



Photo: PCI

Those That Show Up Help Make the Rules

William Nickas, *Editor-in-Chief*

Midway through my career, I had the privilege to be appointed to serve as a state bridge engineer (SBE). Twenty days later, I attended the AASHTO Subcommittee on Bridges and Structures annual business meeting in Nashville, Tenn. Three days into the meeting my head was swimming with all the things going on and, at the same time, I was totally impressed with the group of minds assembled to improve the nation's bridge specifications. At the Wednesday evening ceremony, I sat with an SBE that had been working in that role for more than 20 years. After our lengthy dinner conversation, it was clear the relationship-building experience of these meetings never gets old or stale. It was a great conversation and an experience I would never forget.

During my SBE years, I was very fortunate to have a few advisors on staff and several consultants that really assisted me while in public service. Their insight and recommendations led me to some of the most talented resources in our industry. During my tenure I learned several lifelong lessons:

- Always work to expand your network.
- Listen carefully and appreciate the perspective of those contributing. In nearly every exchange, there is a thread of advice or unique solution offered but, more importantly, seasoned wisdom that will help you someday.
- And as Thomas Jefferson said, "Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude."

It is very easy to get entrenched in our own companies, local organizations, and the activities of

our families and communities. Expanding and building relationships is very important, but growing our minds and knowledge base is equally important. Over the last few months, there have been several bridge conferences and symposiums and it's difficult to attend them all, but these meetings shape our industry.

While attending an Association of General Contractors (AGC) meeting, a contractor was complaining about a specification change by a Department of Transportation. The AGC president just kindly checked his notes and replied, "I see your firm did not participate in the meetings held six months ago... Those that show up help make the rules." I have never forgotten that reply.

These bridge venues always provide lessons learned, as well as exposure to ground breaking technology from both the U.S. and international engineering community. Now working as part of an association staff, my travel takes me to a variety of meetings. These events are always eye opening. The assembled audience of professional members (consultants), owners, other industry organizations, contractors and direct/indirect customers, and suppliers often lead to the next innovative, game changing widget, system, or solution.

The *ASPIRE*TM team uses these professional venues to mine material and ideas we believe will benefit our readership. During this demanding economic period, it can be challenging to attend some of these events. If your travel is limited, let this publication assist you to reach your goals safely and provide an avenue to strengthen relationships within the concrete bridge industry. I hope you enjoy this issue of *ASPIRE*, the concrete bridge magazine. 



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†*ASPIRE*'s managing editor, Wally Turner, has returned to active military service. The entire *ASPIRE* staff wish him well, and thank him for his continued service to our country.