

YOUR CAREER

Back to the drawing board



Tom Kabelka/Chief Photographer

Milton Grew of Grew Design Associates in Bethlehem relaxes in his office.

Architects always drawing on their experience

By REBECCA NEVERS

Republican-American

Architecture is in Milton Grew's blood.

As a child, the Bethlehem resident watched his father draft building designs and talk to clients.

"And he often took me out on construction sites, so I saw it as fun," Grew said. "Very few youngsters get to see their parents at work."

With that positive view, Grew went to college, studied structural engineering and decided to become an architect. He completed a mandatory three-year training program and worked for architecture firms to gain experience. He recently formed Grew Design Associates International with his father, who now lives in New Brunswick, Canada.

Grew said there is no aspect of his job he doesn't love.

"I like the variety," he said. "In 10 years I have never had a dull day."

Architects must be up-to-date on building codes, know local zoning and building regulations, and know how to write technical reports and draw plans, Grew said.

"That's the fascinating part," he said. "You're doing so many things."

At any given time, Grew said he could be working on plans for a deck or a large building. He and his father are the project architects for the restoration of the Palace Theater in Waterbury.

"There's a lot more flexibility and a wider range of projects" when you're self-employed, he said.

Making it to the point in his career where he could start his

So you want to be an...Architect

Description: Research building code, local zoning regulations. Draw plans for buildings down to the last detail. Help hire building contractors and monitor construction.

Education: Degree from an accredited five-year architecture program recommended. Structural engineering or similar degree can be enough. Three-year intern development program required before taking license exam. License required to be an architect.

Helpful characteristics: An ability to work under pressure and take criticism. Talent in art and design.

Salary: Ranges from about \$28,000 to \$62,000.

More information: Connecticut Society of Architects, 87 Willow St., New Haven 06511, telephone 865-2195. American Institute of Architects, 1735 New York Ave. NW, Washington, D.C., 20006, telephone (202) 626-7300.

own business was not easy, Grew said.

Aspiring architects in Connecticut should first attend an accredited five-year degree program and complete a three-year training program, the American Institute of Architects said. Then they must pass a rigorous, four-day licensing exam.

Students are encouraged to enroll in an architecture program, but it is not required, Grew said. A student with a degree in a similar field, such as structural engineering, could balance the lack of education with more experience, he said.

Yale University offers the state's only accredited program, he said, and most students leave the state to get a degree.

Graduates are required by state law to work for three years with a licensed architect, Grew said. Then they take a licensing exam.

Not many pass on the first try, said Judy Edwards, executive vice president at the Connecticut Society of Architects.

"It often takes two or three years to pass the entire exam,"

she said. "The fourth day is often the hardest" because it deals with building codes and a single mistake can mean failure.

Despite the profession's image, architects do not make a lot of money, Ms. Edwards said. The average salary for an architect with two to five years of experience was \$31,100, according to the American Institute of Architects.

"Young people tend to glorify the profession," Grew said. "If you're interested in it, you should talk to people at firms and do some work to learn about the profession."

Openings are likely to be scarce, Ms. Edwards said.

"It's slow in the field right now," she said. "Some companies have had to downsize. There are fewer projects out there right now because there is less construction."

In 1985, 1,415 licensed architects were working in the state, according to the state Department of Labor. By the end of 1990, the department predicts 1,520 licensed architects will be employed in Connecticut.