



Notes from the Editor

Scott L. Melnick

One of the nicest parts of my job is the opportunity to travel. Whether it's San Francisco or Cleveland, Toronto or San Antonio, I love just about every aspect of the trip. I don't even mind the now almost expected airport delays—and in some respects, I even welcome them. While I adore and dote over my two children, travel is about the only time I get to read for two or three uninterrupted hours.

While my usual fare is science fiction, on my latest trip I switched to something a bit more educational: *The Tipping Point (How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference)* by Malcom Gladwell. Recommended to me by AISC's Andy Johnson, the book discusses how seemingly small changes can have monstrously big results. For example, Gladwell examines the sudden plummet in subway crime in New York and traces its roots not to some new policing initiative, but rather to a new concentration on eliminating graffiti and cracking down on fare-beaters. The book is extremely readable and full of anecdotes and practical advice on formatting a message that can actually affect change.

Another book that I've recently enjoyed—but more as a casual read—is *Designs in Space: Blueprints for 21st Century Space Exploration* (written by Richard Wagner and illustrated by Howard Cook). The book is chock full of drawings of futuristic blueprints and serves as a wonderful introduction to the soon-to-be-implemented, cutting edge machinery that will give us a new look at the outer limits of our solar system.

Of course, reading isn't the main reason I travel. Usually, I'm off to a conference or some other meeting. While I can do without most meetings, attending conferences is another enjoyable part of my job. Besides the opportunity to meet people (I sometimes wonder if schmoozing is in my

job description), many of the sessions at the conferences I attend are simply fascinating. My favorite conference, not surprisingly, is the North American Steel Construction Conference (scheduled this year for May 9-12 in Ft. Lauderdale).

This year, the NASCC seems to be making a conscious effort to reach beyond their typical audience of the mid- to upper-level practitioner and also include entry-level engineers. The most obvious part of this effort is a severely reduced registration fee for anyone who has obtained their degree during the past five years. Instead of the normal \$450 registration fee for non-AISC members (\$325 for AISC members), recent graduates can register for just \$175.

And in addition to the normal technical sessions, this year's conference is offering a 10-hour tutorial on Connection Design. According to principals at many engineering firms, connections are a real weakness for most of their new hires. The conference is an ideal place to quickly get people up to speed on this difficult topic. The tutorial is intended to help practitioners understand the fundamentals of connection design, including bolting, welding and connecting elements, and includes everything from specification provisions to moment end-plate connection design.

For more information on the connection design tutorial, or to view the entire advance program for the conference, visit www.aisc.org/nascc.html or fax 312/670-5403, and AISC will send you the information.

Hope to see you Ft. Lauderdale!

Editorial Contacts

Editor & Publisher
Scott L. Melnick
ph: 312/670-8311
melnick@blacksquirrel.net

Senior Editor
Keith A. Grubb, P.E., S.E.
ph: 312/670-8318
grubb@blacksquirrel.net

Associate Editor
Karen J. Thornton
ph: 312/670-8310
thornton@blacksquirrel.net

Production Editor
Elizabeth M. Phillips
ph: 312/670-8315
phillips@blacksquirrel.net

Editorial Offices
Black Squirrel Communications
One E. Wacker Dr., Suite 2406
Chicago, IL 60601
fax: 312/670-0341

Address Changes/Subscriptions
ph: 312/670-5444
fax: 312/670-5403
kingston@aiscmail.com

Advertising Contact

Account Manager
John Byrne
ph: 847/699-6049
fax: 847/699-8681
jabber10@ix.netcom.com
2400 E. Devon Ave., Suite 380
Des Plaines, IL 60018

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