

WITH ARCHITECT GREGORY WIEDEMANN

BY JENNIFER K. DANSICKER

Gregory Wiedemann, AIA, Principal of Wiedemann Architects has been recognized with nearly 100 design awards and has been widely published over the last 25 years. And though he may have the right to rest on his laurels, he prefers to nurture and develop new talent and push the boundaries of architectural design to accommodate his clients. He works closely with his team of nine associates on every single project.



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PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICOLE MARTYN

Located in Bethesda, Maryland, Wiedemann Architects was established in 1984 (practicing as Muse-Wiedemann Architects from 1985-1994) and is a full-service architectural firm with experience in a variety of design projects, from residential additions to large institutional and commercial projects. In addition to architectural services, the firm offers services in feasibility studies, site planning, master planning, urban design, and interiors.

Wiedemann Architects is perhaps best known for the design of sympathetic additions to older structures, for “additions so seamless they look as if they have always been there.” And though the firm has been known locally in the District for many years, it is currently very active all over the region including Baltimore County and the Eastern Shore.

How did you get started as an architect?

Although my interest in architecture is rooted in my childhood, I spent my undergraduate years exploring a variety of related fields including engineering, theoretical mathematics, fine arts, and urban studies. I came to architecture slowly.

I received a Master of Architecture from Harvard University and was fortunate to receive the Frederick Sheldon Traveling Fellowship, which enabled me to travel the world before returning to Washington, DC where I grew up. Early in my career, I joined the architecture faculty at the University of Maryland. Some of my associates are former students and each brings a unique talent that makes the firm what it is today.

What do you love most about your job?

In the beginning, it is the joy of solving the puzzle that draws me into the project. I then take the clients’ memories of home, the uniqueness of the place, and their diverse collection of images to find a timeless interpretation of “home” that connects all those pieces of the puzzle.

If you could change one thing about your industry what would it be?

Architects are in a critical role to promote a sustainable future. The buildings we design will be inherited by future generations. We all need to do more to salvage the best examples of past architecture and build new buildings that are environmentally conscious and will age gracefully.

What accomplishment of yours makes you the most proud?

There is no greater sense of accomplishment than when a client acknowledges that we have created a comfortable home and a sense that the home seems to have always been there. Regardless of style, the work is rooted in an authenticity, a strong sense of context, and an appreciation of each commission.

Who in your life was most instrumental in helping you get started with your career?

Many individuals that I have known have shaped my career, but my parents were certainly the most instrumental in helping me. They were supportive of a son that spent nearly ten years in college, always encouraging me to follow my own course.

What did you want to be when you were five?

As early as I can remember, I helped my father with the redesign of my childhood home. He would come home from the office, put on work clothes, and I would hold the other end of the two by four. Over a period of many years, stairs, built-in furniture, stone terraces, and entire rooms opened up to view in front of my eyes. If you asked me at five I probably would have said, ‘I want to be a fireman,’ but subconsciously I was learning to be an architect.

If you could do anything other than what you are doing, what would it be?

I would return to university teaching. I taught for about ten years, but gave it up when my two sons were born. I enjoyed mentoring future architects, although I think I learned more from my students at times.

What advice can you offer someone wanting to get started in your field?

My advice to my two sons is to find something they are passionate about and do it as well as they possibly can. A career in architecture was that for me. I continue to love what I do, continue to learn more each day, and can visit what we helped create...there are easier careers, but there are few as satisfying. ❖

Jennifer K. Dansicker is Special Projects Editor for ChesapeakeHome.