

# AT A Glance

## Rosemary McMonigal



DAN MARSHALL

### STATISTICS . . .

**OCCUPATION:** Sole principal and founder of Rosemary A. McMonigal Architects in Minneapolis. The six-person firm is known for its residential work and child-care facilities, including Capitol Child Care in St. Paul and the expansion of the YWCA's day-care facility on Nicollet Mall.

**AGE:** 34

**RESIDENCE:** An 880-square-foot house in

northeast Minneapolis. McMonigal and her husband gutted a 1926 bungalow and reshaped it to better fit the site, to gain an additional room and to allow more efficient traffic-flow through the house.

**FAMILY:** Husband, Jim Korba, works as an auditor at Retail Inventory Services in Hopkins. The couple shares their home with two cats.

**EDUCATION:** McMonigal earned a bachelor's

degree in architecture and environmental design from the University of Minnesota School of Architecture in 1981.

**RESUME:** From 1978 to '82, McMonigal worked as an intern architect at Cenex in St. Paul, where she returned in 1983 after spending a year in Vaasa, Finland, on an architectural fellowship. In 1984 she worked briefly for Levine Architects in Minneapolis, designing retail and commercial spaces, before launching her business.

At first, she had no thoughts of going after residential work. "As a woman, I did not want to be trapped into doing houses," she says. By chance, a commercial client asked her to design his house in Wayzata and now two-thirds of her firm's work is residential.

### OPINIONS . . .

**ON HER CHOICE OF PROFESSION:** "My love of it came from the arts. From the time I was a young kid, I loved to draw. I remember reading a book in high school that said if you liked art and math, architecture would be a fitting career."

**ON ARCHITECTS AND GENDER:** "The year I graduated from the university's architecture program, maybe 10 of us were women. Now I believe the U's architecture classes are more than 30 percent women.

"In some ways, men's and women's architectural training is the same, but maybe women bring a different way of communicating to the business, a different way of listening. You can't say across the board:

'All men do this' or 'All women do this.' But I think in general, the architectural field is getting to be less of an Old Boys' network.

"A lot of people seek us out because we're a woman-owned firm with women architects. Actually, more men say that to us than women. It always surprises me. I often ask them why and they say: 'We think you're going to be more perceptive.'"

**ON THE TWIN CITIES' NEW-HOUSING STOCK:** "I find it disappointing. Less than 1 percent of houses in our area are done by architects. I think that's going to change because people are getting more aware of where their dollars are going: why their houses don't fit the site better, why they are not energy efficient, why there's nothing unique about their houses."

**ON THE COST OF AN ARCHITECT:** "Architects can bring a value in terms of layout and design that saves square footage and results in energy efficiency. That alone can pay for the architect's fee. A lot of people think architects do only the big mansions. My firm is now doing four or five houses under 1,500 square feet. If a small house is done well, you don't need a lot of square footage."

**ON DESIGNING CHILD-CARE CENTERS:** "When we started to do more housing, I realized that a lot of child-care centers have an institutional feel and I thought it would be exciting to



give them touches of residential design.

"What's challenging is that there's a lot of health-department and code control. Some places won't let us use a microwave. Can you imagine not using a microwave around kids?

"Philosophies widely vary in the field as far as how a place is run and how that comes out in the physical environment. One person might say: 'This place is too cluttered.' And yet another might walk in and say: 'This has all the characteristics I like. There's stuff stuck up on the walls; there are painted windows. There's a disarray to the space, and I like that.' That's what's interesting, to talk to the providers and find out how to mold the physical environment to fit their methodology."

#### **ON HER FAVORITE BUILDINGS DOWNTOWN:**

"Norwest Center has always appealed to me because of the materials — for instance, the use of Kasota stone. My favorite lobby downtown is in the Dain Tower because of the proportion of space. And I've always admired City Hall, those big blocks of stone, the massiveness. Because I think in terms of space, not just buildings, I like St. Paul's Rice Park, the way it's edged with buildings of different styles."

**ON HER FAVORITE PROJECT:** "Right now it's a house in Stillwater that I've worked on for about four years. The project is interesting for three reasons: One is the 70-acre site

it's on. Another is the owners' history; they had worked on a Navajo Indian reservation for a while and brought a liking of geometric shapes to the project, so the house ended up having a strong circular core that's very unique. Finally, we had a contractor, Ken Nastrom, who is a true artisan, a true craftsman, and who took great pleasure in doing a lot of detailing with art glass and woodwork that's not typical in most houses."

**ON GOALS FOR HER FIRM:** "It's common in our profession to hire when you get a big project and lay off people when the project is done. A goal of mine is not to further that trend. I have to work hard at marketing to

keep an even load coming in.

"Our architects come from a wide variety of projects. We've done work for the state, churches, handicapped-access buildings, retail and commercial work, but we prefer not to shoot out blindly at all types of jobs. We look forward to challenging design projects. Doing high-rise projects has never interested us."

**ON HER WORK:** "I can truly say I enjoy it every day. The reward comes in seeing something that gets built that you've created and seeing someone pleased with what you've done. They even send us flowers!"

— *Bette Hammel*