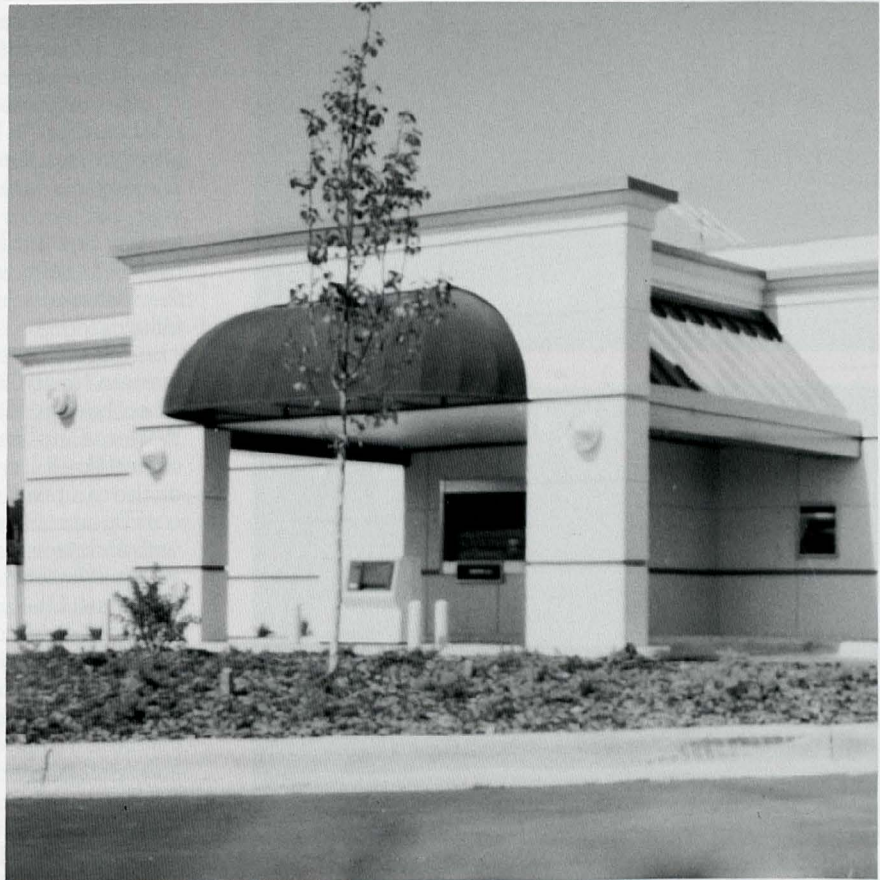
your belt of actually running your practice, then the need for the MBA was prior to that... (Now) you've already established habits and "how-to's" about how you are going to run your business anyway.

**Howell:** I did get the MBA and I found it to be helpful, particularly when I'm talking to corporate clients, because I feel more comfortable talking to them on many of the things that they feel are important to them rather than just the business of architecture.

**Caudle:** I have a question for my colleagues... I worked (in a large firm) with 479 people when I worked there, and we worked on large projects. (On) two, three, ten-million-dollar projects, we had five or six people work on that project. I have been turned down for work before because people said we weren't big enough to do that kind of project, and I have done some large projects, you know, and I've got the same number of people but yet I've been turned down. Have any of you all had that same experience?

**Howell:** Yes. It's amazing when a large project comes out in a small community that all the large firms come rolling in

*Continued on page 20*



*Dennis E. Yates, Concord*



# RIDING THE WESTERN BUILDING BOOM

**Foy & Lee Associates  
Waynesville**

**W**hen Henry Foy returned to his hometown of Waynesville in 1955 to open an architectural practice, he found major changes taking place in the western part of North Carolina, changes that he believed would make his services more valuable.

The area has always been a popular spot for tourists intent on escaping the summer heat. When railroad service into the western section of the state was begun, after the Civil War, visitors came to the area in early May and stayed

until late September or October. Most of these visitors found temporary quarters in boarding houses or small hotels.

However, the 1950s saw the beginning of a building boom in western North Carolina. Tourists began to buy land in both urban and rural areas with the intentions of building permanent resort homes for themselves. And as the tourists built and became citizens of the area, towns like Sylva and Waynesville also began to grow and prosper.

"This setting appeared to provide substantial opportunity and challenge to justify opening small office," says Foy. "It also provided the opportunity to present the value of, and need for, architectural services which, until that time, were provided by firms distant from the area."

Foy, who had received his degree in architecture from Clemson University, opened his office in March, 1955. A year later, he contacted a friend and former coworker and asked him to consider moving his practice to Waynesville.

The friend was Tai Y. Lee, an Asheville resident who had been born in Luncheon, Manchuria, and graduated from Georgia Tech. Lee came to Waynesville, liked what he saw and began a partnership with Foy that is today in its 32nd year.

Foy says the firm's work was at first exclusively residential. "Gradually, we began to do light commercial projects, then school (building) work and industrial projects soon followed."

The firm eventually worked on projects in all areas of western North Carolina, including Jackson, Swain, Graham, Cherokee and Clay counties. A steady client proved to be Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, which commissioned Foy & Lee to design a number of academic projects on the campus.

Foy admits that not all of his early clients were familiar with architects and architectural services. "For many years we often found it necessary to do two things: Sell clients on the value of the profession, and sell them on the idea of the value of our services."

One way in which the firm was able to underscore the value of its services was by becoming part of the local community. "In our experience, the profession became readily visible in a small community like Waynesville," Foy says. "A successful project is readily recognized."

But, he adds, "The same is true for an unsuccessful one. There is little room between."

Both Foy and Lee say they have found "no real disadvantages" in a small-town practice other than the limited availability of material, information and/or technical con-



(Above) Exterior and interior shots of the Ramsey Center, Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, a joint project with Crain/Anderson of Houston, Texas.



sultation, a situation they believe has improved since the early days of their practice.

One factor Lee would like to change is the amount of paperwork involved in university and government work. "The paperwork has drastically increased since we've been in practice... I'd like to do more design, less paperwork."

Foy says his firm often competes with firms from larger cities for projects, primarily federally or state-funded.

"In the earlier years of our practice, our location did present some handicap for large projects, largely due to the fact that if the project was large, had an early deadline for completion or needed considerable advance promotional work, the client was likely to look at larger firms with greater manpower," Foy explains. "However, many clients with smaller projects preferred to deal with a small firm, feeling the communication and attention derived was desirable."

He believes his firm owes its steady growth over the last 32 years to these smaller projects, such as additions and renovations.

The very character of the Waynesville area proved a lifesaver for Foy & Lee when it came to recruiting additional personnel. "Persons with the experience we needed seemed to prefer the larger cities," says Foy. "But since the area's desirability for retirement was developing, our best source of help in our early years came from a retiree, Gerald O. Schoonover." Schoonover, who had retired from an architectural practice in Pittsburgh, moved to Waynesville and subsequently spent 15 years working with Foy & Lee.

Foy & Lee is currently working on an \$8 million Center for Advancement of Teaching at Western Carolina University and a \$2.5 million arboretum/main visitor complex at the University of North Carolina at Asheville.

Projects recently completed include the Ramsey Center at Western Carolina University (a joint venture with Crain/Anderson of Houston, Texas); the \$5 million Allied Health Facility at Southwestern Technical College in Jackson County; a \$2.5 million high-tech center for Haywood Technical College in Waynesville; an office building for the Cherokee Historical Association in Cherokee; and a \$2 million Mountain Research Station for N.C. State University, located in Fletcher.

Foy says that in retrospect, "We would not hesitate to do it again. We have had many happy experiences during our 32 years of practice."



(Top) Haywood County Library, Waynesville. (Middle) Haywood County Library, Waynesville. (Bottom) Western Carolina University Bookstore, Cullowhee.



# BRANCHING OUT FROM HOMETOWN ROOTS

## Ramsay and Associates Salisbury

**J**ohn Erwin Ramsay Jr., AIA, knows he is a man walking a tightrope. The fourth generation of his family to work in architecture, he is loyal to his Salisbury roots, yet left that North Carolina town of 50,000 a number of years ago for a base in Raleigh. And while he admires his father, John Erwin Ramsay, for practicing "architecture for architecture's sake," the younger Ramsay candidly admits he has not adopted that philosophy himself.

"I think practicing architecture for architecture's sake is history," Ramsay Jr. says. "Or, at least, you have to put in a lot of time and energy working up to the point where you have the freedom to practice that way."

