



Meet Margit Whitlock of AIA

LOCAL STORIES



Today, we'd like to introduce you to Margit Whitlock.

Hi Margit, so excited to have you with us today. What can you tell us about your story?

As a child, I was encouraged to be as creative as possible. From cooking to science, art, music, theater, and dance, I just liked making stuff. I made a lot of forts!! I did not know what Architecture was or meant until my SAT results pointed me in that direction. One day, I walked into my career counselor's office and asked to look at architecture schools to apply to.

My counselor said I should look into business or nursing and that Architecture was a man's profession. Well, that did not sit very well with my mom, and the next day, I was called to the principal's office, where my mom and the principal demanded the counselor apologize to me. At 17, I had experienced the glass ceiling, and I was not about to accept that.

I tell this story a lot because, in the 80s, girls were not encouraged to pursue the sciences, let alone Architecture. Thank goodness things are different now. Fast forward, I graduated from the University of Oregon with a B ARCH and headed to San Diego to start my career. In 1992 I started my firm and have enjoyed every moment of my life as a mom, architect, business owner, mentor and community leader.

Would you say it's been a smooth road, and if not, what are some of the biggest challenges you've faced along the way?

Well, that glass ceiling was hovering when I opened my firm, and it took years to earn respect from my male counterparts in architecture and construction. I really did not let it bother me, though.

The bigger struggles were more related to business management, finance, employee retention, HR, marketing, and building a brand, all things no one learns in architecture school. I really suggest young entrepreneurs get an MBA.

Can you tell our readers more about what you do and what you think sets you apart from others?

I think what sets us apart from others and keeps our clients returning is that we care. I am genuinely invested in my client's success, and design is a means to that success, yet so is time and money.

You need to approach a project as a whole. Having a good process, staying on top of the schedule and budget, and having great design is a win-win for everyone.

Can you tell us more about what you were like growing up?

I would say I was a playful child, curious, mischievous, creative, silly, girly girl.

I was interested in everything from gardening and rock hunting to fashion and theater. One big passion from early on has been cooking. I love to cook and put on a big party. I'm an extrovert, for sure!

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