



# International Archive of Women in Architecture *IAWA Center News*

Fall 2008

No. 20



*Nakahara's house for a single working woman related to the design of a garden for the tea ceremony.*

## COMMEMORATING THE LIFE OF NOBUKO NAKAHARA

Donna Dunay, AIA

*Nobuko Nakahara, first president of UIFA JAPON and vice president of UIFA, died on July 5, 2008, at the age of 79. An extensive interview with Nakahara by Junko Matsukawa-Tsuchida was published in the 2007 IAWA Newsletter.*

To commemorate the life of Nobuko Nakahara, copies of exhibition boards by her were displayed at the IAWA Center Annual Meeting at the Virginia Tech College of Architecture and Urban Studies

this fall. To open the exhibition, IAWA Advisor Junko Matsukawa-Tsuchida spoke of Nakahara's professional life. Matsukawa-Tsuchida told that Nakahara's mother worked as a city councilor and her father was a teacher. Nakahara's career in architecture started with a visit to an architect's office to seek employment. The office was laid out with 10 occupied desks, with no room for an additional employee. The principal of the office offered Nakahara a job if she could design the office for 11 desks. She did, and got her first job with an architect. In 1953, she founded PODOKO with 28 other Japanese women architects to indicate the importance of gathering women to discuss architecture. In Paris in 1963, as an intern architect, she helped initiate the Congress of the International Union of Women Architects (UIFA). As UIFA Japon President, she led the organization to prepare for the 12th UIFA Congress, Tokyo, Japan, in 1998 with the theme "People, Architecture, and Cities in an Era of Environmental Coexistence." Many remember the special highlight of the congress when Nakahara, herself, performed the tea ceremony for the 300 members in attendance.

The exhibition boards displayed were copies of ones Nakahara made for the *Women & Architecture: Creating Better Housing and Cities/Towns for Supporting Both Work & Family Life* exhibition, held at The Center for Advancement of Working Women, Tokyo, Japan, in 2002. The boards were donated to and are preserved and stored in the IAWA.



*Junko Matsukawa-Tsuchida presenting the work of Nobuko Nakahara at the 2008 IAWA Center annual meeting*



## NATALIE DE BLOIS PAPERS COME TO THE IAWA

Martha Thorne

It was Chicago's gain when Natalie de Blois returned to the city several years ago. Today, she is someone you might see around Chicago's Loop, lecturing at a Chicago Women in Architecture event, attending a cultural function, or visiting a friend's office and talking to young architects. Although born in New Jersey, she seems to embody the best of Midwestern values: hard-working, straight-talking, open-minded, smart, genuine, and a good friend. She has practiced architecture, taught, and undertaken professional service, especially in the support of women in the field of architecture. A lover of modern architecture, she worked on large corporate structures and was involved in all stages including planning, design, and engineering. It is surprising to think that with such a long and distinguished career, it is only recently that she is gaining the attention she deserves. Her story, like that of many women architects, is one that reflects the reality of practice in 20th-century America—it is that of a professional with immense talent who contributed so much to many noteworthy buildings. Yet, even with the publicity her work indirectly received in the 1950s related to Skidmore Owings and Merrill projects, her name and career deserve much more.

Natalie de Blois was born in 1921 in Paterson, N.J. She began her studies at Western College for Women in Oxford, Ohio, where she had been granted a scholarship. She knew she wanted to go into architecture; her mother, a teacher, and her father, a civil engineer, were supportive of this choice. Although her hope was to attend MIT, it required a two-year stint at an undergraduate school prior to admission. Her father found out that Columbia University had changed the requirements for entry into professional programs. So, after only one year in Ohio, she was able to transfer to architectural studies at Columbia in 1940. Her class of 18 included five women, a high number for that time, but one that could be explained in part due to the draft requiring many young men to go into the military service. She worked during her college career at several jobs—teaching; drafting; at Babcock & Wilcox, which made boilers during World War II; and for Frederick Kiesler, who as an architect, theater set designer, and professor.

Upon graduation, she was hired by architect Morris Ketchum, who was known for his modern designs especially for New York shops. When Ketchum's firm, Ketchum, Gina, and Sharpe,

increased in size, he moved it to a space in the same building as SOM. This move later became important. As Natalie explains it, her departure from Ketchum's firm was due to the maneuverings of a fellow employee. It was a change she didn't expect or want; however, Ketchum introduced her to the neighbor firm of SOM, where she was offered a job. Soon after joining SOM, she was asked to work on the designs for specific commissions, granting her considerably more responsibility than the lettering job she had when she started there. Her earliest design work, for example, included the design of the podium, translators' boxes, and dais for the renovation of the New York State building at the site of the 1939 World's Fair. She also worked on the United Nations headquarters, where Skidmore was a technical advisor.