He says that when his father began Ramsay and Associates in Salisbury in 1946, there were only a handful of architects practicing in North Carolina. "Look at my dad: Within four years of the time he opened his office, he was being asked to do major projects for the State of North Carolina," Ramsay says. "That would never happen today, given the number of architects competing for projects."

Indeed, when Ramsay Sr. returned to his hometown of Salisbury after serving in World War II, the time seemed ripe for his design and engineering skills. The projects designed by Ramsay Associates over the next 30 years included

First Presbyterian Church in Salisbury, the Rowan County Public Library, the Catawba College Community Center and Fairfield Chair headquarters in Lenoir, plus numerous residential designs and commercial renovations.

Ramsay Sr. also maintained a heavy level of involvement in civic and church affairs in Salisbury, through which he met many of his clients. And, his son says, "Practically every architect practicing in Salisbury and its surroundings worked for Dad. They graduated from the 'John Erwin Ramsay School of Design,' in a way."

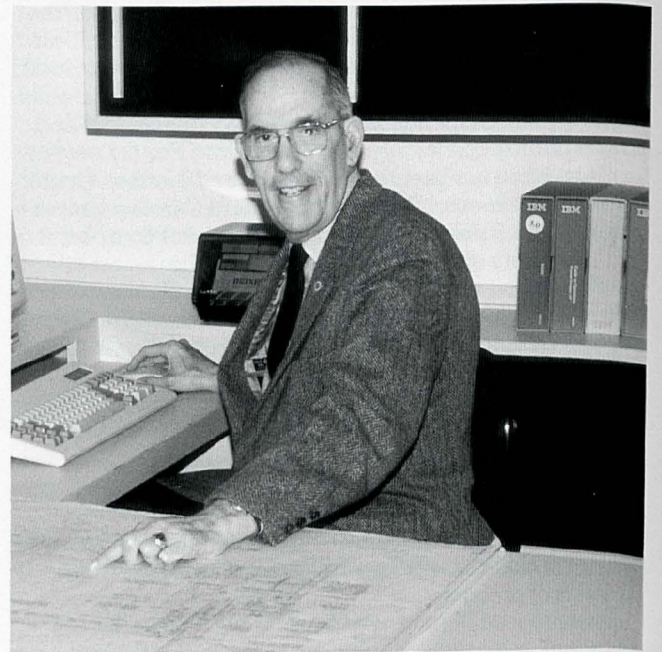
Such a lifestyle is not followed by many architects today, Ramsay Jr. believes. "Dad's perception of the market was that if you do a good job, then the clients will find you. But that was back when there were fewer architects, and the ones that did practice were competing for projects on an equal basis. Now, we're all having to market ourselves very aggressively, which he still is not comfortable with."

Luckily, John Ramsay Jr. is. "I guess I've developed strengths in marketing and administration, things that are weaknesses for Dad, while he's the final authority on design. He likes to think of himself as another Howard Roarke [architect/hero of Ayn Rand's novel *The Fountainhead*]."

Ramsay Jr., who attended UNC-Chapel Hill and received his bachelor of architecture degree from N.C. State, says he

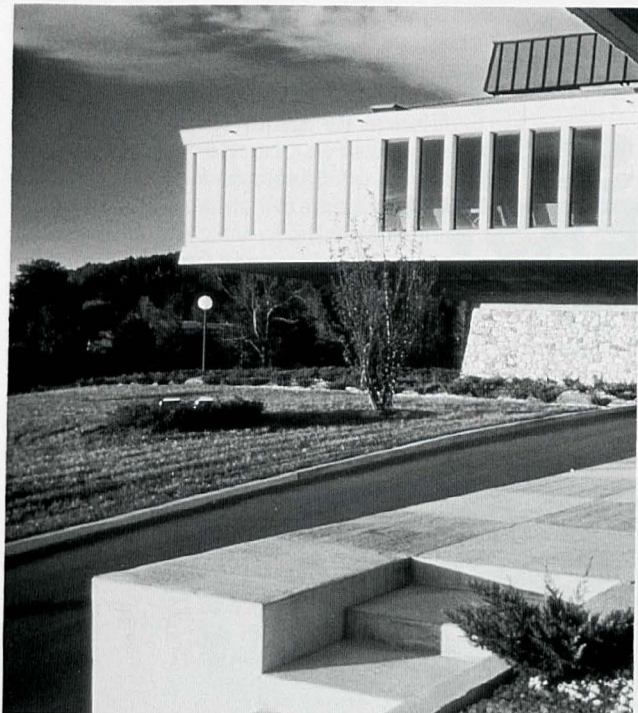


Goodman Residence, Salisbury



John E. Ramsay, FAIA, who founded Ramsay and Associates in 1946.





*Fairfield Chair Co. Headquarters, Lenoir*

knew all along that he was being groomed by his father for a role in the family firm. And while he is now a partner in that firm, Ramsay has chosen to carve his own niche within the family business.

Instead of spending his summers working as a designer for the firm, Ramsay worked for a number of electrical, plumbing, heating and air conditioning contractors in order to gain exposure to those aspects of design and construction. And instead of settling in Salisbury, Ramsay began 10 years ago to spend most of his time in Raleigh, developing business in the state capitol for the firm. That led to the opening, in 1981, of the Raleigh office of Ramsay and Associates, of which he is the principal.

"We didn't really get serious about the Raleigh office until last year," Ramsay says. "Now I spend all my time on projects here, while my other partners are minding the store back in Salisbury."

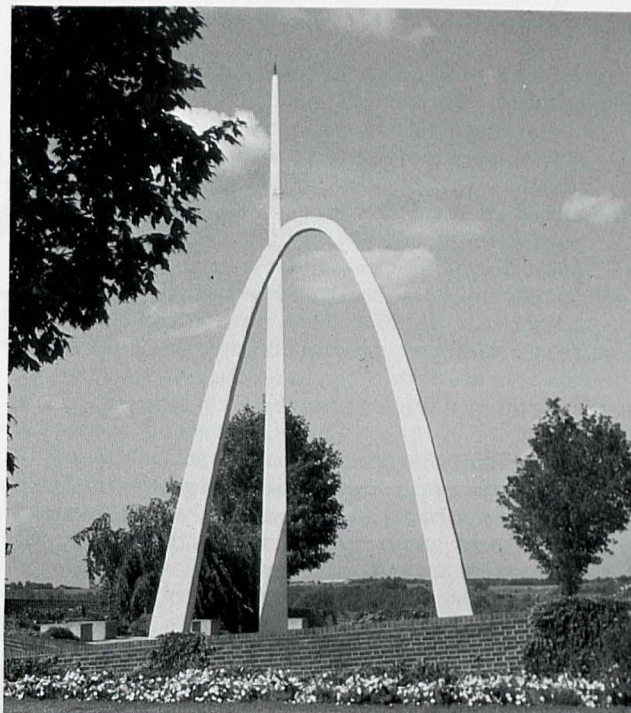
Those partners are his father, who still retains a 25 percent interest in the firm and remains active in the design area; Donna Sturkey Smith, AIA; and William Russell Burgin, AIA. All three work in the Salisbury office.

Interestingly, one of Ramsay's two brothers, Kerr Craig Ramsay, is also an architect, though he has chosen to practice with the large, Virginia-based firm Dewberry & Davis. K.C. is responsible for that firm's North Carolina projects and is also based in Raleigh.

"Every once in a while, he'll talk about the ins and outs of a large firm, while I'll talk about the ins and outs of a small firm," says John Ramsay Jr. "Usually we don't end up competing for projects because of the differences in our firms."

Being one's own man in a firm long associated with one's father has not always been easy. "The quality of life in Salisbury is certainly a big plus, and for that reason I don't believe my father would practice anywhere but Salisbury if he had it all to do over," Ramsay says. "But I can see the advantages we would have now if my father had moved his practice to Charlotte, for example, or Raleigh."

Still, Ramsay believes the firm is making strides towards



*Frederick Memorial Gardens, Gaffney, S.C.*

competing on an equal basis with much larger, urban firms. "It's true that most of our current projects are still in the Salisbury area," he admits. "But we are sensing a distinct advantage in being able to tell prospective clients that we have a Raleigh office."

For one reason, small-town firms often are awarded only the smaller, "goodwill" projects, while city officials and other clients choose to go outside the hometown arena for large projects. Ramsay believes his firm now is perceived as both a small-town firm offering time and attention to a client, and a big-city firm with access to large-scale projects, materials and personnel.

Also adding to Ramsay and Associates' growing list of projects is the firm's computer design capability. "We literally do all our design work on the computer, which as an 11-man firm gives us the work capability of, probably, a 20-man firm," Ramsay says.

