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## "Better Environment Thru Design"

LEONARD A. HAFT, A.I.A.

Co-Chairman, Public Relations Committee

*Ed. Note: The editors and members of the Public Relations and Publications Committee of the Potomac Valley Chapter have chosen the theme "Better Environment Thru Design" as a general governing topic to be considered in feature articles appearing in PVA during the coming year. Here, Leonard A. Haft A.I.A. expresses some of the thoughts which motivated this theme.*

A partial definition of environment is "the aggregate of all the external conditions and influences affecting the life and development of man, human behavior, society, etc." We need only to look around us to see the unhappy state into which our environment has fallen. The last ten years have given us a jumbled mess of land use, land coverage, congestion, and ugliness. Surely all this is reflected and plays in the social picture today; the teen-age gangs, the rising crime rate, and the general unrest and tension.

We create more and bigger housing developments, but are we really providing a better standard of living? We create larger and larger shopping centers, but have we really made it easier and more pleasant to shop? Our highway program is staggering, but is transportation really improved? Has a city improved when it allows its center to become nothing more than a maze of office buildings, parking garages, and lots? Are suburban areas more beautiful when we wantonly remove all the trees and "bull-doze" the entire area? Are schools better if all allowance for art-work is left out of the budget? Is an avenue filled with many signs, each fighting for attention, any more desirable than an avenue filled with teeming run-down tenements?

This is a pretty bleak picture, but unfortunately, it is one that exists. To say that good architectural design is the answer to all these ques-

tions is foolish. There are many factors that enter into making better communities; the attitude of our citizens, good government, economics, etc. However, good architecture is a large factor, and the time has come for us to exert our social conscience, and re-examine our work in terms of building a better society. Much, too much, of our country is, or comes close to being, a blighted area. There are too few pleasant areas, trees, parks, or plazas in our so-called modern cities. Our communities have grown like topsy with little or no civic pride or private restraint.

It would be presumptuous for us to pretend we have all the answers to the many problems we are faced with today. But in an effort to better understand what we are confronted with, we will publish, in addition to all our regular features, a series of articles entitled "Better Environment Thru Design". Men who are considered authorities, or who are outstanding in a particular phase of our topic, will be asked to contribute these articles. A partial list of subjects to be included is: City Planning, Zoning, Landscape Planning, Better Schools, Local Covenants, and many others.

We do not intend these articles to be abstract dissertations, but will try to have them related to our particular sphere of interest, the areas covered by our membership.

We, the Architects, who play a major part in the shaping of our community, have an obligation not only to our clients, but to the entire community. It is not possible for us to think in terms of a building; one well designed building in a sea of chaos is lost. Every job we turn out must be a step towards creating a better environment and community for our people.

## Urban Renewal Means Shedding the Shell

A downtown area with intense growth through the years is likened to the Chesapeake Bay crab, whose own healthy growth will kill it if it fails to shed last year's shell," according to Archibald C. Rogers, president of the Baltimore Chapter AIA, in remarks made to a meeting of the Boston Society of Architects.

His remarks, published in the Summer, 1959, Baltimore-Washington Report, stress the need for the downtown areas to shed their old shell for a new one or be strangled by their own growth.

"In my view, which is perhaps oversimplified and colored by an architect's belief in the importance of physical environment," Mr. Rogers states, "the root trouble from which these symptoms spring is the conflict between a healthy and dynamic life force of 1960 seeking to function and grow within the unshed shell of the last century."

On the subject of downtown decay as a whole, the Baltimore architect believes that the decaying heart of metropolis is basically an architectural problem, and it is his conviction that the directors of downtown will turn increasingly to the architectural profession to seek, if not the solution, at least a major facet of the solution for their downtown problem.

To accomplish this rebuilding, Mr. Rogers sees five basic steps necessary:

—Recognition by the region of the need to rebuild.

Recognition of the opportunity for rebuilding.

—The creation of an action agency.

—The preparation of a physical plan for the new shell.

—Implementation of the plan.

