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Allowed but Appalling—The Importance of Maintaining High Principles

William N. Nickas, *Editor-in-Chief*

For readers new to *ASPIRE*®, The Concrete Bridge Magazine, welcome to the best concrete bridge periodical for the engineering professional. Okay, I'm a little—no, I'd better make that very—biased. To the tried-and-true returning readers, thanks for returning, and enjoy this issue.

When I began this journey as the Editor-in-Chief of *ASPIRE*, my goal was to highlight innovative concrete bridge and precast concrete technologies. The idea of sharing new, exciting, and emerging solutions, with the goal of advancing our profession to meet future challenges and demands, is what drives me as a civil engineer.

Along this journey, I've shared stories of triumph and failure, and on occasion, a saying or two, picked up from time to time, from colleagues across a wide range of professions. I ran across one of those sayings a few weeks ago, and it resonated with me. I thought I'd share it, as it seems to fit several topics that we've highlighted in this past year's issues of *ASPIRE*.


"Allowed but appalling." This phrase came up in a conversation with an associate, who shared a story about how her work at an upper level of state government required a great deal of finesse and more than a few negotiated solutions. She described a one-line press release that came to her for review; it met all public information requirements but the messaging to the community was appalling. The additional time, research, review, and editing that were required to prepare an appropriate communiqué delayed the start of the project but were absolutely necessary to get the project off on the right foot.

How does "allowed but appalling" fit into your business practice? Is it a personal or company

practice that, while legitimate, does not show you or your organization in the best light or circumstance? Is the engineering solution you selected code compliant but, in the long run, not the best idea for your project, when viewed by the end user or owner? Is the public information officer advising the state highway engineer, "Technically you are correct, but your messaging is tactless"? It absolutely may be "allowed," but, ugh, it's just plain "appalling."

As we head into 2021, the challenges we face do not seem to be taking the year off; in fact, I'd argue that they're picking up the pace. How will the projected and realized gas tax revenues impact our efforts? Toss in a tablespoon of COVID-19, mix with seemingly limitless extreme environmental events (think record wildfires in California and a historic hurricane season—which ran out of names!), add a pinch or two of societal stressors, all while observing a slowing of the traditional project workflow. While it's clear that 2021 will challenge our community at every turn, our call as engineering professionals is to meet these demands by pushing the boundaries of innovation while still maintaining the high principles of our profession. We must get back in front, outpace the norm, and develop the engineering solutions for the future we now find ourselves in.

For this issue, the *ASPIRE* team has selected another full slate of practical technical topics, from structural fundamentals that need rekindling to innovative concrete and reinforcing materials, as well as the continuing Perspective series to promote discussion on our bridge community's duties and workflow.

Buckle up! 

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Cover

Schwager Davis supplied the temporary stay-cable system and post-tensioning materials for the iconic Hoover Dam Bypass Bridge whose twin arches meet at midspan over the Colorado River.

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