This year, a number of Ramsay and Associates-designed projects will be completed. Among them are a new sanctuary for Grace Episcopal Church in Lexington; the 25,000-square-foot Rowan County Agricultural Center in Salisbury; the 8,000-square-foot Davie County Health Dept./Social Service addition in Mocksville; and renovations to the Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh.

"The projects we now have on the drawing board are in basically the same categories, but they're much larger in terms of square feet and budget," Ramsay said. "I think that's the result of more intense marketing over the past twelve months."

Future projects include the new 35,400-square-foot Rowan County Public Library in Salisbury; the 22,000-square-foot Davie County Courthouse in Mocksville; and Jo Lene's Nursing Home, a 22,449-square-foot facility in Salisbury.

"I think the secret of our success is that we have the ability to do big projects, without losing the client in a mass of bureaucracy," Ramsay says.





# DIVERSITY "DOWN EAST"

**Noel N. Coltrane Jr.**  
**Elizabeth City**

**W**hen a person or a group seeks the professional help of an architect, I feel the architect has a professional and personal obligation to see that this assistance is available," says Noel Coltrane, AIA, who began practicing architecture in the eastern North Carolina town of Elizabeth City back in 1972.

He adds, "To me, any project is worthwhile... After all, the size of the project does not determine its importance to the client."

Coltrane, who attended Pfeiffer Junior College and North Carolina State University, picked Elizabeth City for a couple of reasons. He had lived in nearby Hertford during World War II and "loved it," he says. And, he discovered in 1972, there were very few architects practicing in northeastern North Carolina.

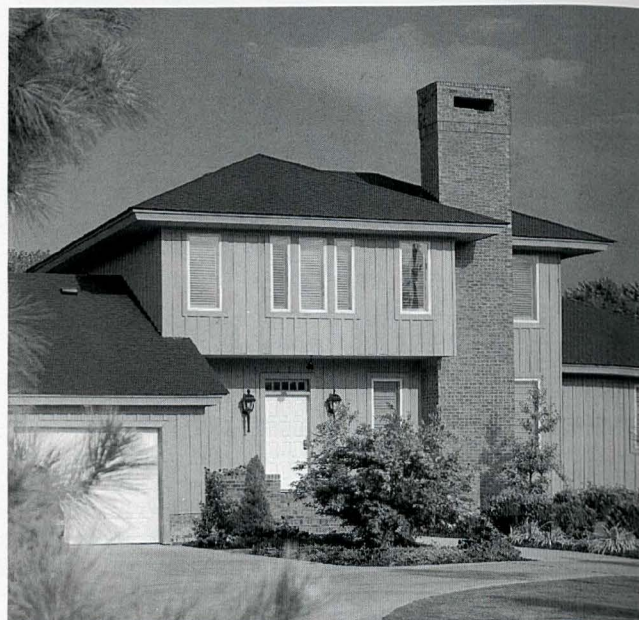
"The largest cities to have an architect then were Rocky Mount and Wilson," Coltrane says. "I saw a need for my services in that market."

Coltrane incorporated his firm in 1979 and has three employees. Among the firm's recent projects are condominiums at Harbor Place in Camden; alterations and additions to the Pasquotank County Courthouse in Elizabeth City; and the Kermit E. White (Continuing Education) Center at Elizabeth City State University. Currently on the drawing board are a community and small business center for the College of the Albemarle in Elizabeth City; alterations and additions to the Albemarle District Jail Facility in Elizabeth City; and offices for Sun Realty in Avon and Salvo, N.C.

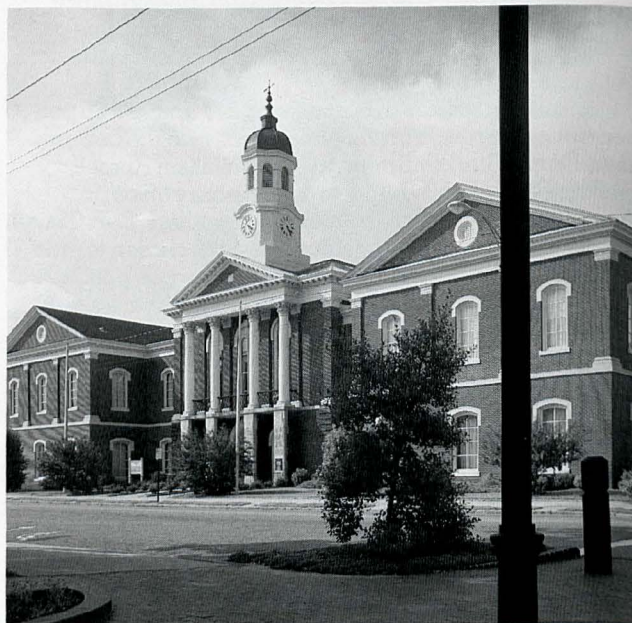
Coltrane credits two individuals, Charles C. Hartman and Adrian P. Stout, with giving him the training and support necessary to think about one day operating his own architectural firm. "Both these gentlemen were architects with firms in Greensboro, and both showed patience and understanding with a struggling apprentice," he recalls. "Since I did not receive a degree [he obtained his license in 1963 through the Professional Education Equivalence and Licensure Examination], I had to obtain my professional expertise through actual experience... 'hands-on training,' I suppose you would call it."

Coltrane says he likes his Elizabeth City location because of the diversification of projects it offers, in both style of architecture and type of building. "I may design a residence, a garage/porch addition, a church or a multimillion-dollar facility," Coltrane explains. "To me, architecture is the challenge offered by each individual project, regardless of style or magnitude."

He points out that a small-town architect must be very conscious of the status of his relationship with clients,



*Private residence, Elizabeth City*



*Pasquotank County Courthouse, Elizabeth City*



since he is likely to encounter them in all other phases of his life, i.e. civic clubs, church and everyday life. "There are no secrets in a small town," he says, chuckling. "You are what you are and everyone knows it."

Also on the list of "musts" for an architect in a small town is the ability to be entirely self-supporting, i.e. having inhouse reproduction capabilities for plans and specs.

And, Coltrane says, "An architect has to be more knowledgeable about a maze of infinite items and areas of work because he doesn't have at his disposal consultants he can meet with and review potential projects with conveniently."

To deal with those disadvantages takes, Coltrane says, being "reasonably prepared for the unexpected." He has also found Sweets Buyline helpful in allowing him to stay current with new products and techniques, and he has access to a number of consultants in the Raleigh area and in the Tidewater region of Virginia when it comes to projects.

When it comes to large projects in his own hometown, Coltrane finds competition to be fierce. "One would think this area had just been discovered, judging from the influx of architects when a project is out for bids," he says dryly. Still, the fact that his firm is there on the spot is definitely

considered in the final selection by a number of clients, he says.

Coltrane estimates he spends about 20 percent of his time on administrative duties; 75 percent on design; and 5 percent on sales and marketing. The last figure is low because most of his firm's work comes through referrals.

He admits that he has had "great difficulty" finding "talented, responsible" personnel for his firm. "Most seem to prefer the life, flair and opportunity offered by larger firms in metropolitan areas," he says, adding, "So be it."

But he hopes and believes that there will always be the need for a small architectural firm. "In an office like ours, the principal and client are involved with each other from the very beginning of the project until the final construction," Coltrane says. "This relationship is very important to most of our clientele, and to us."

And while Coltrane may occasionally think longingly of the amenities provided by a large firm in an urban area, he's not tempted by them. "Sure, the financial benefit is important, for one has to make a living," he says. "But there is a degree of personal satisfaction and accomplishment for a job well done that can't be deposited in a bank."



*Kermit E. White Graduate & Continuing Education Center, Elizabeth City University*



## OFF THE DRAWING BOARD

### Construction Begins New Office Opens

Groundbreaking took place in August for a 48-acre residential development located in Pinehurst and designed by Reg Narmour/The Architectural Group, which is headquartered in Charlotte.

Developers of the project are Cary Brent and H. McMurry of Hollycrest Properties Inc.

The development, Hollycrest, is designed to appeal to active retirees. Eighty living units will focus around an aging 5,000-square-foot Georgian manor house.

Also, the firm announced the opening of an office in Myrtle Beach, S.C., effective August 1. Michael Tych, AIA, has been selected to head the office, which will be closely affiliated with the RN/TAG office in Raleigh headed by Gary B. Cline.



The Myrtle Beach office is located at 618 Chestnut Road, Suite 204, telephone (803) 449-2669.

Other Reg Narmour/The Architectural Group offices are located in Tampa, FL and Washington, D.C.