Mr. Rogers spoke from practical experience in this field with first hand knowledge of what is going on in the urban renewal field in his own city of Baltimore and his firm's experience in re-designing the heart of Hartford, Connecticut.



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#### NEXT REGULAR MEETING

12 Noon, September 2, 1959

Brook Farm Restaurant

7101 Brookville Rd., Chevy Chase, Md.

October Meeting — October 7, 1959

## Welcome New Members

Membership in the Potomac Valley Chapter grows steadily as evidenced by our new roster which lists over eighty architects.

The President and the Executive Committee wish to welcome the following corporate member architects who have joined us recently:

Anthony Campitelli, Warren Davis, John Lawrence, Stanley T. Lewis, Thomas O'Reilly, and Joseph Vaghi. Transfers from the Washington Metropolitan Chapter are Charles Patton and Robert Weppner. Norman Genaro is a new associate member.

Nice to have you aboard, gentlemen.

## School Jobs Slated For PV Architects

Editorial apology is in order to chapter members whose school projects were the victims of a "typographical snafu" in our June issue which listed Montgomery County school jobs

awarded to member architects.

Those to be added to the June list are:

- Bagley-Soule & Associates, Poolesville Elementary (new)
- Bailey & Patton, Potomac Elementary Addition, West Rockville Junior High (new)
- Duane & Lawrence, Burning Tree Elementary Addition, Damascus Elementary Addition, Gaithersburg Elementary Rehabilitation, Olney Elementary Addition

Of the thirty projects included in the 1959-1960 Appropriation of the Montgomery County School Board, nineteen jobs will be handled by Potomac Valley Chapter members.

## Executive Committee Names Chairmen

Looking forward to a busy year, the Executive Committee has named chairmen and co-chairmen of the Chapter's Standing Committees. During the past year the Chapter became more active in County government affairs and representatives made statements before various governmental bodies during hearings on problems affecting the architectural profession.

Similar activity is expected during the coming year, which means that the Buildings and Zoning Codes Committee should continue to be one of the most active committees.

One of the big jobs ahead for the chapter will be the bi-ennial competition and the publication of the Special Awards Issue of PVA in June. On this project the Exhibitions and Competitions Committee and the Public Relations and Publications Committee will work closely together.

Schools are expected to continue as a subject of great interest both to architects and the public in general and our School Buildings Committee will be active keeping up to date on all developments in this important field.

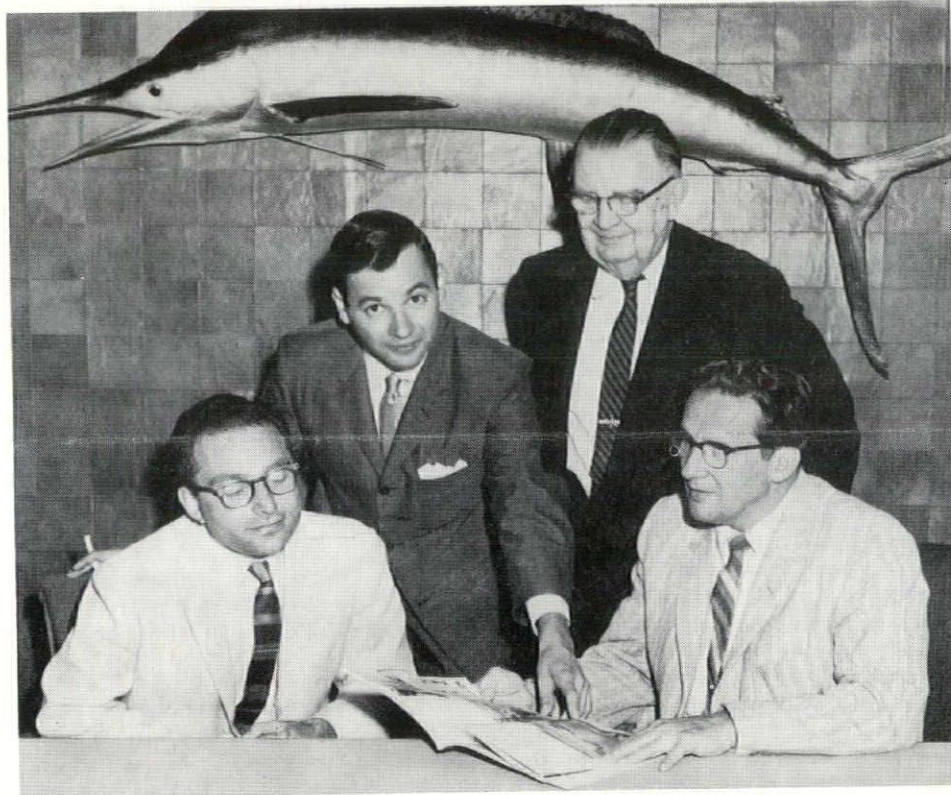
Special emphasis will also be given to a sched-

