



Scott L. Melnick

Looking out my office window, I have a birds-eye view of the demolition of the old Chicago Sun-Times building along the Chicago River. The demolition contractor, Brandenburg, is carefully chipping away at all of the concrete flooring and cementitious fire protection, which will most likely be land-filled, to unveil the steel members—which they're removing and sending to a scrap yard to be recycled (possibly into new steel beams!).

In its place will soon rise a very large residential building being developed by Donald Trump (yes, the same project that Bill Rancic of *The Apprentice* fame is heading up). While I'll leave the architectural criticism to those more qualified (I'm prejudiced since the behemoth will partially obscure my views, but the structure has garnered some very mixed reviews), it is the non-architectural coverage of the building that I find most disturbing—particularly the pernicious urban legend that propagates the myth that concrete construction automatically achieves lower floor-to-floor height than steel buildings. One Trump official went so far as to ignorantly claim: "Because concrete requires less space between floors, architects were able to add two more floors to the project." (The same person goes on to complain about climbing steel prices; in reality prices have been flat or declining slightly for the past six months.)

As regular readers of this magazine well know, structural engineers have no trouble designing steel multi-story residential buildings with 8'-8" floor-to-floor heights. From a hotel in Boston to elderly housing in North Carolina to a dormitory in Philadelphia, we routinely document projects where structural steel framing routinely achieves low floor-to-floor heights while also providing the advantages of longer spans and fewer columns.

Choosing a framing system is often a matter of economics and it's important that structural engineers optimize their design. In my dad's day, that meant simply minimizing the weight of a structure. Today, it's not so simple. In the past, *MSC* has detailed many of the ways to reduce project costs and this issue contains a special report that



The old Chicago Sun-Times building (seen here in February, demolished nearly to street level) is being razed to make way for a 90+ story residential tower.

offers further advice—ranging from another look at camber to a discussion of when HSS is an appropriate solution. Even more information is available on AISC's web site (www.aisc.org) and through the AISC Steel Solutions Center (call toll-free 866.ask.aisc or e-mail solutions@aisc.org). And, of course, AISC offers both continuing education seminars and the North American Steel Construction Conference (NASCC).

This year's steel conference should prove particularly interesting. In addition to the usual technical seminars (there are nearly 50 on such diverse topics as "Designing to Prevent Progressive Collapse in Steel Structures to Castellated Beams: Fabrication, Applied Research, and Innovative Applications, and OSHA Subpart R Revisited; a copy of the advance program can be downloaded at www.aisc.org/nascc), the conference will offer a sneak peak at the new *Manual of Steel Construction*, which will replace the existing ASD and LRFCD manuals.

Yet another bonus is the opportunity to hear and meet Werner Sobek, one of Europe's leading designers who will keynote the conference on Thursday and speak on "The Future of Engineering." And since we began the discussion with the topic of economy, the steel conference is truly a bargain, especially when compared to the prices charged by comparable programs both in the A/E/C industry and in other fields. Registration for the three-day conference is just \$350 for AISC members—and if additional members of your firm are interested in attending, the fee for the third registrant is just \$175. Hotel rooms and meals also are a bargain, thanks to the exchange rate that makes the U.S. dollar worth about 20% more north of the border. To register for the conference online, visit www.aisc.org/nascc and click on the registration button on the right hand side of the page.

I hope to see you all in Montreal!

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