### Firm Honored By National Society

Odell Associates Inc. of Charlotte and its founder, A.G. Odell Jr., were recently honored by The Newcomen Society at a dinner in Charlotte.

The Newcomen Society, headquartered near Philadelphia, is an educational, nonprofit organization which recognizes the achievement of American business. Established in 1923, the Society has 13,000 members in the U.S. and Canada and has honored several other companies in the Carolinas, including Cannon Mills, First Union Corp. and Piedmont Aviation.

Odell Associates was founded in 1939 by A.G. Odell Jr., who retired in 1982. When he retired, the firm had offices in Charlotte; Greenville, S.C.; Richmond, Va.; and Tampa, FL and was considered the 50th largest architectural/engineering firm in the U.S.

### Professor Teaches In Australia

Henry Sanoff, professor of architecture at NCSU School of Design, recently spent two months teaching in Australia as the Nell Norris Fellow for 1987 at the University of Melbourne.

During his stay, June 1 to August 1, Sanoff gave lectures for the university and community, reviewed curriculum in the university's school of architecture and worked with design professionals in Melbourne. He also advised the Victoria State Government in the areas of housing and education.

### Historic Preservation Book To Be Presented

A book on historic preservation in America, edited by N.C. State University design professor Robert E. Stipe, will be distributed to 650 participants in an international conference on preservation to be held in October in Washington, D.C.

The book, which will contain sections written by Stipe, former director of the N.C. Division of Archives and History, will chronicle the American historic preservation movement.

Stipe says America's bicentennial and a 1976 law giving tax breaks for preservation helped to bring the zeal for preservation from America's elite to the general public. "A lot of things we thought were not important to preserve are suddenly very important," he says, "including neighborhoods, landscapes and engineering works."



## NCSU Professor Awarded Study Contract

Dr. Wayne Place, associate professor of architecture at North Carolina State University, has received a contract of more than \$190,000 from the N.C. Alternative Energy Corp. (NCAEC) to study ways to project daylight into non-residential buildings.

His research will also be supported by a university faculty research development grant of around \$35,000.

Place came to the NCSU School of Design in 1986 from the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory of the University of California, where he directed research on making buildings more energy efficient. At NCSU he is developing and testing window supplements and roofing systems.

The purpose of the NCAEC contract, Place says, is to determine the best use of natural light to enhance aesthetics and light quality while improving energy performance. "Simple windows and skylights do not generally work very well in providing illumination," he explains.

## Firm Awarded Airport Contract

O'Brien/Atkins Associates PA, architect for the new Raleigh-Durham American Airlines hub, has been selected to design the new Charlottesville-Albemarle (Virginia) Airport Terminal. The firm was chosen from a group of 10 architectural/engineering firms from across the country.

The new terminal, costing \$4 million, will have more than 35,000 square feet and 6 gates, and is expected to serve more than 600 passengers daily. O'Brien/Atkins had previously completed a feasibility study and master plan for the airport.

## Firm Plans Charlotte Relocation

The FWA Group will move its corporate headquarters and Charlotte division to an uptown location early next year. The firm will occupy the third floor of "Two-Twenty North Tryon," formerly the Montaldo's store building.

The third and fourth floors of the building are currently being renovated by Carley Capital Group and will be connected with the adjacent Cityfair festival shopping center.

*Continued on page 16*



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The FWA Group's new quarters will have 15,000 square feet. The firm also has offices in the Research Triangle Park, Hilton Head Island, S.C. and Jacksonville, Fla.

## RS&H Named To Top Five

Reynolds, Smith & Hills Inc., the Jacksonville, Fla.-based parent company of RS&H of North Carolina Inc., was recently named number five in revenues for 1986 by *Building Design & Construction* magazine.

The company reported revenues of \$107 million in 1986. The North Carolina subsidiary of Reynolds, Smith & Hills is located in Greensboro and has 70 employees.

## Names and Changes In N.C. Architecture

**Sherry Cartledge Yow** has joined the Raleigh firm of Boisseau Design Group/Architects PA in charge of multifamily and residential design. Also, **Robert Sawyer**, president and CEO of Sawyer World Communications of Research Triangle Park and Harrisburg, Pa., has been named marketing manager for the firm.

**Michael R. Tye** has been named president of RS&H of North Carolina Inc., the Greensboro subsidiary of Reynolds, Smith & Hills, which is based in Jacksonville, Fla. Tye, formerly vice president, succeeds **Leerie T. Jenkins Jr.**, who has now been elected to the board of directors and to the position of executive vice president/CEO of the Jacksonville corporate office. Also named: **Allen T. Spotts**, PE, vice president of engineering, as new senior vice president of RS&H of North Carolina Inc.

**Carolyn Wells Kibler**, designer with the Charlotte firm of E.H. Cope-land Jr., AIA-AICP, has been certified by The National Council for Interior Design Qualifications. Kibler, a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, has been with the Cope-land office since 1982.

The Charlotte firm Snoddy and McCulloch Associates has changed its name to McCulloch/England Associates Architects upon the retirement of Mark Snoddy. **John McCulloch**, AIA, is president and **Bill England**, AIA, is vice president. Other principals of the 16-year-old firm are **Ben Pearce**, AIA and **Claude Sanford**, PE.

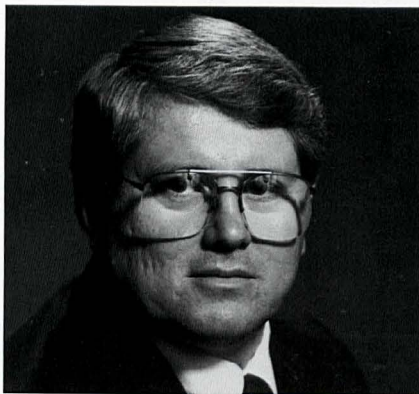
**David A. Wright**, AIA, and **John W. Rowland** have been named vice presidents of the Charlotte office of Peterson Associates PA. **John M. Beyer**, AIA, of the Charlotte office and **Michael R. Dauss**, AIA, of the Cary office have been named associates with the firm. Beyer has also been named associate-in-charge of business development.

**Lucien M. Roughton**, AIA, has opened an office in Westgate Plaza in Durham. Formerly with Hakan/Corley and Associates of Chapel Hill, Roughton graduated from the NCSU School of Design and received a master's in architecture degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

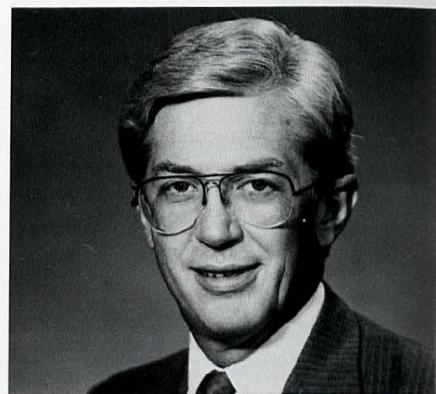
**Steve Setzer**, AIA; **Bruce Brodt**, AIA; and **Jim Goodwin**, AIA announce

the opening of their new firm, Setzer Brodt & Goodwin, in Charlotte. Setzer was formerly senior partner in charge of design for Little & Associates; Brodt was a vice president and team manager with Ferebee-Walters and Goodwin was a project architect and team leader at Little & Associates. The firm is located at 7301 Carmel Executive Park, Suite 224, in Charlotte, telephone (704) 541-1921.

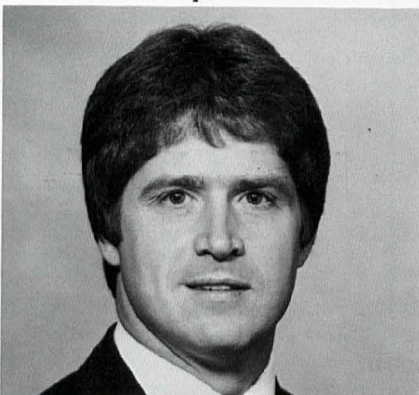
**Michael Tych**, AIA, has been named director of the new Myrtle Beach, S.C. office of Reg Narmour/The Architectural Group PA. He has had his own practice in Myrtle Beach since 1983, and before that was an associate with the Atlanta firm Nichols Carter Seay/Grant. 



