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Reminder:

Copy deadline for the Jul./Aug. 2010 issue is June 1, 2010; copy deadline for Sept. 2010 issue is Aug. 1, 2010.



Los Angeles Section

Monthly: Est. 1913

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Jay Higgins, P.E., M.ASCE
Section President

High School Graduates - Are they ready for the next step?



June is the month that high school seniors graduate and in the fall, many will be continuing on with their education. Some have elected to study civil engineering in colleges and universities across the nation. These are our future civil engineers, the ones that will be taking our place in consulting firms, public agencies, and in the academic world. These students will also be the future members and officers of ASCE and will take on the responsibility of carrying on the tradition of our professional organization. As I think about these students, I wonder if they are up to the task. Are they the caliber of student that will stick through the rigorous civil engineering programs? Will they develop a passion for civil engineering and understand the important contributions we make to society? Will they understand the importance of being involved in ASCE and promoting the civil engineering profession?

I was recently asked to participate on a committee to review scholarship applications for high school students involved in the ACE (Architecture Construction Engineering) Mentor Program. For those of you who may not be familiar with ACE, it is a high school mentoring program in which a team of about six architects, contractors, and engineers conduct activities throughout the school year to introduce high school students to these fields and the career opportunities that are available. The Los Angeles Section is partnering with ACE as part of the Section's student outreach program, and is looking for opportunities to involve civil engineers on the mentoring teams. Through these activities we can introduce high school students to the important contributions that civil engineers make to society. We can show them what is that civil engineers do, and the importance of the infrastructure and the built environment we create.

While reviewing the scholarship applications, I ran across a particularly interesting application from a high school student who has chosen civil engineering as his field of study for this coming fall. I would like to share with you his response to two of the application questions. When asked to describe his career goals and ambitions, including how and why they were chosen, he wrote:

I hope to become a civil engineer in the near future; I cannot really pinpoint the exact reasons for my choice of career. I know that it was not because of child rearing, for my parents always suggested I join the medical profession, though they were still supportive of my choice. I know it was not because of my environment, for though I lived less than 20 minutes from downtown Los Angeles, I have no real memories of the amazing structures there until my early teens. Nevertheless, though I may not know the particular cause of my interest in engineering, I do know that I love it. I love the way everything fits and works, how little components end up forming massive structures that defy the forces of nature. I know that I love that sense of power from

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A New Beginning

This month we will be seeing a lot of our kids graduate from every level of education. Many of them will begin a new life as an adult in either the real world or in college. As our Section President indicated in his message, many of them still will be on the crossroads of selecting a career path.

I can certainly relate to this scenario as JP, my nine-year old son, begins to talk about the things that he wants to do for the rest of his life. Yes, he is in fourth grade, but I am sure for many of you, this age is the beginning of a time when kids like JP start questioning why certain things are the way they are and why certain people chose to be who they are. For better or worse, I have been very candid with my answers.

Karen Sepulveda's article provides further insight into the minds of two of our younger engineers who have just recently started the civil engineering profession. Their words serve as inspiration to many of us who are reading this newsletter. We who chose this career [and are immersed with the daily issues associated with it] are reminded of why we did so and why this career remains to be worth remaining into, despite its challenges.

I once was struggling to find my place in this world. I thought I knew what I wanted in my career but as the years passed by, I felt empty. Despite the accolades, the degrees, the projects and all my professional and personal accomplishments, I felt empty. It was not the career itself nor the things involved in the career.

I discovered that what was missing was an intent to leave a legacy for myself, my family, and my community. "Legacy" does not mean much, if it does not perpetuate itself. And what better way to leave a legacy than mentoring others to be prepared to follow a straight path. This is the message of this newsletter. This is a challenge our organization puts forth that hopefully all of us would take on towards a new beginning.

Enjoy this issue of your newsletter!

- Dr. Cris B. Liban, P.E.

A Great Idea From the Life Members

The ASCE Life Members' Public Image Committee request that members take their (to be discarded) Civil Engineering magazines to their doctor's office or barber shop and merge them with the stack of magazines. We feel that this will be an effective way to make the general public more aware of what civil engineers do.

A Day in the Life

By Karen Sepulveda, Vice President for Student Activities

Occasionally we get opportunities dropped in our lap and sometimes we respond. Recently a local high school student queried our younger member forum with questions related to the field of engineering. Fortunately for our profession, we have many active engineers who are dedicated to promoting the profession and to encouraging our youth to explore the possibilities it holds. Both Jane Tran and Heren Molina of the Metropolitan Los Angeles Branch took time to answer this student's questions and some of those very thoughtful answers are paraphrased below.

