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Reflections on a beloved planner's career

BY RICHARD KRIER, AICP

A few times in our lives we cross paths with soft-spoken planning heroes: the people who stick in our thoughts, influence us in deep but subtle ways and change our profession. At these crossings, we may not understand the influence that they have on us or how they have shaped our professional careers or personal lives. Barbara Lukermann, FAICP, was one of those unique people. Her subtle legacy does not end up as a monument on the mall, but is a much greater and deeper part of what we carry forward and provides a model that we can pass on to others.

When asked to write this memorial, I was struck by Barbara's role as a passionate educator and mentor, but I also knew a woman whose work in the planning profession changed planning's national identity. I knew a professional who changed the identity of many local communities and an international who was part of great democratic revolution in faraway places.

In our quest to understand Barbara better, we asked people to submit their memories of Barbara. What we discovered is a legacy, though subtle, that was part of a momentous change not only at the University of Minnesota but also in what we now identify as the field of planning. The following is Barbara's professional story that lives in our recollections.

Changing the national planning identity

Otto Schmid, AICP, tells the story of her dedication to professionalism and her work towards establishing a planning identity. In the 1970s the Minnesota membership was attempting to define its place as a legitimate member of professional practitioners alongside engineers and architects. Major concerns in those days centered around state licensing, national planner certification, a debate around physical and social planning along with the growing pains associated with regional planning in Minnesota. American Institute of Planners (AIP) newsletters from that time document planning's climb as a profession championed by a number of AIP heroes, including Barbara.

Gene Franchette, AICP, tells the story of Barbara as a sort of national planning icon, who according to Larry Mann, FAICP, played an active role consolidating AIP and ASPO (American Society of Planning Officials) into APA. Barbara was an AIP Board member and on the negotiating team representing AIP, the national organization of professional planners established in 1917. John Hertin, FAICP, former Executive Director of AIP, remembers her calm and conscious leadership. She was dedicated to professionalism, planning diversity and her belief that a consolidated organization would improve planning. It was a tumultuous time, as AIP consolidated with ASPO (American Society of Planning Officials), a historical organization of professional planners, planning commissioners, elected and interested officials. After this very emotional consolidation, Barbara was elected as the first chairperson of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) within the newly formed American Planning Association (APA).

The AIP/ASPO consolidation did not end the debate or the work. Bob Worthington, AICP, tells of her AIP and later AICP work in the early days to focus its mission towards the high quality professional organization that it is today. She believed professional planners needed to expand and diversify from an exclusive club of physical planning to a wide range of planning disciplines. Her tongue-in-cheek editorial during the 1972 AIP national election exemplifies this belief. She asked if there were any planners that would side with a leading candidate's statement that physical planning is what planners do best in alleviating social ills. She then answered her question: the need to include a wide variety of planners (physical, social, economic, policy, etc.) in the profession if it were to grow.

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Barbara Lukermann, relaxing at a friend's home

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Lukermann participated in diplomatic mission to China

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Otto Schmid, who served on the Minnesota AIP Board with Barbara, sums up her AIP days when he writes: "She will always be a vision of class and professionalism in this old planner's eyes."

Judith Martin, a colleague and friend, recalls the early days of the Humphrey Institute. As one of only two planning practitioners, she played an important role in creating a planning function in the school of public affairs and later was a major influence in shaping the Masters of Urban and Regional Planning program at the University.

Her influence on our profession did not stop at the *shining seas*. As a quiet but forceful pioneer, she was not only the first chair of AICP but one of the only women on the groundbreaking APA diplomatic mission to Communist China in 1979. The mission was a success for the United States, APA and for planning. Weiming Lu, AICP, describes the APA China mission as beginning to break down barriers and move the two countries toward closer relations. The China mission initiated what is now an important APA connection with China. Barbara continued her close connections with China, serving on the Municipal Planning Board of China. The Board is instrumental in helping to move the Chinese from the "cultural revolution" to become part of a fellowship of nations.

Later USAID asked her to help the newly emerging Eastern European democracies. Ronnie Brooks tells of the many trips to Romania working with nongovernmental organizations and local officials to establish participatory planning in what at the time, was a closed society. Working in Pitesti, Iulia and Bucharest, she and Ronnie helped this emerging democracy with development, planning and environmental programs, while offering the training, coaching, and education necessary to perpetuate planning. As related by Lori Marker (*Planning Minnesota*, Feb. 2004), Barbara also was a 'faculty trainer for developing the Public Affairs/Masters of Business program at the University of Olsztyn, Poland.