In 1946, Louis Skidmore received a hotel commission in Cincinnati and de Blois began work on the Terrace Plaza Hotel, in reality an innovative mixed-use project for its time. It was a scheme for the two commercial buildings and hotel. De Blois worked on many aspects of the project and in one interview recalls her numerous alternative schemes for the dining room on top of the hotel. In the early 50s, she spent time in France and Germany combining a Fulbright Scholarship and work in SOM's overseas offices. She was a senior designer on the Consular-Amerikahaus program, which consisted of several building consulates in German cities under Gordon Bunshaft's supervision.

Upon returning to the United States, she worked with Gordon Bunshaft in the New York office and remained there until 1961. Under Bunshaft, she contributed her expertise in planning, design, and engineering to some of the most challenging commissions in the office, such as: Connecticut General Life Insurance Company (1957) and Emhart Corporation in Bloomfield, Conn., completed in 1963; the Hilton Hotel (1955) in Istanbul, Turkey; and the Pepsi-Cola (1959) and Union Carbide (1960) buildings in New York City. As an example of her participation in the Istanbul Hotel project, De Blois stated that for the hotel:

We used a concrete structural system, which was something new for me. We used a box frame, which was particularly suited for a hotel where the walls were concrete... and there were no dropped beams. That's what a box frame is. It's like putting a lot of shoeboxes together. The walls of the box were every fourteen feet. The wall then became a sound barrier between rooms, and the ceiling was flat. It was a system that

had been used on other hotels. I figured out that's what I thought we ought to do and Gordon agreed. So that's a very interesting building. It's built right on one of the highest points in Istanbul, overlooking the Bosphorus. It's really a gorgeous site. It drops quickly down on the far side. There were several restaurants and a front court surrounded by shops off the entry. This was a Hilton hotel and the program was specified, of course, by the hotel owner.

The Pepsi-Cola Building on Park Avenue in New York City, with Natalie de Blois as senior designer, has been called one of the most elegant buildings of its era and is clad in what appears to be a weightless screen of grey-green glass and aluminum. In 1962, for family reasons, de Blois moved to the Chicago office of SOM, and began her collaboration with Bruce Graham. She worked on an Arthur Andersen & Company training Center, St. Joseph Valley Bank headquarters, and two offices buildings for the Oliver-Tyrone Corporation. Although she became associate partner in 1964, things began to sour with Graham and from 1969 she worked with SOM partner Myron Goldsmith. Finally, after 30 years at SOM, Natalie De Blois left. She took time to travel in France, Germany, and England. She worked with the National Women in Architecture Task Force of the American Institute of Architects in Washington D.C. In 1976, she moved to Texas, where the architecture and construction industries were strong, and worked for the office of Neuhaus and Taylor, later called 3-D International. She remained there for four years.

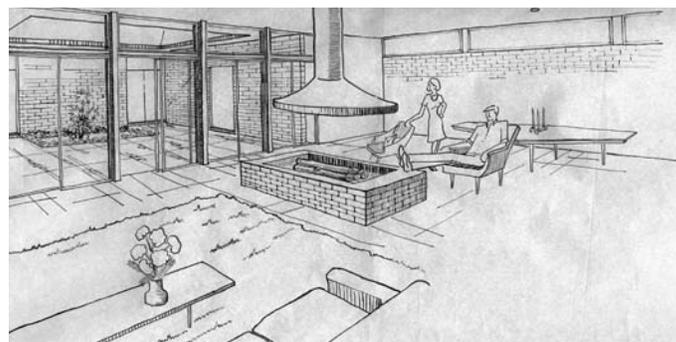
In 1980 she began the next phase of her career, as a teacher in Austin, Texas. She began teaching part time and loved it. Her schedule expanded and she remained at the University of Houston until 1993 teaching advanced architectural design, visual communication, and technical communication. Her advanced design studio had a reputation for being pragmatic and intense. She was awarded the Texas Society of Architects Award for Outstanding Educational Contributions in 1998.