- **Why did you choose this career?**

Jane: I have a great appreciation for structures, and I've always wanted to design and build projects. What better way to leave your mark in the world than to leave behind something that will serve others long after you're gone?

Heren: I chose the civil engineering profession because I knew I would be able to design and construct the things that truly matter, which is something I always enjoyed. I also wanted to one day be able to design and build my own home.

- **Why do you like your job?**

Jane: I love that there is always something new to learn, no matter how long you've been in the profession. The breadth of civil engineering means you will never learn everything there is to know. I love the flexibility as well. Over the course of my career, I can switch to different technical specialties, or move into business development. I can let my job take me to projects all over the world, and the possibilities are limitless.

Heren: I love my job because it gives me the best of both worlds. I get to work in an office environment, but also get to out into the field to see things being built. I also love my job because I get to work with great people and my job is extremely flexible. When you start your engineering major you will learn that engineering is working in teams and learning something new all the time. This is exactly what I do every day so it makes my job more exciting, challenging and fun.

- **What type of training or educational level is needed for this job?**

Jane and Heren: The minimum is a 4 year Bachelor of Science from an accredited university. A Masters and/or PhD would be a plus, but is not absolutely necessary. It is critical, however, that you get your professional license as soon as you can. This will allow you to move up and take on larger responsibilities. It's similar to when a lawyer passes the bar exam.

- **What are some things that you dislike about this career?**

Jane: Sometimes the client deadlines keep you at work late, but it doesn't occur on a regular basis so I don't mind. I get restless and dissatisfied when there is nothing to do, and put a lot of value in accomplishing a full day of work.

Heren: There is nothing I dislike about this profession, but one thing I do wish was different was the stereotypes and the misconceptions that are linked to civil engineering. You probably heard a lot of those stereotypes, such as "it's for nerdy people" or "it's a man's field" or "you have to be a genius in math and science". The truth is that it's none of the above.

Most of the engineers I know are not “nerds”, and many of them are women. You do not have to be a genius, but only have good, solid skills in math and science. Engineers, specifically civil engineers, are normal people who like to make a difference, who love working in teams, who are extremely creative, like a good challenge, love to learn, are very social, and are humanitarians since everything we do is to improve the quality of life and to make things safer for everyone.

- **How did you find your job?**

Jane: I shadowed an engineer for a few days when I was in college, and the following summer he hired me as an intern. During that time, I worked on a team with another company who eventually offered me a full-time position upon my graduation. A significant part of finding employment is about the people you know, which is why it's so important to network with other engineers through professional organizations such as ASCE.

Heren: I found my job by being involved in engineering societies, such as ASCE. I first found an internship while I was still in college and through that internship I was able to find my current job. I have been with my company for five years now and I really love working here.

- **What is a typical day like in your shoes?**

Jane: I've been working for about 2 years as a structural engineer on two projects—the modernization of the LAX airport and the preliminary design of the California High Speed Train (CHST).

On the LAX job, most days at work are hectic. If I'm not at my desk figuring out how to design structures to withstand aircraft and earthquake loading, then I'm talking to the drafting team about creating drawings that will show the contractor how to build the project, or I'm at meetings with the design team planning our next steps. It gets crazy with the back-to-back deadlines, but it's a lot of fun being involved on such a fast-paced project with such a dynamic team. The CHST project is very different because the project is just getting started so the work environment is relaxed. We're in meetings a lot, brainstorming different solutions and presenting them to the client. We pull talented engineers from all over the world to coordinate and perform our design efforts, including people from New York, San Francisco, and even London. It's great working with such a diverse and highly experienced team. I'm very lucky to be working in two completely opposite work environments because on a weekly basis, one experience refreshes the other.

Heren: Almost every day is different for me. I work for a construction company and I am either in the office or out in the field. When I visit our project sites it's because of meetings, to drop off paperwork, to make sure that material is arriving on time, to take progress photos of the work, or to pull permits. When I am in the office I do a lot of paperwork, make phone calls, coordinate material deliveries, have meetings, read or do research. There really isn't time to get bored as there is always something to do and something new to learn.

- **What type of advice would you give someone going into your career?**

Jane: Engineering is a fantastic job, but don't let it consume your life. Plenty of bright-eyed, ambitious engineers come in and drown themselves in work because they think this is what it is all about. If you have a tendency to overwork yourself, it doesn't matter what career you're in, you will likely be unhappy. Take the time to pick up a hobby and invest time in people.