A photo of Barbara from the early years of her career

Personal heroes affect us daily as mentors

We expect educators, parents, older and wiser friends and supervisors to be mentors, but in everyday ordinary life she took time out of her busy schedule to mentor young professionals, the upward mobile planning group and, although we do not call it mentoring, the senior hard-knock planning group. There are many stories of Barbara mentoring students to become the next generation of planners; one of her self-described joys in life. One professional mentoring illustration is in Phil Carlson's story. Phil Carlson, AICP, while working on a premature commercial development took Barbara's advice on timing and location making it possible for Phil to be part of a successful development and enhance his working relationship with his client. As Phil tells it: What impressed him most was not that Barbara was right, but that she displayed the skills of an accomplished mentor with patience, kindness, and professionalism. She was patient with him, explaining step-by-step how to make the hard decisions—something she must have done hundreds of times before—but making it fresh, new, and exciting. Weiming Lu, a very accomplished planner, was amazed at her willingness to share her insight, critique, and intellectual challenge.

LUKERMANN CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

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She served as mentor to countless students and active planners

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Floyd Lapp, FAICP, (a later AICP chair) remembers her people skills in drawing others to do the best they could without showmanship.

Barbara made us feel respected, useful, and safe in our profession. Ken Buckeye, AICP and Barbara Sporlein, AICP, tell stories about how Barbara's smile lit up a room. Ken, then a young planner, was uplifted by how she sought out information, discussion, and friendship. It takes quite a person to take the time to call and see how you are doing and ask if she can help. This behavior made a difference that Barbara Sporlein says is the reason she and several of her planning colleagues serve as mentors, hire students for internships, present in various courses, and provide "real" projects for students to consider. Lukermann took the time for her and others, and she in, turn, tries to do the same.



Barbara Sporlein, current Minneapolis Planning Director, is in white next to Barbara Lukermann in this 1990 shot of the Humphrey planning class.

Barbara believed in us and believed that we could do well in our careers. The reluctant Barbara Sporlein recalls her comment: "Of course you can do this," when she made her the project team manager for a complicated and difficult project. Ronnie Brooks recalls many conversations with Barbara where she exhibited a "generosity of spirit" —that is, putting the best possible interpretation on actions unless proven otherwise. She thought of us that way and although willing to step up to the plate, she was always encouraging you to do your best, according to Judith Martin.

Changing the face of community

Community leaders radiate personality that serve as examples for the rest of us while building relationships and consensus. Larry Soderholm, AICP, long-time St. Paul planner, says he improved his leadership style based on some of these "Lukermannisms." His first impression of Barbara was at a Minnesota AIP chapter meeting and remained consistent through various contact he had with her throughout his distinguished career: "She impressed with her beautiful enthusiasm and her energy." John Hodges, AICP, who remembers Barbara from her National AIP days, tells how impressed he was with her objectivity and demeanor. Thomas Roberts, FAICP, who was on the ASPO negotiating team during the AIP/ASPO consolidation, felt that her objectivity and sensibility was the glue that held things together during the rather enthusiastic negotiations. George Latimer, former St. Paul Mayor and HUD director described her leadership style as "totally without pretention, bringing joy to the environment she entered."

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She was a model civic leader

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Her motto, according to George, was: "That's enough of assessing the problem; let's move to the solution." According to Richard Anderson, FAICP, former APA president and AIP/ ASPO consolidation negotiator, she was an effective, determined woman who stuck to her convictions that could always be relied upon. This reliability is illustrated in the story that John Uban, ASLA, a colleague at DSU, tells about her bailing him out of jail after he was arrested while doing research with her on a planning project. That is when reliability moves from niceness to a real-life difference.



