



Photo by Brandon Flint

James Williams

Designing Excellence

By Janine S. Creager

Award for the year 2010. This award recognizes a TCA (Tilt-Up Concrete Association) member who is “committed to pursuing architectural design excellence and advancing the industry.” Far from being the first award Williams has received, it is his most cherished award to date.

“This industry only recognizes one architect internationally each year,” he explains. “And this year I was fortunate to receive this great honor. We strive to combine both form and function with materials and methodologies and find creative solutions to improving the quality of life.”

It is rare to find someone in the industry who is both an architect and an engineer. But Williams is more than that; he is a civil engineer, a licensed professional engineer, a structural engineer, an architect, and a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) accredited professional. This means that Williams not only knows how to draw up architectural plans, he also knows that the structure can actually be built.

“I look at it more of holistic approach to design,” he says. “I know how the house or the building will perform in an earthquake, under snow load, wind load, [and can] eliminate redundancy.”

Williams understands that every project has unique circumstances with varying factors and, therefore, must have unique solutions. Consequently, Williams and his associates take time to research each building from the ground up and from the inside out during the design phase.

“We have to understand how the building is going to be used, what are the intents of the owner . . . what the restraints are as far as finances, [site] orientation and weather conditions. We approach each project as something new. The big thing is there is always this argument, between form and function. We try to add a third level: feeling [which refers to] the experience that everyone has with that building, whether you work there, visit or provide services. We look at each person that will interact with that building and try to cater our design.”

Among his more than 3,000 projects and acclaimed designs are his personal favorites: the Clyde Company Corporate Office building in Orem, and Private’s Cove, a sprawling, themed private residence located in Boulder, Nevada. For all his efforts in these projects and others, Williams’ early-found passion hasn’t slowed a bit.

“I just love what we do so much that I usually will sleep four hours a night . . . It’s not work for me.” **UB**

To say that James Williams started out young in the architectural and construction business is an understatement. Before he had graduated from high school, he had already designed homes that were built near the Cascade Golf Course in Orem.

As a child, Williams was interested in art and drawing and while he was in junior high, teachers told him that he ought to be an architect. He recalls his grade from a drafting assignment that was worth 100 points back then.

“I ended up getting 350 points,” he says. “I outperformed everybody.” That outperformance continues to this day.

Williams, of AE URBIA and J.M. Williams and Associates, received the prestigious Irving Gill Distinguished Architect