Natalie de Blois is known within the community of women architects as a beacon for women's rights and a true supporter of women in the profession. Her legacy is far-reaching. She was a founding member of Chicago Women in Architecture in the mid 1970s., and started groups in Houston and Austin when she lived there. All these activities, however, are worthy of an entire article, in and of itself.

## MOSS PAPERS COME TO THE IAWA

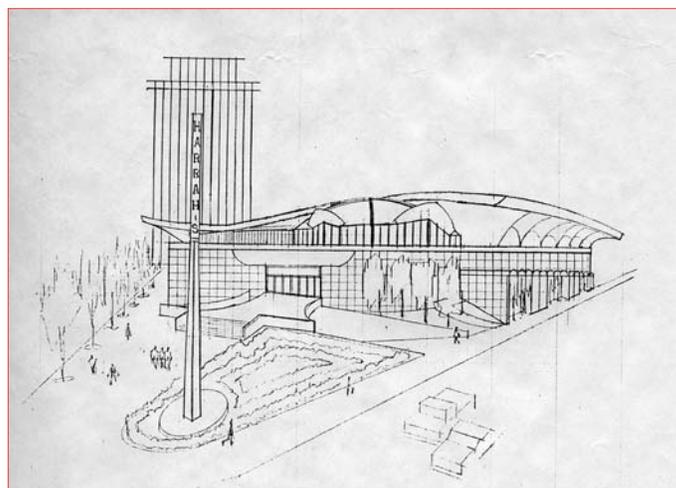
Aaron Purcell, PhD

*Aaron Purcell started work as director of special collections at Virginia Tech in November 2007. For the previous seven years, he served as university archivist and coordinator of research services at the University of Tennessee. During the past year, Purcell has made substantial progress toward the larger goal of establishing special collections as a center of research.*



*Residential interior drawing (Moss Collection)*

Betty Anne Lipper Moss died at her New Orleans, La., residence on Monday, Oct. 22, 2007. Moss was a native of Houston, Texas, and a New Orleans resident for more than 60 years. She attended Newcomb College, and received bachelor's and master's degrees in architecture from Tulane University. She was a conservationist and an active voice in preservationist circles. Moss's collection was given by her daughter, who lives in Idaho. The collection contains architectural drawings, office files, and a small personal library. Processing will begin this summer.



*Rivergate Complex, Harrah's Casino, New Orleans, La., 1956 (Moss Collection)*



**MARY BROWN CHANNEL, A PIONEER IN VIRGINIA  
ARCHITECTURE**

Donna Dunay, AIA

“Back in the late 1920s when she was a math major at Randolph-Macon Woman’s College, Mary B. Channel designed a career for herself that few women attempted: She aspired to be an architect,” opens a 2006 *Virginia-Pilot Hampton Roads* newspaper article describing the life of Mary Ramsay Brown Channel (1907–2006). The article tells some of her earliest memories; she fondly remembered seeing the final Buffalo Bill Cody Wild West Show in Portsmouth, Va., when she was nine. The article concludes with the words of Rev. Ronald E. Grieser succinctly eulogizing, “She broke the glass ceiling softly and in a beautiful way.”



*Mary Brown Channel’s file storage box*

Channel is one of Virginia’s first licensed women architects, having received her license in 1935. For women during this period, the issue of language clearly reveals their status as pioneers. On the registration certificate she received to practice as a certified architect, the broad, arching calligraphy of the Commonwealth of Virginia frames the proclamation that reads, “Know all men by these presents that Mary Ramsay Brown has given satisfactory evidence that he has the qualifications required by the law regulating the practice of Architecture in this State, and he is hereby authorized to practice as a Certified Architect in the State of Virginia.” The telling disjuncture of her name in the contradiction held by the defining words of the proclamation—the noun men and pronoun he, used twice—speaks of that era.

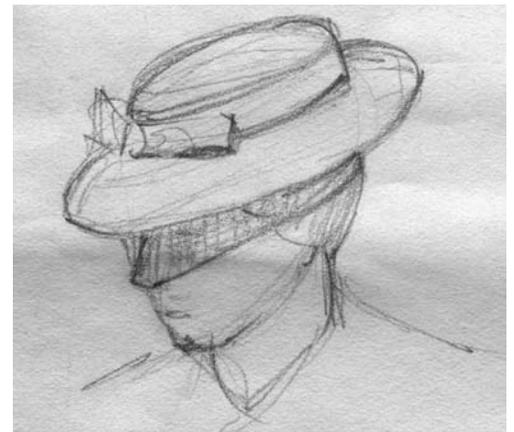
In 1929, after graduating from Randolph Macon Women’s College in mathematics, she wanted to follow in her brother’s footsteps to the University of Virginia to study architecture. Since