If you observed Barbara as chair of many of the organizations that she belonged to you would, as Penelope Simison, AICP, observes, find a person who was not only generous but gracious with a good sense of positive subtle humor. This subtle humor is illustrated in an editorial that Barbara wrote for the Minnesota AIP Chapter's "Little Magazine on Urbanism and Planning" when she wrote: "wanted: ... Bellicose, outrageous statements of fact on the way planning decisions are made in communities; poetic flights of fancy in solid waste disposal; satiric cartoons on almost anything that planners do, or admit to doing; mini-planners note book case studies of miserable failures and/or brilliant successes in your own projects... may be submitted anonymously or posthumously published...". Judith Martin remembers her leadership style as collegial and cooperative. Barbara Sporlein remembers her taking a personal interest in her everyday life and her career. Taking the time to be interested in others is a trait elevating Lukermann far above the so-called civic leaders that we see all too often and a style that many of us try to emulate. The profession recognized this unique leader when APA award her the National Distinguished Leadership Award for a Professional Planner.

Barbara served her country, community and the planning profession with dedication, self-denial and without seeking fame. The following is a limited list of the planning and other boards and organizations that she served:

- Minnesota Chapter of the AIP, Executive Board
- AIP National Nominating Committee
- AIP National Board
- AIP Negotiating Team
- AICP Chair
- APA Board
- National Academy of Science Steering Committee for Cooperative Agreement with the Navajo Nation
- Municipal Planning Board of China
- Citizens League of Minnesota, Chair
- Metropolitan Waste Control Commission Chair (where she was dubbed the "Sludge Queen")

- Minnesota Environmental Quality Board
- AICP College of Fellows
- AICP College of Fellows Nominating Board
- St. Paul District Energy Utility
- Governor's Round Table on Sustainable Development
- Governor's Task Force on the Future of the Minnesota State Planning Agency
- Co-Chair of the Metropolitan Council's Regional Housing Task Force
- Real Estate Advisor to the Metropolitan Council
- Director of Graduate Studies at the Humphrey Institute

As a consultant partner at Midwest Planning and Research, she worked with numerous communities creating various plans and ordinances that changed community identity or built community character. There are very few Twin Cities suburban communities whose development has not been influenced by the skill that Barbara exhibited as a planner.

LUKERMANN CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

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Current job openings for planners

Deputy Executive Director – Washington County Housing and Redevelopment Authority

The Washington County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (WCHRA) is accepting applications for the full time position of Deputy Executive Director. Minimum requirements are a Bachelor's Degree in Housing, Public Administration, Planning, or similar field, and four years experience at a housing authority or public entity, non-profit, or for profit firm focusing on housing and economic development finance and programs. Position responsible for housing development programs, home ownership/foreclosure counseling programs, and capital investment planning. Excellent benefit package available, salary commensurate with experience beginning at \$70,370. To request an application packet, email smeza@wchra.com, call 651-458-0936, or download from www.wchra.com. Deadline for application materials is 4:30 p.m., Thursday, July 16, 2009.

RFP for Station Area & Site Master Planning & EA - Red Rock Corridor Commission

Washington County Regional Railroad Authority (WCRRA) in partnership with the Red Rock Corridor Commission (RRCC) is soliciting proposals for consultant services for the completion of Station Area and Site Master Planning and Environmental Analysis for the Southeast Stations of the Red Rock Corridor. These stations include Lower Afton Road (St. Paul), Newport, Cottage Grove, and Hastings. The work conducted for this study will be utilized in the development of station areas that can serve express bus service in the interim and transition to commuter rail in the long-term. A complete copy of the RFP is posted on the Washington County website (www.co.washington.mn.us) then click on "Info for Businesses" followed by "Bids/RFP Requests for Proposals, Current Listings." Proposals must be received no later than 4:00 p.m. on Mon., Aug. 3, 2009. *Salary Range:* Not to exceed maximum of \$1,150,000. *Deadline:* 4 p.m. on Mon., Aug. 3, 2009.

A bridge between theory and practice CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

As a researcher, numerous school districts depended on Barbara for her skilful demographic work. As an award-winning teacher, Barbara taught, mentored students and professionals well into their careers, published over 40 articles, journals and book chapters, and worked tirelessly at the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs.

Barbara described herself "as a bridge between the academic and practical worlds." She was a "new-age planner" championing the planning ideals born in the 1960s and debated in the 1978 AIP/ASPO consolidation. She believed that planning "deals with the values people hold" and to be a good planner, in the Jane Jacobs tradition, it is necessary to understand those values.

A graduate of Cambridge University and the University of Minnesota, Barbara ended her career as a Senior Fellow and faculty member at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute, a Fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planners, and most importantly a wife, a mother and a friend to all of us.

