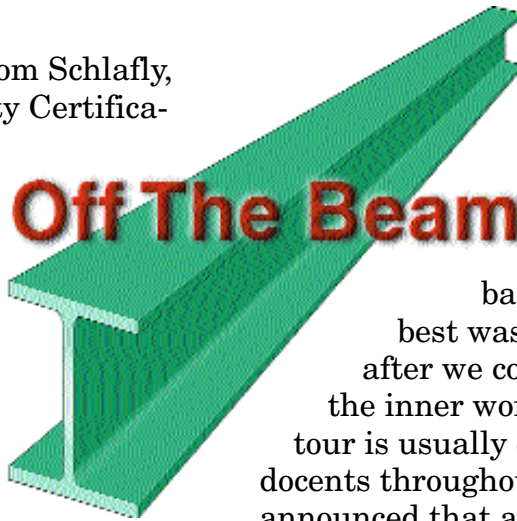


After lunch the other day, Tom Schlafly, who heads up AISC's Quality Certification program, and I were enjoying the pleasant late spring weather and strolling around downtown Chicago. As we crossed the State Street bridge across the Chicago River, we noticed an open door leading into the bridge keeper's tower. Curious, we stopped and noticed a sign inviting the public inside. Even more curious, we entered and met Christopher Holt, Coordinating Engineer with Chicago's Department of Transportation (Bridges and Transit).

Holt explained that through October (and perhaps longer—the city hasn't made a final determination) Chicago was keeping the tower open as an exhibit on bridge design. The city's engineering department has prepared numerous signs explaining the workings of bascule bridges and also some signs explaining the history of bridges in Chicago. According to Holt, it's a chance for the general public to see the workings of a bridge up close—including the more than 1.7-million-pound counterweight and the motor and gears that open



up the gargantuan leaf.

As fascinating as it was to see the inner workings of large bascule bridge up close, the best was yet to come. Shortly after we completed Holt's tour of the inner workings of the bridge (the tour is usually conducted by various docents throughout the day), it was announced that a lift was about to occur. Little can match the grandeur of the ever-larger series of gears driving the giant counterweight into the pit—all powered by a relatively small 75 h.p. engine. I marveled to watch the leaf slowly rise into a nearly vertical position from a view usually only enjoyed by boaters.

If you're a bridge aficionado—or even someone who simply appreciates well made structures—I strongly urge you to take a trip to Chicago this summer and check out the State Street bridge for yourself. Besides, you can also catch a ball game—the Cubs are winning and there are plenty of tickets to White Sox games.

Scott Melnick
Editor & Publisher

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