

Sherry Kafka came from a small town in the Arkansas Ozarks. Her little community in the backwoods of that largely rural state had none of the artistic trappings that would later define her life and make her one of the most celebrated designers and planners in the country. In fact, she later reported, her town didn't even have a movie theater. Once a week, "a gentleman" would come to town with a tent, set it up in the square, and show a movie "if he didn't get drunk that week." Her family didn't have much money, and they moved around a lot trying to make ends meet. She went to sixteen schools in twelve years, and midway through her senior year she transferred from a fairly large school in Hot Springs to a tiny hamlet that had only six graduating students. "I think only five of us actually made it," she later reported. "I even went to schools that don't exist anymore because they were so small and could barely scrape together enough teachers." Yet all that moving didn't daunt her. "It made me forge my own methods of using what the schools offered me," she concluded. "I figured out very early that all schools are cultures, and my job was to go into that school and understand how that culture works." No one in her family had ever gone to college right out of high school, although her father did attend a Baptist seminary later on.