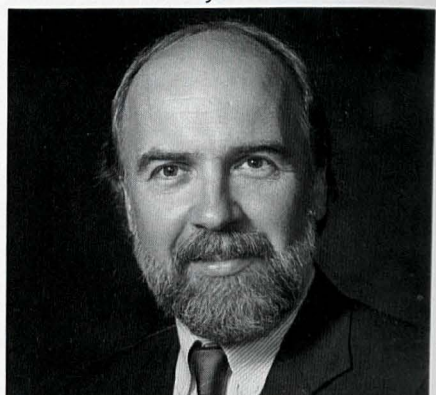
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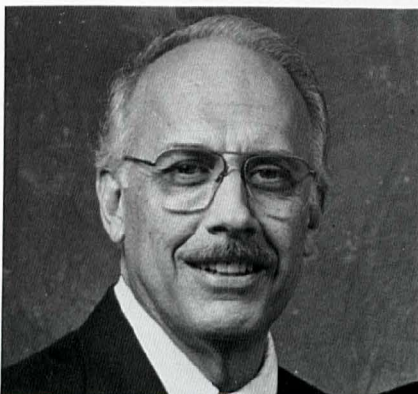
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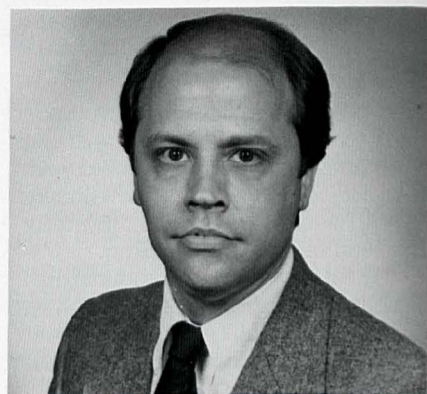
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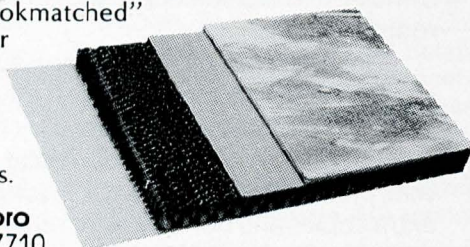
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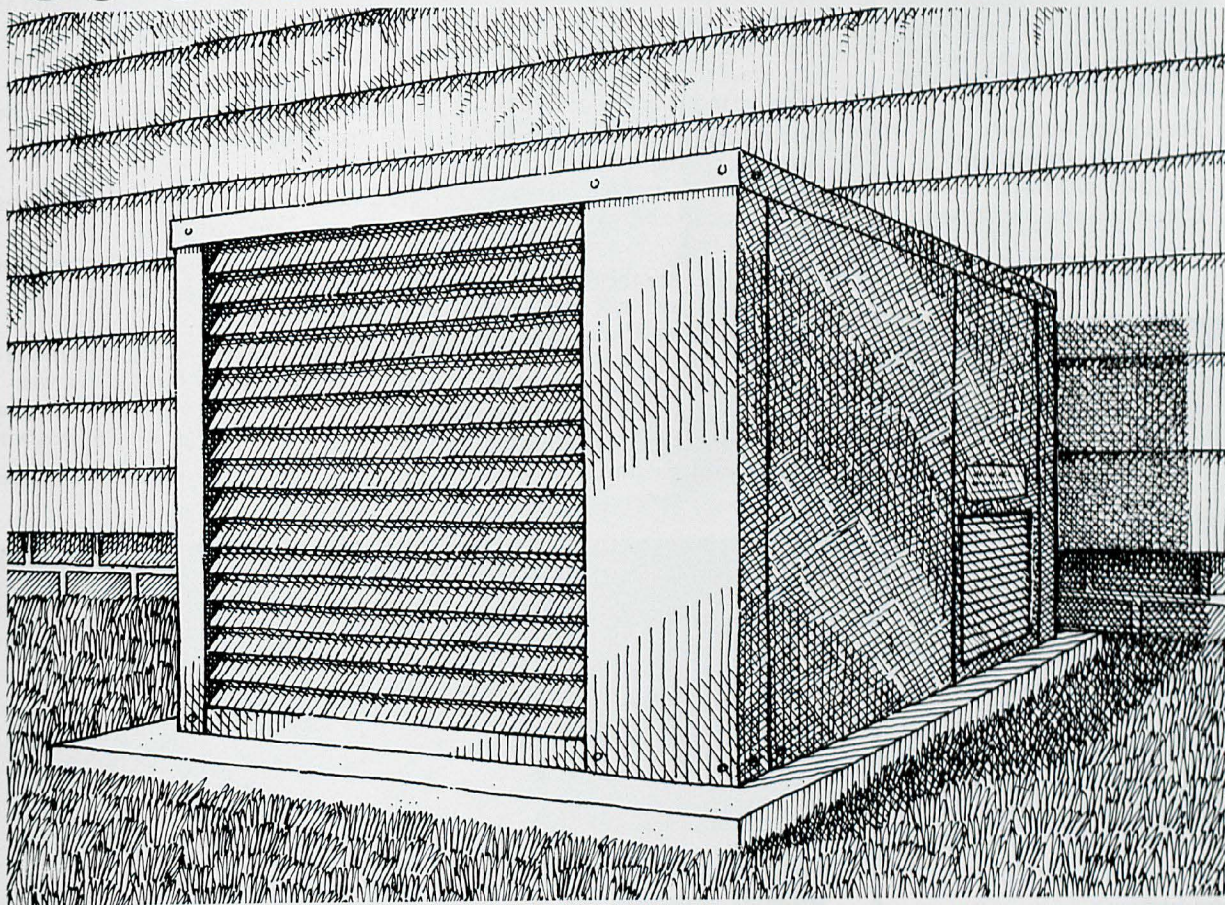
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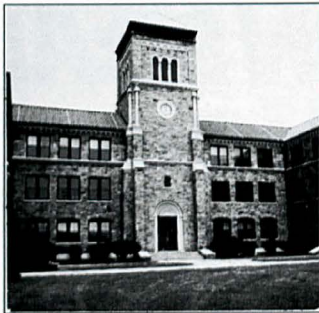
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with all their guns and their dog and pony shows to impress the client, all the salesmanship, and some really slick presentations, it's just unbelievable some of the things they do... We combat that by telling any potential client that regardless of how large the firm is, there still will be only two or three people working on their job. They just have a lot more jobs, that's all. In our office, the two or three people are the principals or the associates in the firm, and we are going to concentrate on your job and we are not going to relegate your particular project to a third tier of experience because we've got other, more important things to be doing. You are the most important client we've got.

**Caudle:** But it's amazing how clients have that concept that a big project has to have 100 people working on it, when even in a big firm you don't have that (situation).

**Yates:** I think another thing is the size of workload you want, or the size of projects, I guess. Probably at some point in time, you would do well to do what Daryl has done, that is to have another name on the board besides your own so there's an indication of a multi-principal firm.

**Howell:** I've thought about that, and I've always looked back at (Charlotte-based) Odell Associates. At one time, I don't know what they have now, but there were 80 architectural associates and it's still Odell Associates. I don't think that's a problem. If Odell thought so, they'd have 80 architects listed up there to show the world how large they are. I don't really think that's important.

**Yates:** It has a lot to do with the credibility you have in the marketplace that you are trying to seek. If you are going just cold-calling on things and you are a small-town firm looking to play ball in the big city and you don't know the people, that's going to make a difference. Day-to-day it doesn't matter, but I think there are situations where it would.

**Caudle:** Yes, I've even had clients before say, "Well, what if you die?"

**Howell:** Well, I would look at my client and say, "The odds are about equal. What if you die?"

**Moses:** I was personally involved in an experience just like that and it was something very real that all of us need to look at. I had left the firm I was with

