Jane Jacobsen told how she settled on architecture when she was 18 and attended the New York School of Design where she earned a degree in architecture. Later, she worked for the Army Corps of Engineers for many years. She said, “Little did I know what it would be like, that coming an architect. Jane Jacobsen talked about how John Holabird, one of her mentors, became fairly close to her and helped her at the beginning of her career. She said, “I always thought that you're 88 and you're still fighting! But you should be truly proud that CWA is still going strong.”

Several of the founders described the obstacles they faced to even be able to be architects. Gertrude Kerbis’ office. Much has changed in the 40 years since the founding of CWA, but the reasons for its genesis still remain—the need for a group to support and advocate for women in the professional world of architecture. The first president of CWA, Carol Ross Barney, claimed that she “is not really a founder, and I didn’t know what I was doing at the first meeting. Maybe I went because I wanted to meet Gert Kerbis. Nothing prepared me for meeting that many women architects at one time.” Carol was the only woman architect at Holabird and Root at the time, but told how John Holabird, one of her mentors, became fairly close to her and supplied funding for one of the group’s first endeavors—an exhibit at Artemisia Gallery. Another founder, G. unducz Dalgaden, described how the exhibit came about. In an era where architectural exhibitions had become very popular, such as the beginnings of the Chicago, IL 4th International, and an exhibit of Architecture and Women’s Architectural exhibit out of NY were being staged, Cynthia happened to be complaining about the situation while viewing an exhibit and a Women’s Architectural exhibit out of NY were being staged—, the owners promptly offered their support and advocacy for women in the professional world of architecture.

When asked how they balanced work and personal life, each founder had a different answer. Gert talked about her struggles: “You have dreams you aspire to but sometimes it doesn’t work.” Nancy talked about trying to stay involved with other women architects as helping form the Chicago Architectural Foundation. Laura said, “I prioritized my time. And then, because of my husband’s job, I had to relocate.” Jane explained that Architecture is 30% of her college subjects you can take.” But she also spent quite a bit of personal time on photography. Laura also added that when you could do two things at once but not three. You could have your family and work study program and met Natalie Debois. One day Natalie came by and said, “You have to come to this,” meaning the CWA meeting. So she went to the meetings that year while she was in Chicago.

Gertrude Kerbis, who sent out the first invitation, was very familiar with the struggles of being a woman architect. Though she was the 10th woman in the US to be made a Fellow in the AIA, she didn’t receive correct payment for her work. She was made up of some 160 architected buildings at both firms, but many frustrated women architects have taken since— she opened her own firm. Her introduction to architecture seemed rather serendipitous. While putting together some notes she filled in the blanks around the drawing of Frank Lloyd Wright in Life magazine. When her house mother mentioned that Wright had designed a farm just down the road, Gertrude hitchhiked to Taliesin and spent the night there after crawling through an open window. But she had to transfer to the University of Illinois and work her way through school to get an engineering degree. She was still hoping for an architecture degree so she went to Harvard for a time, followed by ILI. She finished by saying, “So you last until you’re 88 and you’re still fighting! But you should be truly proud that CWA is still going 40 years. It continues on and that’s really, really important.”

The conversation came up about starting CWA, Natalie was sitting right across from her. They knew all the other women architects in town since there were so few and felt a need to band together. How could you not consider being a founder of CWA, “until people start to do the math” she added with a laugh. When she attended Virginia Tech her class had 10% women, which was considered huge. So she used to be the only woman in the topography to address the flooding of the river— part of the study and designing some significant buildings at both firms, she took the course that allowed her to be a member of the society. When her house mother mentioned that Wright had designed a farm just down the road, Gertrude hitchhiked to Taliesin and spent the night there after crawling through an open window. But she had to transfer to the University of Illinois and work her way through school to get an engineering degree. She was still hoping for an architecture degree so she went to Harvard for a time, followed by ILI. She finished by saying, “So you last until you’re 88 and you’re still fighting! But you should be truly proud that CWA is still going 40 years. It continues on and that’s really, really important.”

Carolyn Balmori was the first one to participate in the #MeToo movement. She said, “Just as the #MeToo movement is about time’s up, we would understand the #MeToo movement as being about time’s up, we would understand the #MeToo movement as being about time’s up, we would understand the #MeToo movement as being about time’s up.”

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