



2005 Winter Institute

By Michael J. Tylk, Chairman, NCSEA Continuing Education Committee

The 2005 Winter Institute in Scottsdale, Arizona on February 18 & 19, 2005, featured the following non-technical subjects: *Keeping up with the Law, Lowering Your Insurance Premiums, Implementing Value-Based Compensation, Foreseeing the Testimony of an Expert Witness, Selecting Your Successor, and Recognizing and Preventing Embezzlement*. Each afternoon, the program concluded with a round table discussion on the day's topics, as well as other areas of business practice.

Justin Weisberg, an attorney with Schuyler, Roche and Zwirner, discussed the erosion of the Economic Loss Doctrine in some states, allowing for more lawsuits against design professionals.



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water treatment plants, were identified, as were low risk projects such as warehouses and commercial structures.

Jon Magnusson, CEO/Chairman of Magnusson Klemencic, used audience breakouts into hypothetical companies to bring home the point that you get paid for the value that you bring to a project, not what it costs you to produce it.

Dr. W. Gene Corley, Senior Vice President of Construction Technology Laboratories, covered the qualifications of an expert witness (everyone was surprised to learn that the requirements are not very high), and how an expert can be disqualified. He also discussed the Daubert Ruling, originally intended to reduce the number of hired guns and allow only those opinions based on science. At times, however, the ruling has backfired and reduced the ability to defend engineering assumptions.

Sandy Blaha of Blaha Associates, a performance consulting

Mark Blankenship from AVA Insurance talked about the things that you can do to make a favorable impression on insurance underwriters. An example would be a project selection procedure that takes into account the client, the fee, the type of project, your experience with that type of project, and your ability to meet the project's schedule. Projects that are high risk, such as condominiums, parking structures and waste



Not everyone agrees.

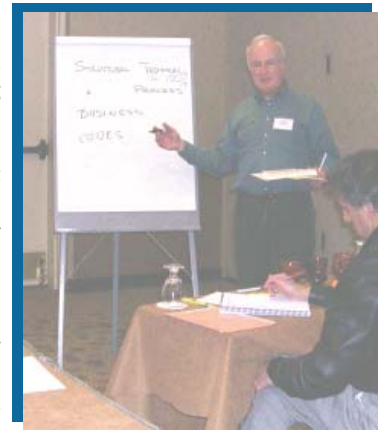
company, discussed methods of identifying those staff members who have high potential, advising, however, that you do not offer them stock in your company until their capabilities are proven.

Maria Kieras Vedral, President of Silver Edge System Software, Inc., explained and gave examples of the three elements that are usually present when you encounter embezzlement: motivation, opportunity and justification. Red flags include a bookkeeper who does not want to take vacation time or does not want to train someone else to do his or her job, or who works when no one else is in the office to monitor activities.

During the late afternoon of each day, Mike Tylk of TGRWA, LLC led a round table discussion. One of the topics involved allowing your staff to work at home. Some firms were against it altogether, while, for a few firms, it was the way they did business. Most firms allowed their staff to work at home on an as-needed basis, such as having a sick child home from school. One firm reported, however, that they had been embezzled out of about \$30,000 by an employee that was paid by the hour, worked at home, and turned in time sheets with inflated hours. Other topics of discussion included continuing education, dress codes and flexible time.

This year's Winter Institute was geared toward the owners and senior management of engineering firms. Attendance could have been better; therefore, the Winter Institute format and subject matter are likely to change. Possible formats include a one-day seminar followed by a second day of roundtable discussion, or a day of committee meetings followed by a one-day seminar.

A mini-version of the 2005 Winter Institute is also under consideration, for presentation in various cities this spring and summer. If you have an interest in this type of mini-seminar for your area, or if you have ideas for what you would like to see at next year's Winter Institute, please call Mike Tylk at 312-341-0055, extension 29. ■



Attendee Craig Barnes likes to see discussion points in writing.



Attendees work together as owners of a hypothetical company.



Talking things over at the closing reception.

