EDITORIAL

Photo: PCI.

A Time of Reflections

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

There are times when I sit down to draft my thoughts and the words just flow. Today's editorial began with a bit of reflection on past and present technologies, and the impacts of certain remarkable people on our industry and community. I was struck by how swiftly time passes, and the realization that as we push the envelope with new technologies, we may be missing opportunities to deploy effective strategies that are already on hand.

For example, I recently read a report (see the Concrete Bridge Technology article in this issue) about the potential value of embedding optical fiber sensors in epoxy-coated (EC) strand to monitor post-tensioning strains. This next generation of EC strand is an exciting concept.

I then became aware of a completed structure where the intrusion of moisture is causing corrosion concerns. The strand was uncoated, and the specification requires flexible filler to be pumped in after installation to fill the duct. As you might guess, there are differing opinions about why the strand is corroding. I wonder whether the benefits of first-generation EC strand could have helped alleviate the situation. I know that's an after-the-fact thought, but EC strand has some significant advantages over noncoated strand. Initially, EC strand was costly, but today, it may be a cost-effective option when you consider the expense of other items like flexible filler and/or grouting operations.

Even if second-generation EC strand with fiber optics isn't yet an option for your next bridge project, first-generation EC strand could be. Let's continue to both push the innovation envelope *and* revisit the potential of existing technologies.

I recently participated in my 70th National Highway Institute class for a state agency since 2007. Supported by the Federal Highway Administration and focused on prestressed concrete load- and resistance-factor superstructure design, these two-day sessions typically involve around 30 engineers. Over the years, I've had the privilege of meeting nearly 1800 engineers across 35 states in these classes.

My late father, a retired civil engineer, used to jest about my role as an instructor by quoting, "Those that can, do; those that can't, teach." He couldn't have been more mistaken. Teaching the National Highway Institute classes involves addressing numerous inquiries, which can be quite draining by day's end. I do not know where professors get all that energy to teach engineers for a whole career.

I'd be remiss if I didn't share that this is a bittersweet time for the concrete bridge community, as we must bid farewell to several retiring colleagues who have helped so many of us grow in this field. The individuals mentioned in the following paragraphs made me better as both an engineer and a person.

Kevin Eisenbeis and Gregg Reese retired after stellar consulting careers, each spanning some 44 years focused on all things bridge related. I was incredibly fortunate to share many hours with Kevin during his volunteer committee time at the American Railway Engineering and Maintenance-of-Way Association and at PCI. What a pleasure it was to work with such a humble professional. Gregg taught me a lot about curved, spliced concrete U-beam technology.

Dr. Tess Ahlborn, Dr. Maher Tadros, Dr. Rich Miller, and Dr. Carin Roberts-Wollman are other colleagues each with a deep "book of knowledge," who either just entered emeritus status or are heading into retirement from academia. They have left an indelible mark on our concrete industry for decades. Their conversations are always enlightening, educational, and yes, at times passionate, and I always benefit from their insights. Just think of the number of engineering students who passed through their lectures and coursework, and into our profession during the past 45 years.

Finally, we bid farewell to Dr. Reid Castrodale. In recent years, Reid has been the quality control, check and balance, and calming influence for the National Concrete Bridge Council and for this publication. I have gotten to know Reid on a deeply personal level and I can assure you he is far more than just an expert in the field of shale, clay, slate, and all things lightweight aggregate.

To all of these colleagues and all the other fellow professors and engineers entering retirement, I say: I will miss our interactions and wish you nothing but the best retirement has to offer! Please come back from time to time to share your expertise and reflections. A

Cover
Located in Blue Hill, Maine, the Falls Bridge spans a reversing waterfall at the narrows between Blue Hill Bay and Salt Pond. Photo: HNTB.

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