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# Anne Percival, Architect

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## Les expériences d'une femme architecte.

I am a resident architect for an athletic complex which is being constructed for the Conestoga College of Applied Arts and Technology. If anyone had asked me a year ago what I might be doing right now, it would never have occurred to me that I would be sitting in a construction trailer with safety boots on, the only woman involved in the building of this four-million-dollar project.

Although I spent five years at the School of Architecture at Carleton University in Ottawa, everything I am experiencing now is totally new to me. Schools of architecture have generally become so much more design- and planning-oriented now that they are no longer attached to Faculties of Engineering and have become autonomous entities. This trend has meant that it is possible to spend five years in a school of architecture and know virtually nothing about construction. Such was my state upon graduation as an architect in 1977.

After graduating, I was extremely lucky to find a job almost immediately. I had worked in architectural offices every summer during my five years at school, so that was an asset; nevertheless, competition for jobs in architectural offices is intense. (About half of my friends are working in Calgary or Edmonton.) Recent graduates looking for jobs through traditional sources like newspapers or trade publications can easily become discouraged—every employer wants a candidate with a minimum of five years' Canadian experience—unless you happen to walk into his/her office at the right moment. This was precisely what happened to me. I was there, I was ready to work, and the firm had just landed a large job.

I spent just over a year with this partnership before one of the partners suggested to me that I move to Kitchener and act as a resident architect. The idea struck me as little less than ludicrous at first; I thought over various ways of saying no, but there were so many reasons for saying yes that in the end

I succumbed to what I thought was a lack of judgement on the part of my superiors and accepted the job. I wanted and needed the experience in the field; I wanted to see a building come together from inception to completion: I liked the idea of working more or less on my own, taking initiative and shouldering responsibility; and last but not least, I hate to back down from a challenge.

And so here I am, reviewing shop drawings, issuing site instructions and contemplated change orders (!), writing up minutes of our job meetings, keeping an eye on the progress and quality of the construction, acting as a liaison between contractor and client, contractor and engineers, contractor and architects, etc., etc., and generally trying to help the job run smoothly by getting answers to questions rapidly: really very little to be afraid of so far. Naturally, I still long to be designing: that is why I went into architecture, not construction technology. But what I am learning here by watching this building piece itself together is of inestimable value to anyone who seriously aspires to become a good architectural designer.

As for being the only woman on the site—after five years of architectural school, being in a minority is not new to me, and I don't entirely dislike it, although given a choice I would certainly prefer to see a few more women out here. At school I never found that being a woman was a drawback (to the contrary, in fact) and I have not run into any unpleasantness in the real world either; my employers were very encouraging when I doubted my own capacity for doing this job. Not to mention the bottle of homemade crabapple jelly given to me this morning by the job superintendent. (I hope he doesn't think I'll fall for that old trick.)

So if you're contemplating entering non-traditional training come on in—the water's fine!

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## Women in Trades

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In an effort to cut costs and increase efficiency, the federal government has modified training allowances. Effective 2 October 1978, anyone put on training allowance is subject to the following schedule:

<i>Your Status</i>	<i>Old Rates</i>	<i>New Rates</i>
person with employed parent or spouse	\$45 per week	\$10 per week
with no dependants or employed parent	\$79 per week	\$60 per week
with one dependant	\$90 per week	\$80 per week
two dependants	\$97 per week	\$95 per week
three dependants	\$103 per week	\$110 per week

four or more dependants

\$109 per week

\$125 per week

For married women, living at home, the training allowance has been dropped from \$45 to \$10. Although this is not retroactive, it may reduce the incentive for women to increase their skills.

Let your views be known, make your voice heard on subjects like this. Write to your own MP and to the Minister in charge of Employment and Immigration, Bud Cullen, Ottawa.

If you have any concerns about trades training, or have any questions about the Women in Trades Training Project, contact the Women's Bureau, 241 Vaughan St., Winnipeg 944-3476 or at the Women's Study Centre, F311, Red River Community College Winnipeg 632-5188.