SEAMT-Development of a Member Organization in Montana

By Carol J. Pivonka, President, SEAMT

On February 19 and 20, 2004, Marc S. Barter, SE – Chairman of the National Council of Structural Engineers Associations (NCSEA) Organizational Development Committee, and Jeanne Vogelzang – Executive Director of NCSEA, came to Montana and met with structural engineers to discuss the formation of a Structural Engineer's Association of Montana (SEAMT). Meetings were held in Billings, Bozeman, and Missoula, and structural engineers, building officials, and other interested parties came from all over the state to attend. Marc and Jeanne explained the process of establishing this non-profit organization and talked about the benefits of having an SEA in Montana. They also discussed NCSEA and the relationship SEAMT would have with the national organization.

On March 5, 2004, a meeting was held at Montana State University in Bozeman to further discuss the formation, goals, and objectives of SEAMT. A committee was formed at this meeting to write the bylaws, subject to approval by future SEAMT members. Dr. Dan VanLuchene of MSU set up a website – www.seamt.org – so that these bylaws and other information could be posted for viewing and comments. The annual Joint Engineer's Conference in Helena, MT was scheduled for November, 2004; and it was decided that officers would be elected and the paperwork for SEAMT's non-profit status would be completed at that time.

On November 4, 2005, SEAMT held its first formal meeting in Helena. The following officers were elected by ballot before the meeting: Carol Pivonka of Billings – President, Dave Roberts of Missoula – Vice President, Kurt Keith of Bozeman, Secretary,

and Janna Mosser of Missoula – Treasurer. The Directors are from Billings, Bozeman, Great Falls, and Missoula, so the organization is represented by structural engineers throughout the state. It was reported that the legal paperwork had been filed with the IRS. The bylaws were adopted, and membership categories and dues were determined. After much discussion, the SEAMT decided to develop a SEER Program as its first goal. The program would include structural engineers' support teams in each city, to assist the Emergency Response Systems that are already in place. The organization of this program is already well underway. There is an SEAMT-SEER Committee Chairman, as well as local SEAMT-SEER contacts in most Montana cities. SEAMT also decided to actively participate in NCSEA and will elect a delegate in March 2005 to attend the 2005 NCSEA conference in Kansas City this October.

Montana is a very large state with very few structural engineers, so the logistics of having an SEAMT that could maintain good communication and reach its many goals at first seemed a daunting task. But the volunteers who have worked so hard to make this organization a reality are also determined to make SEAMT a meaningful organization, dedicated to "promoting and elevating the profession of structural engineering in the state of Montana". The enthusiasm and dedication of the people involved made the formation of SEAMT a smooth and great success; and with continued hard work, we expect to succeed with our other goals as well. SEAMT thanks SEA of Colorado for their advice and help along the way and welcomes your visit to our website at www.seamt.org!

Call for Entries

NCSEA 2005 Excellence in Structural Engineering Awards Program

NCSEA announces the eighth annual Excellence in Structural Engineering Awards Program. Up to three Excellence in Structural Engineering Awards will be presented in each of the following five categories: New Buildings under \$10M, \$10M to \$30M, and over \$30M, New Bridges, and Other Structures. In each category, one of the three projects will be chosen as an Outstanding Project.

Entries are due on July 8, and awards will be presented at the Fairmont Hotel on October 29 at the conclusion of the NCSEA Annual Conference in Kansas City, Missouri. Winning projects will be featured in future issues of STRUCTURE magazine. For awards program rules, eligibility, and entry forms, see the Call For Entries on the NCSEA web site at

www.ncsea.com.

Call for Papers

2005 SEAOC Annual Convention

The Structural Engineers Association of California issues this Call for Papers to be presented at its 2005 Annual Convention, to be held at the Loews Coronado in San Diego, California. The dates of the Convention are Wednesday, September 28 through Saturday, October 1.

It is anticipated that the technical program will be composed of papers in Practical Design, Research/New Methods/New Application, & Business.

Interested parties should fax a brief (300 words or less) abstract of their paper before May 1, 2005 to: Casey Whitsett, Technical Program Committee, 2005 SEAOC Convention, Hope Engineering, 1301 Third Avenue, Suite 300, San Diego, CA 92101, Fax: (619) 235-4675.

Authors will be notified of acceptance around May 21, 2005 and papers ready for publication will be due on July 1, 2005. Authors will be provided with detailed guidelines for publication.