*Continued on page 22*

## CHEROKEE DESIGN MATERIALS

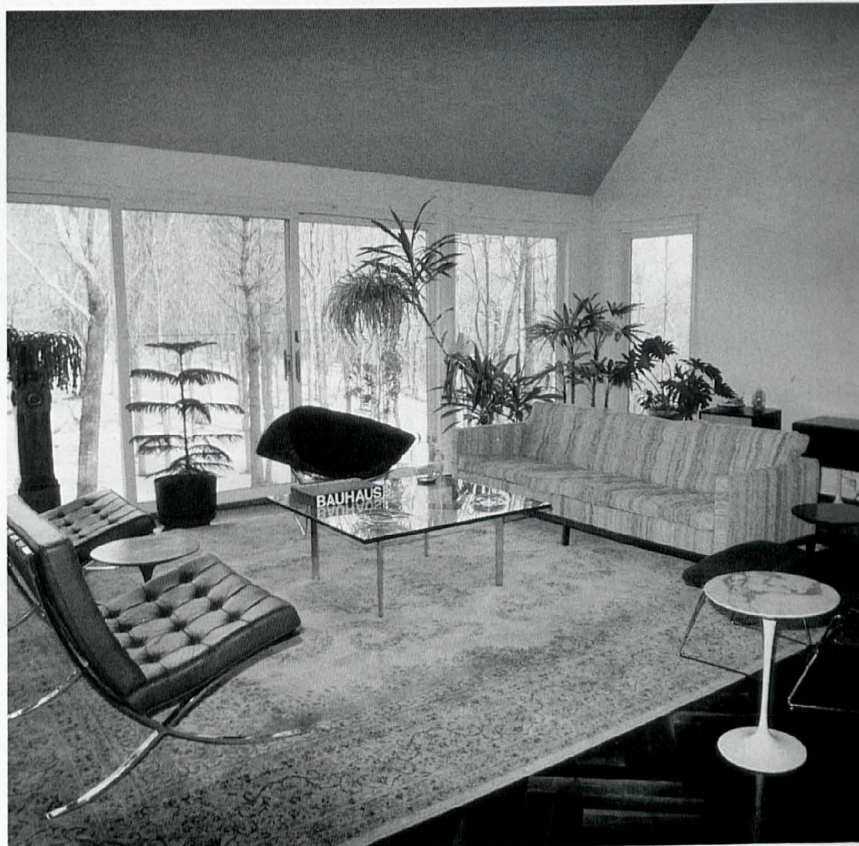
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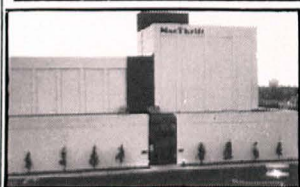
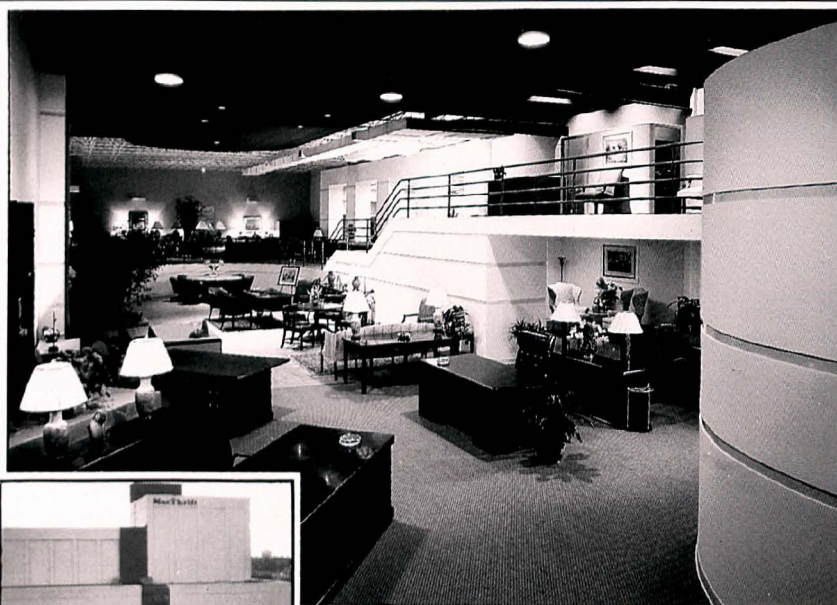
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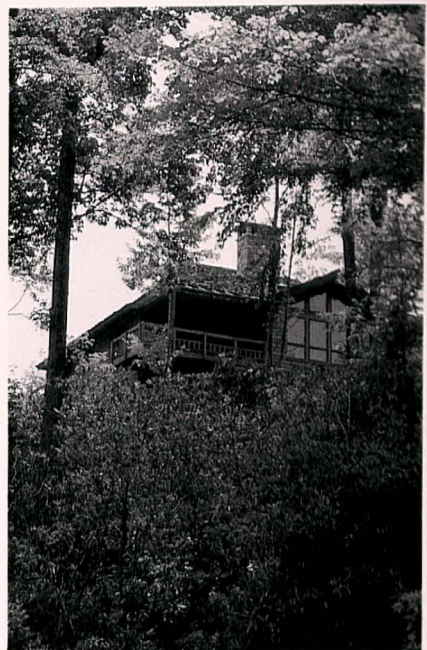
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*Howell Associates Architects, Boone*

in Charlotte, and when two years later the man died, because I had been with him the longest, I was asked by the estate to come back and help shut the firm down. And it really opened my eyes as to what I, as a single practitioner, need to take into account. If it's not all lined up and squared away, you are just going to have a big mess on your hands.

**Howell:** I've got two other architects in the firm, and either one of them or both of them are quite capable of taking over and running the firm. Each of you has registered people in it besides



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yourselves, so I think there's some stability in the firms. I think there's a weakness when there's only one registered person in a firm. When that person passes on, the firm passes on.

**Caudle:** In my situation, I work with a fellow named Larry Smith. We have worked together for a long time and I feel like either one of us could finish the other's projects if something were to happen to either of us.

**Yates:** Another thing too, there's a little bit of illusion that might need to be cleared up. A lot of the firms that are represented in this room are not necessarily small firms. If you look at the average cross-section of firms in Charlotte rather than outside, probably the vast majority of them are the same size as those sitting in this room. Probably across the country, for that matter.



Al Platt Jr., Brevard

**Howell:** We're not small firms. We just practice in small communities.

**How often do you see projects in your towns awarded to big-city firms?**

**Yates:** Maybe I'm being naive, but I would like to think that most people in Watauga County or Linville or Cabarrus County have a little bit of a notion of wanting to keep the money inside. They are a little bit protective of that edge. In my case, we're doing a \$7.5 million city-county government building for Concord, which is a scaled-down version of what (J.N. Pease Associates) is doing for the city of Charlotte. I think that what I'm trying to say is that if you

*Continued on page 25*

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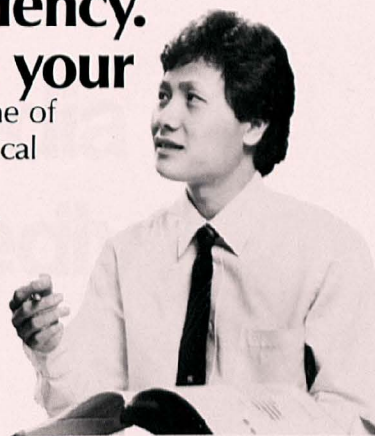
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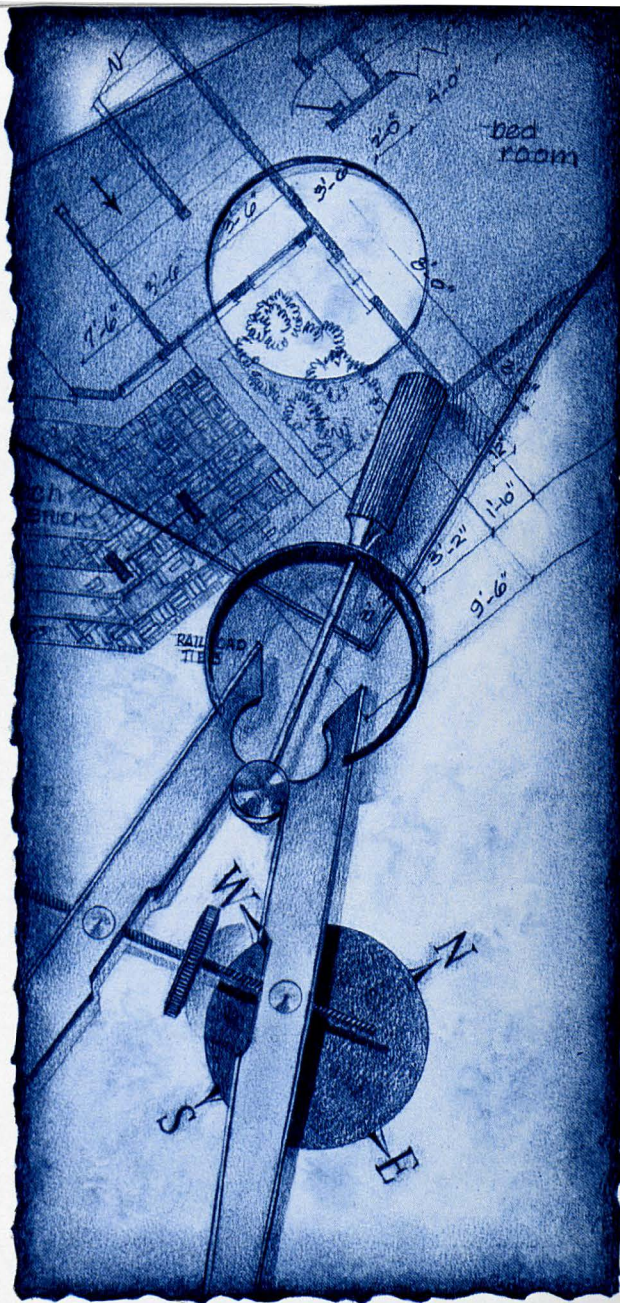


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Al Platt Jr., Brevard

show a lot of confidence in the work that you do, then probably (being local) is an advantage.

