



In October 2005, I received a call from Ron Hamburger, who was nearing the end of his term as President of NCSEA. He informed me that Jim DeStefano had resigned as chair of the Editorial Board for STRUCTURE magazine, and he asked me if I would be interested in succeeding him. He described the job as primarily coordinating the work of the other members, which consisted of soliciting, shepherding, and editing articles for publication.

Ron gave me a week to think it over, during which I obtained more information about the associated expectations from Craig Cartwright, who was acting as interim chair; Jeanne Vogelzang, the Executive Director of NCSEA and Executive Editor of the magazine; and Marc Barter, who oversees the business aspects. Based on those conversations, I accepted the position and attended my first meeting that same month at the 13th Annual NCSEA Conference in Kansas City. A decade later, I look back on it as easily one of the best decisions of my career.

Ten years seems like a nice, round number; so effective January 1, 2016, I am stepping down. Fortunately, I am leaving the role in good hands – Barry Arnold, who has written multiple articles over the years and just finished his term as President of NCSEA, is taking over. As a result, this will be my last bi-monthly InFocus column, but I hope to continue writing on an irregular basis for Structural Forum in the future ... or maybe Outside the Box would be more appropriate for my usual philosophical topics!

My very first article in this space (“A Charge to Keep,” January 2006) outlined the vision, mission, objectives, and goals that I established for the editorial board when I joined it. I believe that we have achieved them, by and large; STRUCTURE magazine is indeed the premier resource for practicing structural engineers. I have a lot of people to thank for this, starting with those already mentioned above – my predecessors, Jim and Craig; Ron for giving me this opportunity; Jeanne and Marc for managing the enterprise; and Barry for volunteering to carry on from here.

The publishing staff at C³ Ink (a division of Copper Creek Companies, Inc.) obviously deserves a lot of credit, as well – Christine Sloat, Nikki Alger, Rob Fullmer, and Will Radig currently; Dawn Sloat, Brenda Schwartz, Pat Blinderman, and Nic Stage in the past. They have always cared as much about the quality of our product as anyone, and have taken great pains to assist with every step of the process. In particular, their initial setup and ongoing maintenance of an online Intranet – in fact, two completely different versions, because the vendor for the first one discontinued it – has been absolutely critical to keeping all of our operations running (mostly) smoothly. Furthermore, the distinctive “look and feel” of the magazine largely sprang from their creative efforts.

Another secret to our success was the sustainable business model developed by Jeanne and Marc, which ties the number of pages printed in each issue to its volume of advertising sales. One of my least favorite tasks was deciding which articles to cut each month

during the Great Recession. I appreciate Chuck Minor and Jerry Preston, as well as Dick Railton previously, for selling as many ads as they could – and for continuing to beat the bushes even in (somewhat) improved economic conditions.

I am grateful, as well, for the continuity of the editorial board itself. Greg Schindler deserves special recognition for serving as our unofficial secretary throughout my tenure as chair, vigilantly keeping track of the ever-changing schedule of articles. Brian Leshko, Evans Mountzouris, Steve Schneider, and Buddy Showalter all started before I did and will remain after I am gone. Craig Barnes rode off into the sunset just last month, and although David Biggs technically left the board in 2006, he has graciously continued to help populate the masonry-themed May issue ever since.

It has been a pleasure to interact with the various others who have been involved, as well. Some were there when I began and have since departed: Steve Schaefer (2006), the late Bill Liddy (2007), the late Dan Falconer (2007), Richard Hess (2012), and John Mercer (2014). Two joined and left under my watch: Matt Salvesson (2006-2010) and Amy Trygestad (2013-2015). Several others are still in the mix: Mark Holmberg (2006), Brian Miller (2007), Mike Mota (2007), Roger LaBoube (2010), Dilip Khatri (2012), John Dal Pino (2014), and newcomer Jessica Mandrick.

I must also acknowledge those at Burns & McDonnell who have steadfastly supported my “extracurricular” activities throughout my 21 years (and counting) with the firm: Don McLaughlin, David Yeaman, Randy Pope, Joel DeBoer, Mike Fenske, and Dave Griffith. My colleague Phil Terry reviewed the very first technical article that I ever composed, way back in 1997, and wrote on it, “I think you may be a writer.” I guess he was right!

Of course, a magazine has nothing to print without authors, and I have had the privilege of working directly with more than a hundred of you to put your ideas into words. Furthermore, a magazine has no purpose without readers, and I sincerely thank all 30,000-plus of you for giving us your time and attention month after month.

That leads me to close with a quote from Charles Sanders Peirce, the subject of my last column (“Representation and Reality,” September 2015): “The writer of a book [or article] can do nothing but set down the items of his thought. For the living thought, itself, in its entirety, the reader has to dig into his own soul. I think I have done my part, as well as I can. I am sorry to have left the reader an irksome chore before him. But [I hope] he will find it worth the doing.” ■



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