Heren: I would tell them not to get discouraged...no matter what. At times courses will seem to be very demanding or difficult, but don't let that get to you. The hard work, dedication, and all of those sacrifices will definitely pay off when you get out of school. Also, I would HIGHLY recommend you get involved with professional societies, such as ASCE. I got involved with ASCE when I was a sophomore in college and it was one of the best things I ever did. Through the organization I was able to meet other civil engineering students. This made finding study groups easier, allowed me to travel for different student conferences and competitions (such as our concrete canoe and steel bridge competitions), it helped me make tons of friends, and made my college experience so much more fun and exciting. ASCE is similar to a fraternity or sorority, with the exception that you don't have to pay to be part of it and everyone involved is a civil engineering student so you get to actually compete in really cool competitions against other universities across the country. It's definitely a great learning opportunity. The best part is that it will help you get a job a lot easier when you graduate and your professors will support your involvement. Some of my most fun and exciting college days are because of ASCE.

Although you may never know the influence you have by taking the time to speak to people about our profession, it will likely pay off in positive ways. The time both Jane and Heren took to answer in such depth shows they are excited enough about the field of engineering to try and gather young minds to choose it as a profession. The Los Angeles Section is fortunate to have such young engineers spreading the message, and I personally am very thankful for their help. So if you someday find yourself with an opportunity such as this dropped into your lap, take a few minutes to put in your two cents.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MEMBER AWARDS

The Honors and Awards program of the Society has as its basic objective, the advancement of the engineering profession by emphasizing exceptional service, either through research, publication or career achievement. The awards are conferred by the ASCE Board of Direction in the name of the Society.

In our continuing effort to enhance communications between ASCE Headquarters and the Regions, Sections and Branches, Geographic Services is pleased to announce you that **Stephen G. Ritchie, Ph.D., M.ASCE**, a member of the Orange County Branch of the Los Angeles Section, has been selected to receive the **Frank M. Masters Transportation Engineering Award**. The award will be presented at the 2010 Annual Conference Leadership Luncheon, October 2010, in Las Vegas, Nevada. Additional information and photographs are available at www.asce.org/awards.

ASCE's 2010 Member-Get-A-Member Drive Depends on You!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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creating [a] structure that will last a lifetime. That is the career I want to follow, a career that creates something beautiful and monumental from nothing more than the ideas. Hopefully, I am able to become an engineer to not only service my community but make my own addition to the whole of human development and creation.

When asked to describe any obstacles or hardships he has faced in his life and how he overcame them, he wrote:

My world is defined and governed by two words "Immigrant Dream." Though it bears resemblance to what many would call the American Dream, my definition is much more specific than simply "making it big." My parents were immigrants from China; they arrived in the late 80s with the dream of building a happy life in their new surroundings. Like many others, my parents arrived full of hope, brimming with dreams of wealth and prosperity, the American Dream. However, that dream was never fulfilled; they have yet to purchase their own home or enjoy a life of ease. My parents remained in the lower class, my father a laborer and my mother a dedicated homemaker; even so, they never complained or gave up. My parents, instead, shifted their focus, from one of monetary gain to that of child rearing.

My parents tried to provide all the opportunities for our talents to "shine." I remember the failed attempts at the arts, of cacophonous piano lessons and horrid calligraphy lessons which ended, at least for me, due to my reluctance. Eventually, as I began to enter middle school I realized the financial situation my family was in. I noticed the cars, the homes, the "stuff" of others but more importantly the hours my father worked. Not the 9-5 office jobs other fathers had, but a grueling 11 hour work day. I don't know why it never occurred to me, perhaps I had been too young to understand, or simply because my father's burdens grew heavier. Though our family remained static in size and we were raised to enjoy the things we had; the wants of children can never be satiated. As time went on, more things became apparent to me. I noticed that my parents had no time to themselves or that all their belongings were also the belongings of the family. Then it finally dawned on me, my parents had sacrificed everything they wanted to provide for us, to nurture and guide us.



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It was this realization that set my dreams, my personal "Immigrant Dream" to fulfill. I saw how significant my parents' sacrifices were in raising my two sisters and me. I then made my parents and myself a promise, a promise to be successful, and give to them what they had dreamed of when they first got on the plane headed to the land of the free. I have since worked towards honoring my promise. Though never spoken, it has always motivated me, it has always pushed me forward, through the hardships that are life, because I know that somewhere along the way I will be able to make good on my promise. I will be able to make my parents happy by building them a world of their own, a family that relies on each other and lives without worry.