the University of Virginia did not admit women to the program in architecture, she ventured to Cornell University, graduating second in her class in 1933. There, she made history as one of two students to win the Baird Prize Competition Medal. The six-day competition for architecture students in their junior and senior years was for the design of “ a monumental aeration fountain for the city reservoir.” An article in the *Herald Tribune* announcing the historic results features a wonderful portrait of Channel at her drawing board with the caption, “Miss Mary R. Brown, of Portsmouth, VA., first girl to win the Baird Prize Competition. She was awarded second prize medal.”

As Channel’s work was being cleared from her house, Virginia Tech architecture alumnus Chris Wildman thought it would be a valuable part of the historical record and should be preserved in the IAWA. After receiving her work later, the IAWA examined and catalogued it with her son and daughter-in law, Warren and Gayle Channel. The simple box she hand crafted for project file storage expressed her ingenuity. By lacing a corrugated cardboard box with string, she fashioned a matrix of labeled cells to receive project rolls. The rolls of tracings, delineated with precision pencil work, bring authority to her architecture. “She could draw a perfectly straight line without a ruler,” Gayle Channel tells us.

A short biography accompanying some of her matted work reveals Channel “began her career in architecture with the firm Rudolph, Cooke and Van Leeuwen in Portsmouth, Va., drawing no salary for two years while she gained experience. She worked with the team that designed the Norfolk Federal Building. After the birth of her first child, a son, she opened her office and worked from home, specializing in residences and church buildings in the Tidewater area of Virginia. She worked well into her 80s, and maintained her license until 1990.”

*Mary Ramsay Brown Channel, sketch of a woman’s head*



## THE MILKA BLIZNAKOV PRIZE

Donna Dunay, AIA, Milka Bliznakov Prize Committee Chair

Each year, IAWA invites architects, scholars, and researchers to honor IAWA founder and Virginia Tech Professor Emerita Milka Bliznakov through their research on women in architecture and the related design fields. This research, in concert with the preservation efforts of the IAWA, helps fill the current void in historical knowledge about women's professional achievements. The winner of the Milka Bliznakov Prize receives \$1,000. The applicants to the ninth annual Milka Bliznakov Prize have registered their proposals, outlining the research work they plan to complete within the coming year; and the center is currently reviewing those proposals. Over the years, awards and commendations have been received for research work on women in architecture from Switzerland, England, New Zealand, Spain, Germany, Turkey, and the United States. All materials received for the prize become a part of the archive.

For the seventh annual prize, the IAWA awarded a commendation to Eran Ben-Joseph, professor of landscape architecture at MIT, Cambridge, Mass.; Holly D. Ben-Joseph, landscape architect in Acton, Mass.; and Anne C. Dodge, a city planner in Cambridge, for their project, "Against All Odds: MIT's Pioneering Women of Landscape Architecture." Both the project and IAWA were featured on the MIT website:

[http://sap.mit.edu/resources/portfolio/pioneering\\_women](http://sap.mit.edu/resources/portfolio/pioneering_women) and published in the MIT School of Architecture's newsletter, *PLAN*, issue 69. The team is continuing research; they plan for an extensive exhibition next year. To participate in the 10th annual Milka Bliznakov Prize, register your project proposal by Nov. 1, 2009. For more information, go to <http://spec.lib.vt.edu/iawa>.



Research from the Bliznakov Prize Research Commendation, "Against All Odds," the Great (Killian) Court at MIT designed by Elizabeth Pattee and Mabel Babcock (Courtesy of the MIT Museum)

## NOTE FROM THE CHAIR/IAWA CENTER DIRECTOR

Donna Dunay, AIA

With the IAWA reaching its third decade, we are preparing to celebrate our 25th anniversary in 2010! The IAWA was founded in 1985 and houses more than 350 collections. We appreciate the contributions of: Betty Moss, Anne Moss Zenowich, Hartwig Moss III, Iskra Nikolova Petrova, Nevena Stoinova Kechedzhieva, Snezha Daskalova, Krasimira Zheliazkova Choneva, Milka Bliznakov, Alice Finnerup Moller, Marcia Feuerstein, Anna Sokolina, House + House, Lois Gottlieb, Natalie de Blois, Jude Hamilton, Lisa Taranto, Abbye A. Gorin, Lima/Adachiara Zevi, Evelyne Lang Jakob, Alexandrina Getov, L. Jane Hastings, Audrey Brians, and Dorothy Baxter Alexander.



