

# Point of View

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

### Unite/Enjoy

## *Treasure the fellowship of an old AIA tradition*



by John D. Anderson, FAIA

Those of us converging on Denver for the 2001 convention will be the latest generation to carry on a vital tradition. That tradition was established when architects first met in New York City in 1857 to create the American Institute of Architects and, even more importantly, to create a new profession. It's captured in the opening words of the objects of the AIA, which state, "... to organize and unite in fellowship."

The first AIA convention was in New York City in 1867, and—132 conventions later—we're still uniting in fellowship for reasons just as valid and meaningful, if not more so.

#### A team sport at its best

Yes, we are an organization of individual members who are passionate individualists. Just listen to the way we talk (and argue!) about everything from architectural education to the weather. Still, after all is said and done, the true genius of our craft is that we work together. More so than ever, including working with an ever-expanding group of consultants. Indeed, architecture has been well described as team sport at its best. Celebrate that special sense of a common purpose that has always been such a powerfully positive force. Allow the fellowship of the convention to reenergize you.

There's the delight and wonder that come from hearing the leaders among us who are shaping the future in evermore exciting ways. Lest you think I'm talking only about the Libeskind and Calatravas of the world, be reminded that the lady with the new, sustainable building material or the guy promoting the latest cyber-wrinkle also takes us to that future. It all happens on the AIA Expo floor.

Programming your Palm Pilot won't be easy. Between the plenary sessions, panel discussions, the business meeting, continuing education seminars, and Expo, there will be tough but delightful choices to be made as to how you balance the competing temptations.

#### Unadulterated fun stuff

But be sure to end work in time to enjoy the unadulterated fun stuff, beginning with the weather. Those of you coming from the South will get another crack at spring. If you're from the still-thawing North, you can't get enough of a good thing. There isn't a better time to enjoy the tours, the great food, the run in City Park, and the Host Chapter Party at Ocean Journey.

(Why in heaven's name, you may ask, is there a world-class aquarium on the banks of the inch-deep South Platte River? Just show up, explore, and find out for yourself. But don't forget to budget some time to head up into the mountains.)

On a personal side, it's great to run into colleagues and their families whom we haven't seen for a long time, swap tall tales that have been happily enhanced by the good economic times of the recent past, and make a new connection or two that will grow well into the future. Best of all, the fact of our eternal youth is confirmed as we spot friends who, unlike us, are losing hair and aren't doing much better with the battle of the bulge.

#### Enjoy the evolution

My wife, Flodie, and I are well into our 50th year in Denver. You'd think we had seen it all. Yet we still marvel at our good fortune in coming out here sight unseen to be a small part of making it a great city. "Making" is the operative word. When you cut to the core, the city is best described as a work in progress, a dynamic mix of great neighborhoods, unchecked sprawl, and a vibrant, revitalized downtown. Sometimes complementary, sometimes competing, but always interesting, the many faces of Denver continue to evolve. There is much to learn from this evolution and much to bring back home.

If I were a gambling man, I would bet that when you unpack your memories of Denver, you will treasure the fellowship. I'm also willing to bet you will return informed, inspired, and convinced there's something very special out here in this oddball time zone that is never mentioned in TV promotions.

That's just the way we like it. ■■■