

PROFILE

KENT EDWARDS, AIA

Firm: Michael Baker Jr., Inc.

Training: B.A., B. Arch. Kent State University.

Personals: Married, two children.

Chapter Activities: President, 1989, First VP, 1988. I was Vice President of the Eastern Ohio Chapter before I moved to Pittsburgh. Somehow Lana or Bill Bates found out about that. Skipping the normal pattern, I went from being a worker on the state convention cocktail party to joining the board.

Leisure Time Interests: I generally spend free time with my family.

Specialty: I've probably fallen into the trap that a lot of architects have—I've focused on management more than design: production personnel issues, marketing, office administration, financial management.

When and Why You Chose Architecture as a Career: Eighth grade. We did a profile on



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what we wanted to be when we grew up. My best friend did his on becoming an architect and that sounded like great stuff. Then in my third year of college I decided that architectural school took up too much time and I was missing out on other things. I left and took my other B.A. I worked for a couple of years and then I went back into architecture.

Favorite Project: My favorite is still my first—a small doctor's office. I liked the way the project turned out—the client was happy.

Favorite Pittsburgh Building: It's not a building, it's a place. I tend to be attracted to places like Mellon and Market Squares, not the buildings that surround them. If I've missed out in a career opportunity, it is to get more involved in urban design. I've always really enjoyed it. Open spaces ultimately appeal to me more than buildings.

Favorite Building in the World: LeCorbusier's chapel at Ronchamps.

Most Enjoyable Aspect of Architecture: I enjoy the early stages of a project, particularly with a new client and building type. Everything is so fresh and possible at that point.

Least Enjoyable: It's probably universal—collecting the money.

World's Greatest Architect: Saarinen—He had

no formula. He never forced the idea. His best buildings were truly distinct from each other and were done in different materials. He came up with fresh solutions to each new problem.

Most Aesthetically Pleasing City: This may seem truly odd but I have to say New York. The contrast between the good and bad is so great that it makes the good look even better. I like *spaces* again—Central Park, small vest-pocket parks. I think boulevards like Park Avenue have a special character to them. If I had to pick one element I like the best it's the cross streets. You're surrounded by corporate headquarters and glitzy shops, and right around the corner you're in a totally different environment. It's a contrast—one is so massive and the other is so intimate, you feel like you've entered a time warp.

Advice to a Student of Architecture: I think architectural education has failed the profession. It doesn't prepare graduates for what they will be doing and as a result, they don't make much money compared to other professionals. Even when practitioners teach, they tend to go into the abstract or theoretical, rather than bringing the practical realities of their profession to the classroom. I wouldn't mind seeing a student revolution in the curriculum. Learning should be more comprehensive, to reflect what architects really do. Design is a specialty. Schools treat everybody as if they were going to become designers. And they're not! Architects abate asbestos or replace roofs every day, yet graduates aren't prepared for this kind of work. The IDP Program is the clearest evidence that the educational process has failed. There are 700 value units that you have to collect on your IDP and only 35 of those are in design.

What Gives You Itchy Fingers: Almost any place along the rivers. The city has made poor use of an incredible resource. The water has such an enormous attraction for people. Even the places we have created close to the river's edge are separated from the water by railroad tracks or highways. I'd like to see residential developments right along the water's edge, even reaching over the water. I suppose the North Shore is a better opportunity because of the southern exposure, so somewhere on the north bank of the Allegheny or down the Ohio would be the best place to start.

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