

Profile:

Doug Berryman, AIA, New Chapter President



As the Pittsburgh Chapter AIA celebrates its 100th anniversary, Doug Berryman, AIA assumes the reins as Chapter president. A graduate of William and Mary College with a degree in political science, Berryman earned his second bachelors degree in architecture from Carnegie Mellon University.

After a stint in the Army, Berryman returned to Pittsburgh and worked at two other architecture firms before founding his own practice in 1973. Today that practice specializes in residential design.

Though Berryman is of a philosophical nature, he doesn't shy away from controversy and holds some admittedly unorthodox views on some of the burning questions of the day—not the least of which is the evolving role of the architect as this century draws to a close. COLUMNS spoke with him recently on this and other issues:

On the blurring of the architectural, engineering, and interior design disciplines....

“The positive and negative aspects [of the melding of the disciplines] are only relative to what the ‘traditional role of the architect’ has been. A hundred years ago, we were still master builders involved in every aspect of the process—not only the engineering of buildings and homes—but right down to the finished details. Those architects who still fancy themselves in the traditionalist approach probably view the overlapping of other disciplines as a negative. I don't see it that way. I think that if we're strong enough, we can still do all those things. We may be confused by the blurring of the roles, but we certainly have the tools to either regain, to some degree, that which we had, or to establish exactly what our niche is supposed to be.”

On increased specialization...

“I think that the profession at large has probably permitted that to happen. Whether we did it willfully or not I don't think is relevant. Interior design has developed as a profession and I think our ability to get the same kind of work is limited only by our desire to get it, and by our willingness to accede to the demands that are expected of the interior designer.

“Architectural engineering is almost the same kind of a thing. We've let that discipline develop by itself. We rely heavily on civil and structural engineers because they have become specialists and we, as architects, have been concerned primarily with creating the shells and the interior spaces that then get decorated or get engineered.

“Now I wouldn't say that the architect has absolved himself of the responsibility of acknowledging the function of a building because I think that's something that we do. We don't turn our backs on how the building should function. But because of the specialization of the various fields, when we get good competent consultants, it frees us to a certain extent to concentrate on that which we feel we do best.

“I think that the successful projects are those that put together a team—whether they are in-house engineers, interior design sections in our own firms, or outside consultants. A successful piece of architecture is going to be a cohesive amalgamation of all of those disciplines. There are going to be times when it's a team, and times when it's going to be an architect who can do it all. A lot of it is affected by budgets.

“I think that these days, we're searching for



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what our identity is supposed to be. The other disciplines are not going to go away. They've created their own niches, and if we're left with a smaller niche, then it's our job to be as strong as we can to expand it."

On the role of the university in training architects....

"This issue transcends fields. The practicing architects, the employers, have said many times that they are dissatisfied with the type of person coming out [of the universities]. In this day, we need someone who can be profitable for the firm immediately. That does not mean they have to know everything. But they have to be better prepared to enter the field.

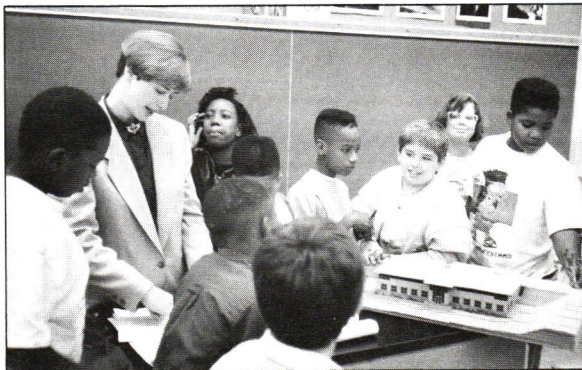
"But there are points to be made on both sides and that's why I tend to be more conciliatory on this. We still need the fanciful approach. There are times when I think that it is unfair to put budget constraints on a burgeoning designer coming out of a design-oriented school. They need to be given free rein, otherwise they're not going to grow. But, by the same token, at some point, they have to be reined in a little bit. So I don't take one side or the other. I see a need for dialogue—there has to be a middle ground."