ule of seminars through the Office Practice Committee. All those who attended last year came away from these meetings much better informed in their profession.

The chairmen and co-chairmen named for the coming year are as follows:

Associate Membership Affairs, Chairman, Joseph Dennison; Building and Zoning Codes, Chairman, James T. Thomen, Vice-Chairman, Jack Samperton; Education, Chairman, Andrew H. MacIntire; Exhibitions and Competitions, Co-Chairmen, Andrew H. MacIntire, Eugene Delmar; Historical and Chapter History, Chairman, Edwin B. Morris, Sr.; Housing, Chairman, John A. Bartley; Liaison, Chairman, Charles B. Soule; Membership and Attendance, Chairman, John E. Moore; Office Practice, Chairman, David Shaw; Vice Chairman, Warren Sargent; Preservation of Historic Buildings, Co-Chairmen: Paul Kea, Clifford B. White; Public Relations and Publications, Co-Chairmen, Leonard Haft, Eugene Delmar; Registration and Legislation, Co-Chairmen, Paul Kea, Ronald Senseman; School Buildings, Chairman, Stanley H. Arthur; Special Programs and Meetings, Chairman, Dennis W. Madden.

## CONVENTION - GOERS REFLECT

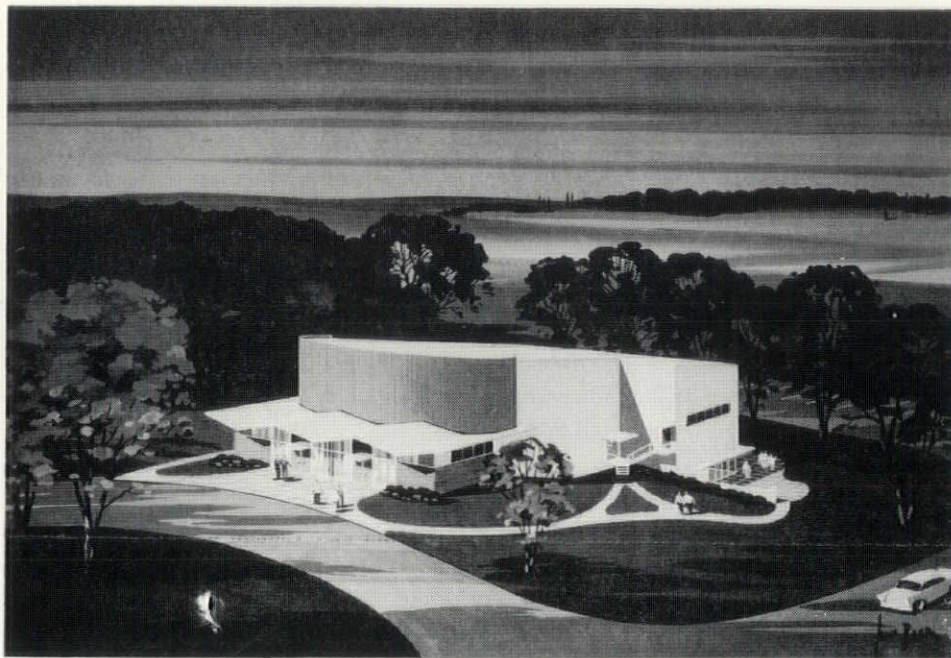


According to all reports the AIA Convention in New Orleans was a huge success. Attendance was excellent, the program well received, and Old New Orleans gave forth with its usual charm and hospitality.

