



The Significance of September 11, 2001

By Jon A. Schmidt, P.E., SECB

It is one of those dates that is emblazoned in the memory of all who were aware of what happened and what it meant for the United States and the world. It obviously changed the course of my career forever, when you consider

that my secondary job title is now Director of Antiterrorism Services.

However, something else important took place on the morning of September 11, 2001 that did not appear in any headline. At the offices of Needham & Associates in Overland Park, Kansas, four individuals — Wes Britson, Jeff Needham, Tom Heausler, and I — met to complete the paperwork necessary to establish and incorporate the Structural Engineers Association of Kansas & Missouri (SEAKM).

Less than a month later, I braved long airport lines to travel to Manchester, New Hampshire, where I attended the NCSEA 9th Annual Conference as SEAKM's representative.

It was an incredible experience to be present for Leslie Robertson's emotional presentation about the World Trade Center towers and their untimely demise. I also had a chance to introduce myself to many of NCSEA's leaders, including the incoming president, Mike Tylk.

I subsequently learned of a new initiative spearheaded by a group of organizations that included the US Army Corps of Engineers and ASCE: The Infrastructure Security Partnership (TISP). The original mission of TISP was to collaborate on issues related to the security of the nation's built environment. I contacted Mike Tylk and volunteered to sign up NCSEA as a charter member.

Mike and the entire NCSEA Board of Directors were very supportive of my participation in TISP over the next several years. I attended a series of events, and reported on many of them in the NCSEA News section of STRUCTURE® magazine. These activities enabled me to interact with established experts in the field of antiterrorism and serve as a voice for the broader community of practicing structural engineers that is NCSEA's core constituency. I also became my firm's expert in this field, allowing us to pursue and perform work that otherwise would have required a specialized subconsultant.

At the same time, I was eager to dive into NCSEA committee work. In 2002, Mike suggested that I contact Stan Caldwell, who was the chair of the NCSEA Advocacy Committee at the time and was looking for new members. I decided to join the Clients & Prospects (C&P) Subcommittee. Within a year, Stan needed a new chair for C&P, and I agreed to give it a try. Stan and I worked very well together, and under his leadership, the Advocacy Committee prospered and grew.

During the NCSEA 12th Annual Conference in New Orleans in 2004, Stan mentioned to me that he had just formed a new ASCE task committee to develop a business plan for a new entity to be known as the Building Security Council (BSC). Inspired by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) and its Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for sustainability, the BSC's purpose would be to develop a rating system for buildings and a certification program for professionals, both addressing security.

Stan was aware of my role in TISP — which coincidentally was coming to an end because of a change in its focus and membership structure — and promised to get me involved in the BSC as soon as it would be appropriate. He eventually added me to the task committee, and later asked me to chair the Certification Program Development Committee (CPDC). This past summer, Stan invited me to join the BSC Board of Directors.

Finally, last fall, Ron Hamburger, nearing the end of his term as NCSEA president, asked me to consider taking over as chair of the STRUCTURE magazine Editorial Board. I believe that my regular attendance

at NCSEA Annual Conferences as SEAKM's Delegate, frequent TISP reports in NCSEA News, and service on the Advocacy Committee were all part of the equation that led to this development. You obviously already know what my answer was!

My purpose in writing this column is not to call attention to all of my "extracurricular" activities over the last five years. The point is to illustrate what can happen when you take initiative to be actively involved in doing something about the important issues that face our profession and our society as a whole. You never know what organization, or what relationships therein, will open doors to opportunities that you cannot possibly anticipate and that will greatly benefit you personally, as well as your employer.

NCSEA, CASE, and SEI are always eagerly seeking volunteers for leadership positions, committees, and other activities. I am grateful to people like Mike Tylk, Stan Caldwell, and Ron Hamburger — not to mention the management at Burns & McDonnell, especially my direct supervisor, Don McLaughlin — who have given me a chance to stretch myself in new and exciting ways.

What will be your September 11, 2001 — the date when you take action to make a difference? Why not today?■

"...to be actively involved in doing something about the important issues that face our profession and our society as a whole."

Jon A. Schmidt, P.E., SECB, is a senior structural engineer and the Director of Antiterrorism Services at Burns & McDonnell in Kansas City, Missouri. He also chairs the STRUCTURE® magazine Editorial Board.

Editorial Board

Chair
Jon A. Schmidt, P.E., SECB
Burns & McDonnell
Kansas City, MO
chair@structuremag.org

Executive Editor
Jeanne M. Vogelzang
NCSEA
Chicago, IL
ncsea@structuremag.org

Craig E. Barnes, P.E., S.E.
CBI Consulting, Inc.
Boston, MA

David Biggs, P.E.
Ryan-Biggs Associates, P.C.
Troy, NY

Daniel Falconer, P.E.
American Concrete Institute
Farmington Hills, MI

Richard Hess, S.E., SECB
Hess Engineering Inc.
Los Alamitos, CA

Brian J. Leshko, P.E.
Robert W. Hunt Company
Pittsburgh, PA

Bill Liddy
American Institute of
Steel Construction
Chicago, IL

John A. Mercer, Jr., P.E.
Mercer Engineering, PC
Minot, ND

Evans Mountzouris, P.E.
The DiSalvo Ericson Group
Ridgefield, CT

Steven E. Schaefer, P.E.
Steven Schaefer Associates
Cincinnati, OH

Greg Schindler, P.E., S.E.
KPF Consulting Engineers
Seattle, WA

Stephen P. Schneider, Ph.D., P.E.
Kramer Gehlen & Associates, Inc.
Vancouver, WA

John "Buddy" Showalter, P.E.
AF & PA/American Wood Council
Washington, DC