On the changing role of the AIA....

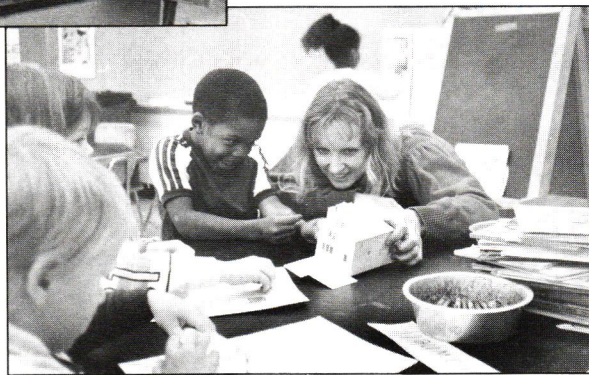
"I think we need to open up. The role of the AIA is to *push* the whole practice of architecture, the field and everything therein. We don't get anywhere by being defensive and closed in. Paul Theroux said that architecture is the art of understanding human uniqueness and then making an appropriate shelter for it, to give it a place to flourish. One thing [as Chapter president] that I want to do is at least *indicate* that there's something there for all of us—whatever that shelter turns out to be." 

It's Elementary my dear: Architects in the classroom

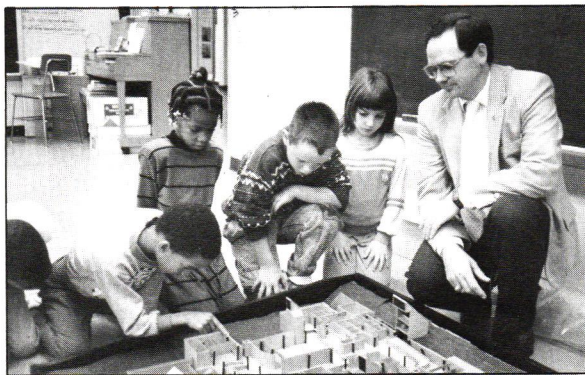
Nine chapter members shared secrets of the trade with youngsters at Chartiers Elementary School in October as part of Pittsburgh History and Landmarks' *Architects in the Schools* program. Students had the chance to role-play a discussion between architect and client, design a community plan, handle building materials including marble, brick and terra cotta, and construct a bridge. Volunteers are still welcome. Call Diane DeNardo, PHLF, 471-5808.



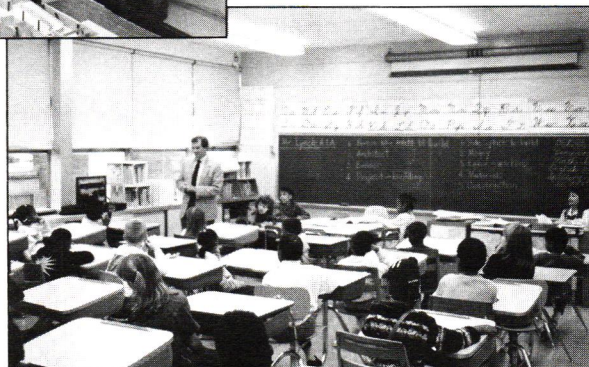
← Even Bart Simpson looks interested as Cherie Moshier, AIA (Design Alliance) explains site plans for the Angerman Corporate Center at RIDC Park.



→ Wide eyed in wonder, a first grader explores a model with Stefani Ledewitz, AIA (Quick Ledewitz Architects)



← Ken Evans, AIA shares his scale model of a school with 3rd graders at Chartiers Elementary.



→ "Who makes buildings?" asks Robert Dale Lynch, AIA as he helps students discover the role of the architect in the world around them.

Other AIA members not pictured who participated in this program are: Marsha Berger, AIA, Gary Carlough, AIA, N. John Cunzolo, AIA, and Charles Wellington, AIA.