IAWA Advisor Junko Matsukawa and UIFA President Solange D'Herbez de la Tour reviewing the IAWA exhibition at the 15th UIFA Congress in Bucharest, Romania

The IAWA exhibition *Three Decades of Collecting and Preserving the Work of Women in Architecture* was mounted for the 15th congress of the International Union of Women Architects in Bucharest, Romania (2008). It addressed the congress theme "IDENTITY: Preservation of International Heritage." The exhibit showcased the growth of the IAWA's contribution to history.

(Continued on page 6 . . .)



The UIFA congress again demonstrated great success in bringing women from around the world to discuss their work in architecture. Georgeta Gabrea, UIFA Romania President, promised the exhibition of the 15th congress UIFA would come to the IAWA after touring Romania this year. During the 2007 annual meeting, the IAWA UIFA exhibit was mounted for the occasion in the School of Architecture + Design at Virginia Tech. As part of the annual meeting, the IAWA held a symposium, *Finding Women in Architecture*, during which several presentations were featured: “Revolution from the Kitchen,” by Gunsup Rhie, Korea; “Learning with Frank Lloyd Wright,” by Lois Gottlieb, Frank Lloyd Wright apprentice, Taliesin West, San Francisco, California; “Mongolian Women in Architecture,” by Ochirpureviin Sarantsatsral, architect, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia; “Collateral Damage: Russian Patriotic War Memorials,” by Anna Sokolina, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio; and “Building Information Modeling,” by Kristine Fallon, FAIA, Kristine Fallon Associates, Chicago. Materials from these talks were contributed to the archive.

This year, we welcome Aaron Purcell, the new head of special collections, as archivist. The IAWA also welcomes new and returning advisors. Last year the board of advisors welcomed William Galloway and Lisa Tucker, of Virginia Tech, and Nicole Shiaris, of San Francisco, as new advisors. Returning advisors Donna Dunay, Solange D’Herbez de la Tour, Kristine Fallon, and Ochirpureviin Sarantsatsral complete the board’s roster for 2008–2011.

We thank advisor Ioana Plesca, of Belgium, who will be leaving the board this year. She is dedicated to researching women in architecture in Belgium and has offered to send the research work of her organization to the IAWA.



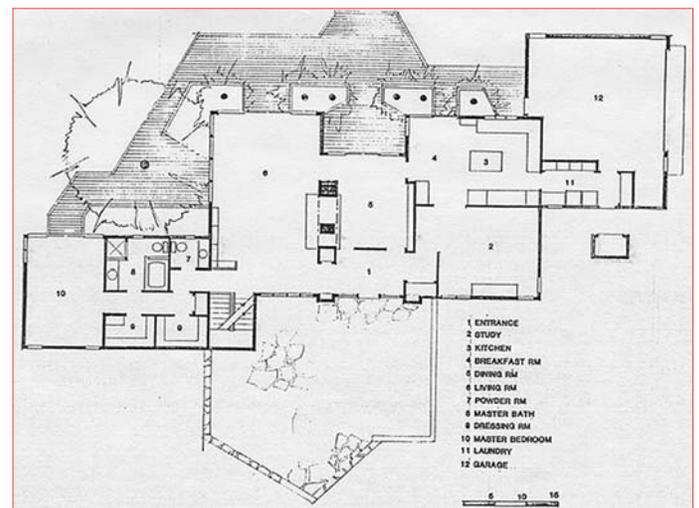
L–r: Milka Bliznakov, Junko Matsukawa-Tsuchida, Bill Galloway, and Kristine Fallon (advisors); Aaron Purcell (ex-officio advisor); and Lois Gottlieb (advisor) review drawings in the collection.

