



Photo: PCI

More Greek for You to Consider

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

In an editorial written several years ago, I discussed the Greek concept of *Philotimo*, which is essentially the idea of doing what is right (see the Spring 2020 issue of *ASPIRE*[®]). To my surprise, that article was republished by the National Society of Professional Engineers' *PE Magazine*, reaching a larger engineering audience—and for that I am grateful.

Today, it seems appropriate to share another Greek word, *Phronē*, with all of you. *Phronē* means “to intensely interest oneself in.” There are myriad topics that require our attention and, in some cases, a spirit of *Phronē*. Two topics that have recently grabbed my attention are new, larger loadings from truck platoons and the concrete industry's shift toward the use of portland-limestone (Type IL) cement. In this issue of *ASPIRE*, you will find another article in the series by Dr. Jay Puckett on truck-platoon loading, and a recent *PCI Journal* article¹ by Dr. R. Douglas Hooten (University of Toronto) and Dr. Kyle A. Riding (University of Florida) provides an enormous amount of detail about the impacts of Type IL cement on strength gain and other concrete properties. I think you will find these papers to be very interesting. Dr. Riding previously published a high-level article on the topic of portland-limestone cement in the Winter 2022 issue of *ASPIRE*. Today, we know much more.

In their *PCI Journal* article, Hooten and Riding explain the societal concerns about environmentalism that are motivating the cement and concrete industries to take action. They mathematically show how the use of Type IL cement can reduce a structure's carbon footprint by 10%, and they address previous concerns regarding short- and long-term prestress losses. Hooten's and Riding's leadership in this area is highly commendable.

The challenges of embracing a spirit of *Phronē* and remaining engaged with today's developing workforce continually resonate with me. How do I, and how do we, remain “current” and stay informed about relevant topics? The advantage of being “seasoned” in this profession is the perspective one gains about questions like this. Although engineering techniques change and evolve, our reliance on theory,

calculations, and results remains a foundational principle.

When I was first becoming established in the industry, my interactions with senior bridge engineers—even when they seemed skeptical about my work—were very helpful. When the engineers senior to me covered my calculations with red and yellow pencil marks, it felt like they were challenging me, asking, “Why did you do this?” Some old-timers were troubled just by the presence of younger engineers, and the atmosphere they created as they marked up my plans and calculations was not particularly encouraging of dialogue. I really wanted to ask to see *their* calculations, but that type of question wasn't welcome. Still, I learned from their open and implied critiques of my work.

Now that I am a senior engineer, I try to set a different tone. I seek opportunities to encourage others and to share my thoughts. Those of you who know me just shake your heads, knowing that I rarely hold my thoughts to myself. That's true, but seasoning and perspective allow for a great deal of reflection and *Phronē*. I continue to find our industry intensely interesting, and its progress requires our engagement and attention.

In my Winter 2025 *ASPIRE* editorial, “Stay Vigilant and Innovate,” I discussed the need to stay engaged with suppliers and remain vigilant about the quality of concrete materials. I hope that you have signed up for a National Concrete Bridge Council webinar or in-person course so that you can collaborate with the experts in our industry.

I also hope that you will find a concrete bridge topic that drives your interest and immerse yourself in it. Then, once you realize your *Phronē*, I hope you will share your discoveries with your bridge squad at your place of work or at a professional engineering society meeting in your area.

Reference

- Hooten, R. D., and K. A. Riding. 2025. “Type IL Cement Use in Precast, Prestressed Concrete.” *PCI Journal* 70 (2): 22–36. <https://doi.org/10.15554/pcij70.2-04>.

Editor-in-Chief

William N. Nickas • wnickas@pci.org

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Ad Sales

Scott Cunningham • scunningham7@aol.com
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Reprints

lisa scacco • lscacco@pci.org

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Bob Risser, President

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