The consulting business involves long night meetings, long drives in the middle of the night when only the deer roam the roads and a chance get to know one another. From discussions on planning to sludge, from meeting strategies to the best affordable wines, from raising children to gas mileage, I, as many of you, got to know this remarkable woman. Thank you, Barbara, for all that you have done for each of us! Also, thank you to everyone who contributed their stories to this memorial.



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Summertime and my time is spent...commuting

BY CYNTHIA YUEN, MNAPA PLANNING STUDENT DIRECTOR

Wait a minute... isn't the line supposed to be "summertime and the livin' is easy?" Minnesota summers are perfect for long weekends at the cabin, bicycling around all the great trails we have throughout the state, baseball games, cookouts, outdoor festivals, etc. But how do I get to enjoy all the benefits of a Minnesota summer when I'm spending more time commuting to work, especially with all the road construction? Understandably, the majority of road construction occurs during warmer months in Minnesota, and with the burgeoning sprawl within the Twin Cities metropolitan area, we do need wider roads and HOV/bus lanes to accommodate our growing cities. But then again, all I really want is to just spend more time with my family and friends and enjoy the summer. It frustrates me that I lose so much personal time with my commute to and from work, with additional road closures and road blocks to get all the construction done nearly doubling my average commute time.



Enter eWorkPlace, a new state-sponsored program for Twin Cities metropolitan area employers that also works as a business strategy. Telework enables employees to work from home or a remote location and connect to the office via technology- internet, phone, and mobile devices. Complemented with flexible scheduling, including summer hours, telework can be performed on a full or part-time basis, thus not only saving teleworkers time and money, but also mitigating congestion on roadways, decreasing vehicle emissions, and helping us to "green" our lifestyle.

With increasing budget cuts, employers are finding it difficult to offer benefits to their employees. Employees are finding that their flex spending accounts (FSAs), health and dental insurance, 401K plans, and other benefits are all decreasing due to the tight economy. As a business strategy, telework is a benefit that employers can offer their employees that doesn't cost them any money. In fact, employers actually save money in terms of overhead and are able to retain employees that they otherwise would have had to terminate. According to a recent survey by Citrix Systems, Inc. called "Worldwide Workplace: The Web Commuting Imperative," 1 in 5 workers are willing to take a 5% pay cut for the freedom to telework 1-2 days per week. If this happened at a substantially large company, the employer's savings would be quite tremendous.

With telework and eWorkPlace, not only does my employer save money since I'm not in the office using my computer, lights, and other resources, but I do as well. Fewer trips to work equal fewer tanks of gas and less wear and tear on my car, as well as an increase in my productivity. I'm not getting up super early to "try to beat traffic" and still arriving late to work; I'm still getting up early, but I can start working right away and not lose any time. In fact, I'm gaining time, time to spend with my family and friends and to enjoy the Minnesota summer.



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Upcoming events for planners

FRI., JUNE 19, 2009. MnAPA Board Meeting. Location: Great River Energy 12300 Elm Creek Blvd. N. Maple Grove.

WED., JUNE 24, 2009. 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. The Metro District Directors bring you an opportunity to earn CM credits on the following topic: Balancing the Land Use/Transportation Equation. Location: SHE Consulting, 3535 Vadnais Center Drive, St. Paul, MN 55110. Contact: Kate Garwood, AICP, via phone or email: 763-862-4230 or kate.garwood@co.anoka.mn.us. Space is limited – please contact Kate to reserve your place. CM Credits: 1.25. Faculty: Uri P. Avin, FAICP, PB PlaceMaking; Terry Moore, FAICP, ECONorthwest; Bruce Appleyard, AICP, SERA Architects and Urban Designers.

MON. - WED., AUG. 10-12, 2009. 2009 Minnesota MPO Conference, St. Cloud. CM Credits available! The Complete Streets Workshop on Monday, August 10th will run from 10:00am-4:30pm and will include lunch and afternoon refreshments. The registration fee is \$45.00 and the workshop has been approved for 5 AICP CM. As noted in the materials, the workshop will feature nationally renowned experts Barbara McCann and Michael Ronkin.

The second page of the Registration Form provides info on Monday only attendance. If you are interested in attending the entire conference, you are more than welcome to register for that also, but again, AICP CM credits only apply to Monday's workshop.