It was the dream of fulfilling my parents' desires and giving them what they were never able to achieve, which shaped my aspirations. I realized that my interest in how things worked could be used to achieve my dream. By becoming an engineer, I would be able to make something great, something beautiful. I would be able to, not only, fulfill my parents' dreams but also change the lives of many others. I would be able to bring this world closer to the one many have envisioned when they picked up their lives and risked it all.

This is the person I aspire to become; one that works towards a better future, not one that sits idle as life passes by. I am to do all I can to change the world we live in, to create, to improve, to live.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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With high school students like this, I feel that the future of our civil engineering profession will be in good hands.

There were many other applications I read from students that have been introduced to civil engineering through the ACE mentor program. Many of them were as inspiring as the one quoted above. ACE has focused their program on inner city high schools. Some of these areas are plagued by crime, drugs, and gang violence. Several of the students have experienced firsthand these problems; some had even lost a family member or friend to gang violence. Some started down the wrong path and joined gangs; however, many students, after being introduced to the ACE program, are determined to get an education and lead productive lives. ACE gives them hope for the future. They see the opportunities that a career in architecture, construction, or engineering offers. They are at a crucial age and can easily go down the wrong path in life or make responsible choices to head down the path of education and a productive career. ACE is helping them make the responsible choices.

I am pleased that we are partnering with ACE and introducing high school students to careers in civil engineering. This is an important part of the Section's Student Outreach Program. Let's continue to

work with ACE to inspire the next graduating high school class to study civil engineering.

To learn more about the ACE Mentor Program go to www.ace.org/579. The Los Angeles Section is currently seeking civil engineers to become part of ACE mentor teams. If you are interested in participating as a team member contact Sonia Flores at sflores@ldcla.com.

Enjoy your newsletter. If you have any questions and comments please feel free to send me an e-mail at jay_higgins@urscorp.com. Articles for the Newsletter may be submitted to the Newsletter Editor, Cris Liban, at LibanE@metro.net.

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Emergency Supplies Checklist

The first 72 hours after a major emergency or disaster are critical. Electricity, gas, water, and telephones may not be working. In addition, public safety services such as police and fire departments will be busy handling serious crises. You should be prepared to be self-sufficient - able to live without running water, electricity and/or gas, and telephones - for at least three days following a major emergency. To do so, keep the following on hand in a central location:

Can You Go it Alone for Three Days?

Essentials

- ☐ Water - One gallon per person per day (a week's supply of water is preferable)
- ☐ Water purification kit
- ☐ First aid kit, freshly stocked
- ☐ First aid book
- ☐ Food
- ☐ Can opener (non-electric)
- ☐ Blankets or sleeping bags
- ☐ Portable radio, flashlight, and spare batteries
- ☐ Essential medications
- ☐ Extra pair of eyeglasses
- ☐ Extra set of house and car keys
- ☐ Fire extinguisher - A-B-C type
- ☐ Food, water, and restraint (leash or carrier) for pets
- ☐ Cash and change
- ☐ Baby supplies: formula, bottle, pacifier, soap and baby powder, clothing, blankets, baby wipes, disposable diapers, canned food and juices

Sanitation Supplies

- ☐ Large plastic trash bags for waste; tarps and rain ponchos
- ☐ Large trash cans
- ☐ Bar soap and liquid detergent
- ☐ Shampoo
- ☐ Toothpaste and toothbrushes
- ☐ Feminine hygiene supplies
- ☐ Toilet paper
- ☐ Household bleach

Safety and Comfort

- ☐ Sturdy shoes
- ☐ Heavy gloves for clearing debris
- ☐ Candles and matches
- ☐ Light sticks
- ☐ Changes of clothing
- ☐ Knife or razor blades
- ☐ Garden hose for siphoning and firefighting
- ☐ Tent
- ☐ Communication kit: paper, pens, stamps

Cooking

- ☐ Plastic knives, forks, spoons
- ☐ Paper plates and cups
- ☐ Paper towels
- ☐ Heavy-duty aluminum foil
- ☐ Camping stove for outdoor cooking (caution: before using fire to cook, make sure there are no gas leaks; never use charcoal indoors)

Tools and Supplies

- ☐ Axe, shovel, broom
- ☐ Adjustable wrench for turning off gas
- ☐ Tool kit including a screwdriver, pliers and a hammer
- ☐ Coil of 1/2" rope
- ☐ Plastic tape, staple gun, and sheeting for window replacement
- ☐ Bicycle
- ☐ City map



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