**Howell:** I think the large towns have the same problem. When Charlotte decides to do a massive project, where do they go looking? They look for (I.M.) Pei... At the same time, those large Charlotte firms... probably fight that and say the same thing. "We don't need those folks. We are capable of doing that." I think we express the same thing in a small town. Like Dennis has said, it's a matter of marketing. It's a matter of selling yourself to the people who are making the decision, convincing them that you do have the technical and professional ability to do the job... I think it's incumbent on the architect in the small town to be prepared to do his marketing, to convince those groups that are making those decisions that the architectural capability conveniently exists right in their own backyard.

**Yates:** One way that we tend to help our marketing efforts a lot, especially when the bigger firms from outside the community come in, is to do more marketing, i.e., specifically look at their

*Continued on page 26*

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projects and decide what we can do to solve their problems in an upfront kind of way. And most people in outside firms, I find...they don't really take the time to ask, "How can we really help this person's project?" I think that's a good advantage for the small-town company.

**Caudle:** Where I am it used to be, literally, that anything done in Union County meant hiring a Charlotte architect for it. I have seen this change gradually to where now there are six architectural firms (in town) and the decision-makers are now thinking about the local firms.

**What about the growth of your firms? Is there a point at which you will say, "Do I want to get bigger or do I want to stay small?"**

**Caudle:** I'm getting to that point. My only good time to draw anymore is at night, and I work just about every night



Dennis E. Yates, Concord

because during the day there are too many phone calls, etc., which is part of the business. I'm not knocking it. You knock the phone calls, but when they don't call you worry, too. You probably even worry more then, but it really gets to the point that you have to decide what you really want to do, and right now I haven't decided where I want to go now.

**Has anybody made a conscious effort to stay at a certain number of employees?**

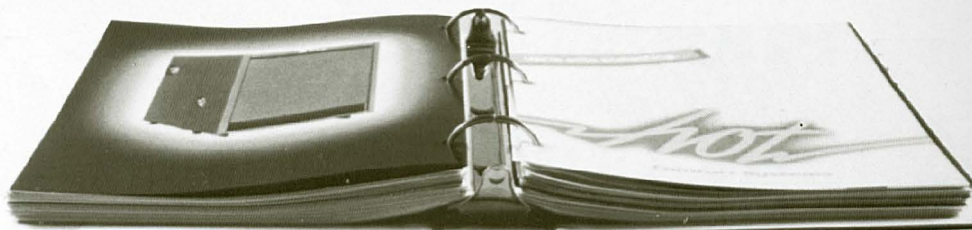
**Carpenter:** I feel like we need another one or two people in the firm because of some of the projects that have been coming down the pike lately.

**Anybody here want unlimited growth?**

**Yates:** No, it just equates to unlimited stress.

*Continued on page 28*

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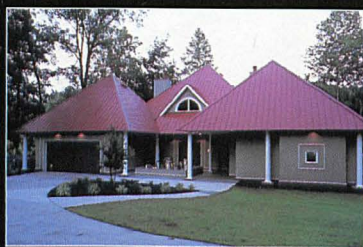
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Marshall E. Caudle, Monroe

**Howell:** I think that many firms allow the market to set the size of their firm and their growth. I also believe that a firm, if it handles its future properly, can establish its own size and maintain that size by attracting and going after the particular clients that will give it a certain level of stability. I think that if the firm plans for that, the firm can actually market itself rather than react to a market that just happens to be out there. I think you need to plan who your clients are going to be. I think you can do that to some degree.

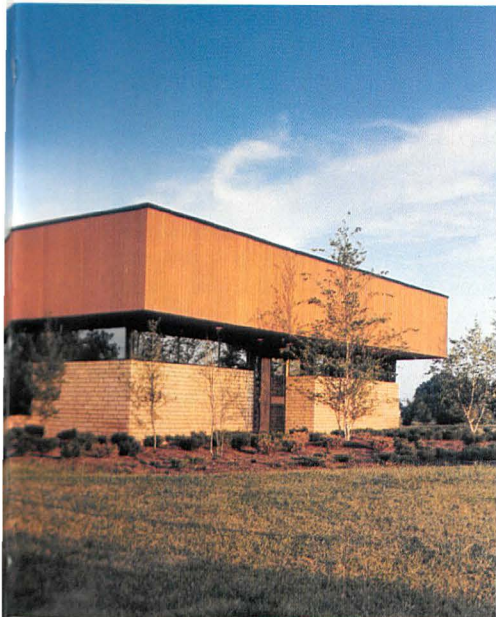
**Yates:** For me, I think one of the things about owning your own practice is that you can be on the offense rather than on the defense, the defense being that you are always reacting versus taking the active role of doing what you want to do. What I would like to do (is) keep consolidating until I had a super, hard-core group of people who were very capable of managing and taking care of themselves so that I could do more of what I personally want to do. It's not a total question of the money (you make) or the size, it's more what makes you happy and allows you to do what you want to do when you want to do it.

**Howell:** In the small town the key is, if it isn't fun, don't do it. I think that's why we are in those small towns.

**Caudle:** I really enjoy what I do. I thoroughly enjoy architecture.

**Platt:** I'm aware that I'm constantly trying to figure out what's a natural size for a firm that has me as its principal, and there are a lot of factors that can tell me what it is. One of the factors is





the type of work, of course...the level of sophistication of the clients, the natural timing of projects.

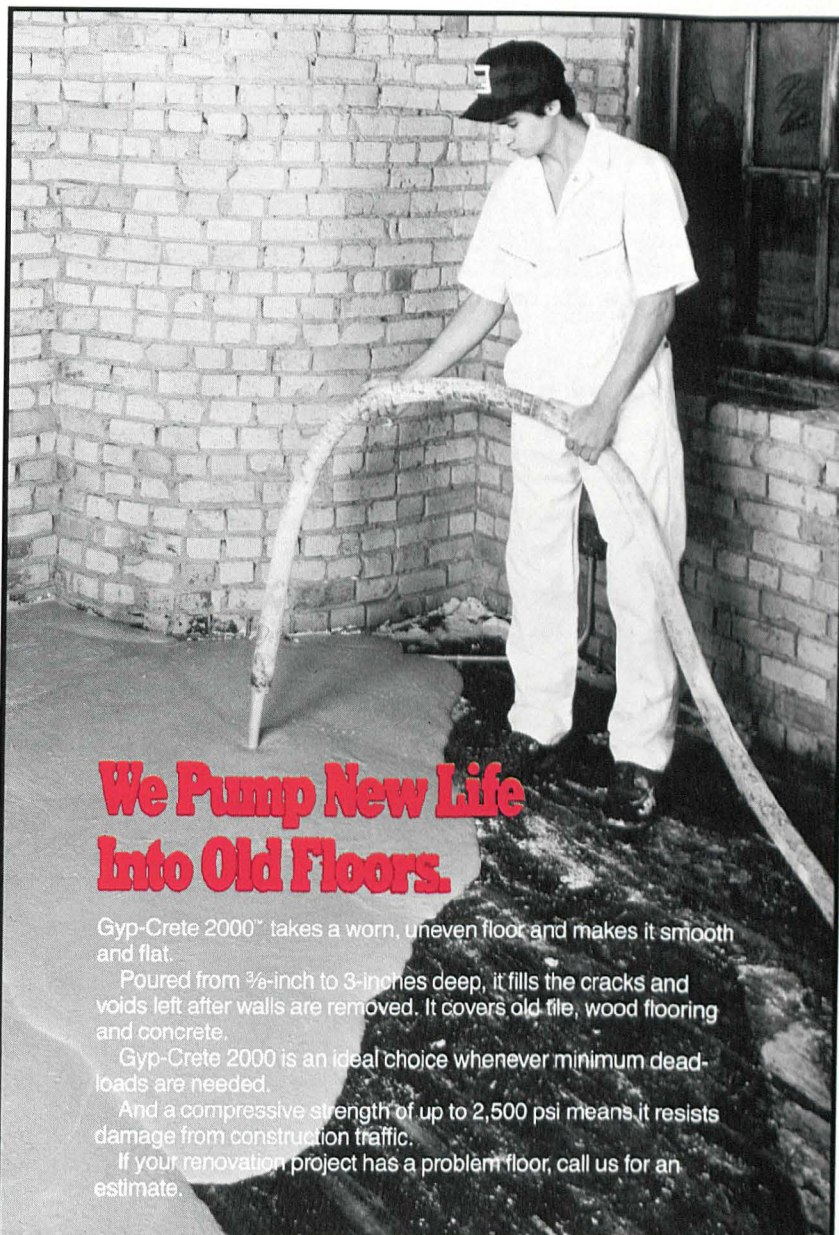
Another problem, I don't know whether you guys have it or not, is that engineering and consulting firms are a real problem for me. I have them, but they're not nearby, and they're not in all the consulting areas that I need covered in the mountains. Civil work is very, very difficult to get done. Year in, year out, I can look back at the past year and realize that 90 percent of what I would consider problems, were site problems. There's nobody, virtually, in the southwestern part of the state in civil engineering.