WED., AUG. 12, 2009, 5 p.m. MN APA TAILGATE PARTY AND TWINS GAME. It is that time of year again for the MnAPA Annual Tailgate party and Twins Game. So in the final season in the Metrodome, let's all get together and cheer them on to victory against the Kansas City Royals! Tailgate Party starts at 5 p.m. and game starts at 7:10 p.m. This year, the tailgate party will be held in the parking lot of **LHB Architects**, 250 3rd Ave. N. (<http://www.mapquest.com/maps?city=Minneapolis&state=MN&address=250+3rd+Ave.+N>). This location is within throwing distance of the new Target Field where the Twins will be playing next year so we will get a preview of where to go next year! You are on your own for parking. There are parking lots in the area and on-street parking. After the Tailgate Party is over, it is a couple of block walk to the LRT station. From that station, it costs a half buck ride to the Dome. Planners, friends of Planners (very prestigious people, no doubt), family of Planners (including kids), and Planning students all welcome. **Cost:** \$25 gets you a \$22 ticket in the Section 221 (upper deck) between home plate and first base in row 10, 11 or 12 and a delicious hot dog or brat meal including chips, dessert and bottled water. A grill will be going so feel free to bring your own stuff to grill if you want something else. **MOST IMPORTANTLY**, bring whatever you want to drink other than water which means beer, wine or other mixtures. Please reserve your seat by sending a check for \$25 to "MnAPA" by no later than July 31st. If you just want to tailgate, send a check for \$5. Mail checks to Lisa Wittman, City of Golden Valley, 7800 Golden Valley Rd., Golden Valley, MN 55427. If you have questions, please call Mark Grimes at 763-593-8095.

THURS., AUG. 20, 2009. MnAPA Brown Bag Lunch: 12-1:30p.m. Event: Pedestrian Activity Audits in Hennepin County. Presenter: Peter Bruce, Pedestrian Studies. Location: Main Street North St. Paul (tentative).

THURS. & FRI., SEPT. 17-18, 2009. MnAPA State Mini Conference. In light of the 2009 National Conference, we will not be holding our annual State Conference. Instead we will hold a mini-conference at the Northland Inn in Brooklyn Park on Sept. 17-18. Interested volunteers should contact Peg Schmid at mnapa@buffleheadweb.net.

Ethics credits available for metro area planners

Missing your Ethics credits for your AICP certification maintenance? You can gain 1.5 credits to fulfill your CM requirement by attending a session on the following dates:

Wed., July 15, 11:30 a.m. at Great River Energy in Maple Grove (contact Jen Chaput at jchaput@greenergy.com)

Thurs., July 16, 11:30 a.m. at SRF Consulting in Plymouth (contact Jeremy Monahan at jmonahan@srfconsulting.com)

Thurs., July 30, 11:30 a.m. at SEH Consulting in Vadnais Heights (contact Kate Garwood at kate.garwood@co.anoka.mn.us)

Space is still available in all sessions, so make your reservation now!

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planning minnesota

published by:

The Minnesota chapter of the American Planning Association (MnAPA) publishes the newsletter on a monthly basis, with combined July/Aug. and Dec./Jan. issues.

submissions:

We welcome articles, letters to the editor, photos, calendar items, project profiles, planners on the move items, and other news. Job openings will be listed in the newsletter and posted on the MnAPA web site for \$25. Send all submissions via e-mail to jill_mazullo@yahoo.com.

deadlines:

All submissions should be sent to the editor by August 20, 2009 for inclusion in the September 2009 issue.

newsletter editor:

Jill Mazullo, Planning Minnesota newsletter editor, 1000 Friends of Minnesota, 1031 W. Seventh Street, St. Paul, MN 55102, Phone: 651-312-1000 ext. 204. E-mail: jill_mazullo@yahoo.com

changes of address:

Minnesota APA does not maintain address lists. All lists are maintained at the national office and mailed to local chapters each month. If you have moved, send your updated info to: Membership Department, American Planning Association, 122 S. Michigan Ave., Ste. 1600, Chicago, IL 60603-6107.

MnAPA administration:

The chapter web site is www.mnapa.com. Otto and Peggy Schmid are the chapter administrators. They can be reached at mnapa@buffleheadweb.net. Their address is 9288 Beverly Drive, Breezy Point, MN 56472. Phone is 888-882-5369.