Here Potomac Valley convention delegates, Jack Cohen, Len Haft, E. B. Morris, Sr., and Ron Senseman reminisce over those pleasant days. Also attending from the chapter was Mort Noble.



## ROCKVILLE CIVIC CENTER



*An important addition to Rockville's Civic Center now consisting of a thirty-room Colonial Mansion and twenty-eight beautifully landscaped acres in East Rockville on Baltimore Road, will be this auditorium and social hall. Designed by chapter member Stanley H. Arthur, the auditorium will have a capacity of five hundred—expandable to seven hundred and fifty—complete stage and dressing rooms.*

*The social hall on the lower level will accommodate three hundred—expandable to six hundred—and include kitchen facilities. Completion is planned for early fall, 1960, so that dedication and a theatrical presentation can be one of the highlights of Rockville's Centennial Year which will be celebrated with various events beginning in March.*

### New President Active In Chapter Affairs

President Ben Elliott, one of the new members of the Executive Committee (Secretary Ted Cromar is the other fellow), is no stranger to Potomac Valley Chapter programs.

Active in chapter affairs since its formation five years ago, Ben served as vice president for two years immediately following the chapter's organization. Since then he has been busy as Chairman of the Public Relations and Publications Committee. For three years prior to Potomac Valley, Ben was Secretary of the Maryland Division of the Washington Metropolitan Chapter.

As Chairman of the Public Relations and Publications Committee, our president was active in launching the publication of the Potomac Valley Architect and two years ago he and his committee published the first Biennial Awards issue which received national AIA recognition.

A native Washingtonian who was born in the shadow of the U.S. Capitol, Ben attended McKinley Tech and Catholic University, from which he graduated in 1948. His architectural education was interrupted with a two-year stint with the Army Corps of Engineers in World War II in the European Theatre from where he brought home his bride, Mary Dickenson of Birmingham, England.

Registered in September of 1948, Ben worked with Cliff White and Johannes & Murray until he opened shop in 1950 in Silver Spring. In 1957 he and Andy MacIntire set up the partnership of Elliott and MacIntire which numbers among its projects motels, schools, churches, industrial buildings, Army Reserve Centers and limited residential work.

Active in civic affairs, Ben is a member of the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, West Montgomery County Citizens Association, Exchange Club of Silver Spring, Washington Building Congress, and an unassigned member of the Washington Metropolitan Chapter AIA.

With wife, Mary, and children—Paul, 11, and Sarah, 7—Ben lives at 11000 Dobbins Road in Potomac, Md., where he is currently busy designing the Potomac Swimming Pool and Recreation Area.

During his term of office, Ben hopes the chapter will "better acquaint the public with the architect's position and responsibility for the betterment of the community." Still another aim is to encourage young men with architectural talents to adequately prepare themselves for practice.

## HERE and ELSEWHERE

### SMITH-KEOGH BILL REPORT

Chances of the Smith-Keogh bill being considered by the Senate before Congress adjourns are pretty slim. The bill, it will be recalled, would permit self-employed to take current tax deductions on a portion of income set aside for retirement purposes. The bill has already passed the House of Representatives.

The situation is not hopeless, however, since the Senate, which has not acted, will still have the bill under consideration during the second session of the 86th Congress which convenes next January. Those interested can urge consideration by contacting their Senators.

### ASSOCIATE CERTIFICATE WELL RECEIVED

There is a good deal of interest in the Potomac Valley Chapter's move to recognize their associate members with an appropriate Certificate of Associate Membership.

Blank copies of this certificate can be made available to other chapters in the country with their chapter names suitably inscribed. All chapters interested should address their inquiries to the Secretary, Potomac Valley Chapter AIA, 8226 Fenton St., Silver Spring, Md., and state quantity desired.

### AWARD OF HONOR

Entries for the first AIA-National Association of Home Builders architect-builder team competition should be submitted by October 1, 1959.



*Benjamin P. Elliott, A.I.A.*



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