**Moses:** Al brought up a very good point. When I was in Charlotte, if I had a problem with something that I needed to show to my structural engineer, either I'd call him up and say, "Let's have lunch so I can show you this," or, "Can you come over here sometime this afternoon?" I still use the same engineer in Charlotte, but I can't call him up and say, "Let's have lunch," because he's two-and-a-half hours away.

**Platt:** If you've got a problem, it's two or three hundred bucks just to talk to him.

**Moses:** Yeah, and two or three days, four days, five days if I'm lucky. Sometimes I am fortunate, and it can be handled over the telephone. The same thing happens with mechanical, electrical and plumbing problems. It's been one of the biggest drawbacks, and I've learned to deal with it. I've learned to

*Continued on page 30*



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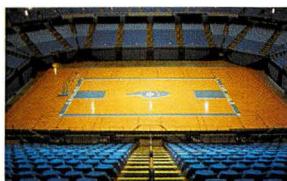
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accept the fact that the solution may be three or four days coming.

**Platt:** I could put a young civil engineer in business on the Interstate 64 corridor – Cashiers, Highlands, Brevard – just with the work I could (give him).

**Howell:** I've experienced the same problems that David has with consultants. We do have a good civil in the area who's available, but not for HVAC, electrical and structural...In fact, I use a structural engineer in Charlotte myself, and I have for years.

**Caudle:** Well, having access to consultants has not been my problem, because when I started, I started with an engineer in Monroe, with an architectural and engineering A&E. That relationship has continued.

**Moses:** Even if consultants weren't in Monroe, though, it would be a lot easier for you in Monroe, coming to Charlotte, than for Al or Ray or me to come to a big city.

**Caudle:** Right! But I think, you know, a good consulting engineer could have a good practice in some of these small towns where he has five or six architects around him.

**Howell:** One advantage we do have is that our structural engineer is happy to come to Boone any time he gets an opportunity to do so.

**Moses:** Especially if you offer him a round of golf or something.

**Howell:** That's right. He's happy to come any time he can get up there.

**Yates:** I think another thing that Al mentioned, that it costs \$200 to get this consulting guy to come up here, made me think about fees. I think probably there's a perception that...perhaps you would not get, if you were in a small town, as good a fee as a big firm would get. To me, the reality is, that the fees are probably as good as or better than they used to be (when I worked in Charlotte). That's on the one side; the other side is you also have tons of folks who come in, who don't realize that it costs \$300 to get an engineer in. An engineer's not free, and architects aren't, or shouldn't be. But it seems like there are two radical extremes to me. About every month or two I'll get a guy in, he wants to build a fish house and his kitchen won't work over here. And I'll say, "Thank you very much, but I appreciate it, go see this fellow right down the street." Of course, sometimes

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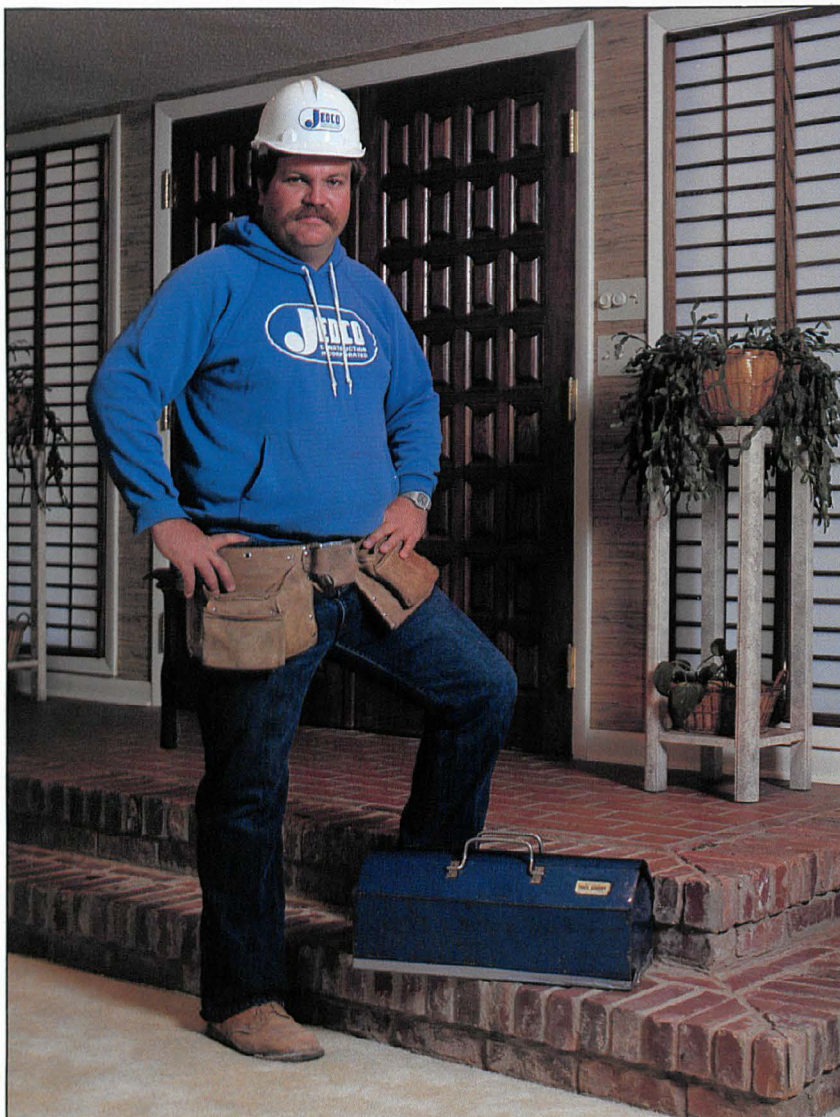
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**Is that part of paying your dues...?**

**Yates:** No, it's the fun part. I'm doing a woodshop now, things like that. If you get good at maintaining or managing clients—controlling clients is, I guess, what I'm trying to say—if you get very good at doing that and the clients begin to trust you, then you can kind of manipulate those folks any way you want them to go, within reason. A developer you don't do that with necessarily. I have not really not looked for that much developer work at all. Every time I've gotten close, I've gotten big-time burns, so I'd rather just deal with folks who appreciate what I do for them. They pay me well. I do the work well. Everybody's happy. We work again.

**Caudle:** I'm glad to hear you say that.

**Yates:** The two or three developers I've touched around Charlotte...if they owe me \$10,000, it's more like, "I don't have but \$7,000. Will you take \$7,000?" or, "Will you take \$6,000 off?" It's just always a problem.

**Howell:** There are good developers. There certainly are.

**Platt:** It takes a while to build a good relationship with a developer, or to find a good developer client, but a good developer client is a good client.

**Moses:** And if you do, and help him solve his problems, you will have work forever and ever.

**Caudle:** The problem is finding a good developer, one who is interested in something besides the almighty bottom dollar. And I've had one of them.

**Yates:** One of the reasons I haven't (sought developer clients) is that a developer wants your time, *your* time, and there's only so much of it to go around. I'd rather do things that my staff can help me do.

**A final question. Is a small-town architectural practice on its way out, as some critics have said?**

**Yates:** I think that anybody who practices in a small town would disagree with the (critic) who wrote that phrase. Obviously he was in Chicago or New York, he wasn't around here.

**Caudle:** He's out of touch.

**Yates:** I think the bottom line is that the people that you work with still want to know who you are and who the workmen are.

**Caudle:** It's a people business.







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