


a WOMAN'S *view*

BY JANE FREDERICK, AIA

"Look like a girl, think like a man, act like a lady and work like a dog." Was the description of being a woman architect by Lucille Raport in 1960.¹ Times have changed since I was a one year old and women were only 1% of all the registered architects in the country. Currently 13% of South Carolina architects are women so there is still ample room for growth.

I have been very fortunate in my architectural career. Opportunities to serve on the AIA/SC board, the South Carolina Board of Architectural Examiners (SC/BAE), National Council of Architectural Registration Board (NCARB) test writing committees, and the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) visiting teams have been very rewarding. There are two factors that contributed to the doors opening to these positions. One was running for United States Congress for the second congressional district in 1998 and 2000. I was not elected to congress, but Governor Hodges appointed me to the SC/BAE as my consolation prize. The SC/BAE was the introduction to the national organizations of NCARB and NAAB. The second and more important factor was being a partner in a firm with supportive partners. I could not have run for congress without the support of my then business partners, Robert Montgomery, AIA and Michael Frederick, AIA (who is also my husband).

One challenge that many women architects face is how to complete IDP, get registered, and progress in a firm while getting married and having children. I went the route of getting registered before having children. I took the paper and pencil test when it was given once a year over four days, more of an endurance test than anything. I know today the test is more comprehensive because I have been involved in NCARB's writing and grading committees for the past seven years. I recently became a LEED AP and can appreciate how much more discipline is required to take exams at will; the thought of losing a year when the exam was given annually was a great motivator.

The following conversation was overheard between tests during my 1985 exam. One woman candidate to another woman; "Did you study for the exam?" "Oh yes, Victor took the kids to the zoo on Sunday and I studied then." From my recent conversations with women architects and interns throughout South Carolina, the path to licensure and firm ownership has not gotten any easier in the past twenty-three years. Many women mentioned the unspoken rules, expectations and road blocks that they have encountered, magnified by a sense of isolation due to a lack of mentors. The AIA Theme for 2009 is Diversity, let us find new ways to support one another and strengthen AIA/SC by reflecting our state's diversity in our membership. 



¹ "Wanted: More Women Architects, One Says" by Mary Lou Loper, Los Angeles Times, November 11, 1960.

Editors Note: Jane Frederick is a partner in the SC architectural firm of Frederick + Frederick. She is the AIA/SC Secretary/Treasurer 2008-2009, is married to Michael Frederick, AIA and is the mother of two daughters.