



# The YAF Connection

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August 20, 2008

## ***Defining Achievement: An Interview with Barbara A. Nadel, FAIA***

Lisa M. Chronister, AIA

*Barbara A. Nadel, FAIA, principal of New York City-based Barbara Nadel Architect, was elevated to the College of Fellows in 2000, for service to the Institute. She was 2001 national AIA vice president, served twice as New York regional director on the AIA National Board, was 2002 chair of the AIA Academy on Architecture for Justice, and chaired the AIA national advertising committee. She is author and editor-in-chief of Building Security: Handbook for Architectural Planning and Design (McGraw-Hill, 2004). She received the 2005 AIA Institute Honors for Collaborative Achievement and the 2003 Milka Bliznakov Prize Commendation from the International Archive of Women in Architecture. Lisa M. Chronister, AIA, communications adviser for the 2006 YAF Advisory Committee, interviewed her for the YAF Connection.*

**LC: You have defined achievement as “what you personally accomplish and cause to happen.” How were you able to move beyond simply serving on a committee to achieving real results?**

BN: Being proactive and following through are important. While chairing the AIA New York Chapter Health Facilities Committee, I organized monthly programs; moderated panels; identified and invited speakers; wrote meeting minutes, announcements, and newsletter articles about our events; represented the committee at the AIA component, state, and national levels; and coordinated the routine logistics of funds, meeting spaces, and publicity deadlines with component staff. I collaborated with senior members at major firms on programs and activities and met many industry people and government officials as a committee point of contact.

In 1994, the AIA invited me on short notice to go to Washington, D.C., for a health care event and I was available. I lobbied former Vice President Al Gore at the White House to support health care reform for small businesses. We went to Capitol Hill and met with the late Senator Daniel P. Moynihan and provided useful information on renovating health clinics in underserved areas, such as Harlem, that resulted in funding legislation. Woody Allen was right when he said “90 percent of life really is showing up.”

The AIA New York Chapter Health Facilities Committee was a major time commitment over the years. However, I got a crash course in leadership, management, collaboration, networking, lobbying, public speaking, journalism, public relations, and navigating a three-tiered membership organization. All those skills were useful in various AIA positions, in my own architecture practice, and as a writer and editor. I got my start as a journalist by writing about our committee activities in *Oculus*, the component’s monthly magazine, and in *Texas Architect*, about how to run a committee.

Since then, my articles have appeared in more than 100 trade and consumer magazines, newspapers, books, and Web sites. My book, *Building Security: Handbook for Architectural Planning and Design*, featuring more than 50 expert authors, won two awards, including the 2005 AIA Institute Honors for Collaborative Achievement. *AIArchitect* (March 20, 2006) just featured the book as “the last word

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in security design," which is a tremendous compliment to everyone who contributed their expertise.

**LC: What tips can you give young architects who find themselves in new committee and board positions?**

BN: Tips for young architects on committees and boards include

- Approach AIA activities and committees as you would a project, with long-range planning, schedules, and budgets
- Volunteer in areas that interest you and you will be motivated to participate
- Offer to take on a task, no matter how large or small, and do it well; more responsibility and visibility often follow
- Demonstrate that you are reliable: show up, keep promises, and collaborate with others
- Build bridges with allied professionals by creating events and activities that benefit and educate the profession and the building industry
- Give appropriate credit to those who volunteer time and resources to AIA events and activities
- Always remember to thank AIA staff who work with you to bring all these activities to fruition and a successful completion.

**LC: Of what AIA service achievement are you most proud? Why?**

BN: After serving as New York regional director on the national AIA Board for three years, I was elected 2001 AIA national vice president. The members had just approved paying for an advertising campaign at the national convention. As vice president, I advocated, and eventually built consensus for, creating a multiple-message advertising campaign, reflecting the varied practices of a diverse AIA membership, from sole practitioners and large national firms to several building types most important to clients and the public, along with portrayal of men and women architects.

I'm most proud of the work product created while I chaired the AIA Advertising Committee, a diverse group representing various AIA stakeholders, and leading the effort that resulted in a successful three-year multimillion dollar print and radio broadcast advertising campaign, featuring *The West Wing's* Allison Janney, which ran from 2002–2005.

The ad campaign raised public awareness about AIA architects and the AIA brand, by reaching millions of targeted radio listeners and trade magazine readers across the United States and around the world. Whenever I heard the Allison Janney spot come on the radio or saw the ads in a magazine, it was gratifying to realize that I played an important role in bringing the message of the AIA to the public and raising awareness about what AIA architects do. The ad agency we worked with, Carton Donofrio, sent the committee members a framed letter of the radio spot text, signed by Janney, which is a wonderful reminder of this accomplishment.

**LC: Do you have any specific suggestions on how to get published or quoted?**

BN: To get published, you have to pitch story ideas to editors that they can use in a few well-written paragraphs. Study the publication or Web site to determine what kinds of materials they print, and be sure your story or press release addresses information that is relevant to their audience.

**LC: How would you suggest someone get involved in panel discussions and lectures?**

BN: For panels, having expertise in an area is helpful. Creating a compelling program that ties together an idea, project, case studies or a theme is usually a good approach. Get some great speakers that people will want to hear. Public speaking ability is very important for state and national conferences, along with an interesting program idea. Organizing panels and moderating programs at the local level is a good place to start. Understand what is involved in orchestrating the content and timing when more than one person will speak. Sometimes finding an

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affordable, adequate venue and date and coordinating the publicity can be time consuming as well. For conferences, preparing a winning program proposal, and subsequently a panel program with handouts, such as for the AIA National Convention, can often be a significant amount of work.

One of the most successful and exciting panels I've organized and moderated was at the 2003 AIA National Convention in San Diego. With the support of former U.S. General Services Administration Chief Architect Ed Feiner, FAIA, we had a panel with 2006 AIA Gold Medalist Antoine Predock, FAIA, 2005 Pritzker Prize Laureate Thom Mayne, FAIA, and 1995 RAIC Gold Medalist Moshe Safdie, FAIA, discussing transparent security in civic architecture. Moderating an all-star panel with these four well-known architects and an audience of more than 500 made me reflect upon the journey I'd taken since 1989 when I agreed to chair the Health Facilities Committee in New York.



*Lisa M. Chronister, AIA, is the communications adviser for the 2006 YAF Advisory Committee. A project manager with Helpern Architects in New York City, she is a member of AIA Brooklyn and also a past president of AIA Central Oklahoma. In recognition of her exceptional leadership in design and service to the profession, she was honored with a 2003 AIA Young Architects Award.*