## IAWA: A RICH SOURCE OF RESEARCH MATERIAL

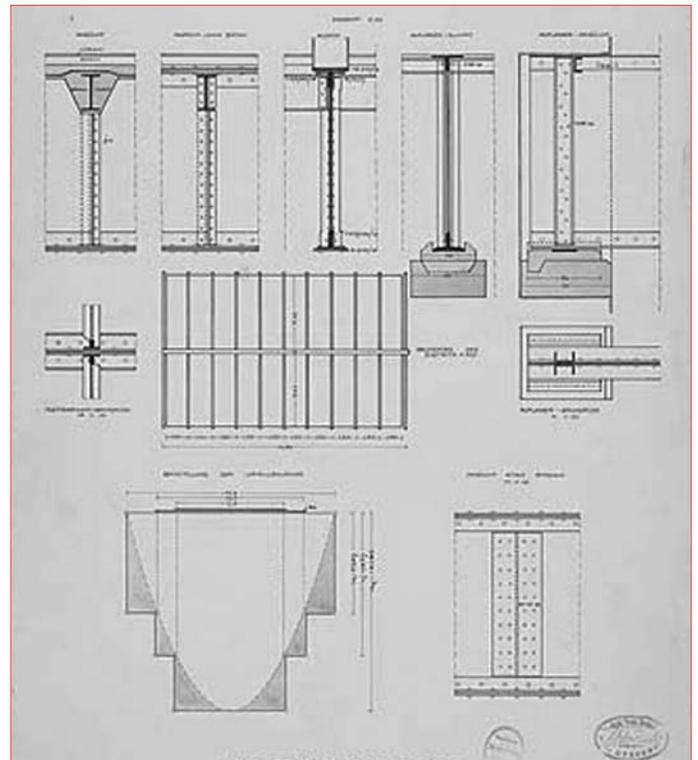
Marc Brodsky, Public Services Archivist

The IAWA, with more than 350 collections that document the contributions of women to architectural practice, offers an extraordinarily rich ground for research. Beginning with the papers, photographs, and drawings of those pioneering individuals who entered the field when opportunities for women were few, the IAWA continues to collect materials from contemporary women architects whose accomplishments stand equal with those of their predecessors. Virginia Tech Special Collections, home of the archives, not only provides access to an increasing number of collections and documents, but also offers, among its many services, instruction with regard to these collections as both introduction and an invitation to research.

These instructional services can take several forms and may be provided for either university classes or individual researchers, scholars, and students. Basic instruction is offered on the tools of archival practice, particularly the nature and structure of finding aids. These documents, produced by special collections, describe the scope and arrangement of specific collections and provide the gateway to their productive use. Further instruction into the range—across decades, beyond geographical boundaries, and encompassing many styles of work—of the IAWA collections, themselves, is also available. Of course, reference inquiries, specific questions regarding the collections, are also encouraged and gladly answered. For more information regarding instructional opportunities and the IAWA, please contact Marc Brodsky, public services archivist, at [marc9@vt.edu](mailto:marc9@vt.edu).



Plan, Glickman Residence, from the Eleanore Petterson Collection



Top: Lari residence. Yasmeen Lari, former IAWA advisor, was the first registered woman architect in Pakistan.  
 Bottom: Theis House living room, Olive Chadeayne

Top: K-brick, by Anna Wagner Keichline  
 Bottom: Lilia Skala, architectural details drawing



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## IN MEMORIAM: SALLY BOULD STAN, NOVEMBER 29, 1917–MAY 28, 2008

Sally Bould

Sally Bould Stan was a resident of Lafayette, Calif., for 50 years. She was dedicated to her family, her community, and her church. As a child in Taft, Calif., she designed and built an adobe brick clubhouse. Stan wrote briefly of her childhood, growing up in a house leased from the Honolulu Oil Company; this is on display ([www.westkern-oilmuseum.org](http://www.westkern-oilmuseum.org)) at the West Kern Oil Museum in Taft, Calif. Her interest in art and design led to her education at the University of California, at Berkeley, where she graduated from the School of Architecture in 1939. In her life-long career, she designed almost 2,000 homes, most of them ranch houses in Contra Costa County. After her children were grown, she devoted more time to her career; in 1985, she was licensed as an architect.

As a long-time active member of the United Methodist Church of Lafayette, she designed the remodel of the church office

building and the enlargement of the sanctuary. A selection of her work is archived by the IAWA (<http://spec.lib.vt.edu/IAWA/inventories/StanSB.html>). Although her career was extraordinary for a woman of her generation, she never thought of herself that way; her career simply reflected her long-term interests. Stan served on the board of the Lafayette Improvement Association as member, secretary, treasurer, vice president, and president over a two-decade period. She was the first woman to serve on the board and subsequently got other women involved.

Stan is survived by her daughters, Sherri La France, of Irvine, Calif., and Sally Bould, of Brookline, Mass.; her sister, Wena Dows, an architect in Culver City, Calif.; four grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her son, Robert Bould.