



Scott L. Melnick

I'm going to miss Lou Gurthet, as a leader, a boss, and an advisor.

When he was hired as president of AISC back in 1996, no one was sure quite what to expect. It was the first time a fabricator was taking over the reins, as well as the first time a structural engineer would be in charge. And, of course, with change always comes a certain level of trepidation.

But over the ensuing decade, Lou proved himself to be an outstanding president and a great boss. He taught me that it's okay to fail as long as you've tried. He taught me that you can't do everything yourself, that you need to be able to depend on others. He taught me to recognize when something is just never going to work and to have the strength to cut your losses. And he taught me to expend the effort where it will have the most results; to not insist on perfection but rather to recognize that the time it takes to go from 98% to 100% is probably better spent elsewhere.

Was Lou perfect? No one is. He tended to be volatile, and he certainly had a knack for mispronouncing and misusing words (in much the same vein as Richard M. Daley or George W. Bush). But to his credit, he was always open to criticism and never took himself too seriously (if you have any doubts, next time you see me ask to see the "hula" video—or just use your imagination). And he never let a disagreement in one area blend over to another topic.

On page 57, Lou talks about some of the accomplishments during his nearly 10 years at AISC. To me, though, his biggest accomplishment was making AISC more responsive and friendly to the design community and construction industry, something I'm sure every old-time observer of the steel industry can attest to.

The most visible example is undoubtedly the AISC Steel Solutions Center, though our revised membership program is probably a close second. But even the new specification and manual reflect Lou's emphasis on serving our constituents.

The concept behind the Solutions Center is both simple and elegant. If anyone—designers, developers, builders—need to know anything about structural steel, they can call one number (866.ASK.AISC) and get an answer (and, thanks to Lou's insistence, usually in less than a working day). And while it now answers nearly 200 inquiries a week, the Solutions Center is more than just a one-stop source for technical information. The team also provides conceptual solutions on actual projects. The conceptual solutions consider an owner's program and offer economical suggestions regarding both cost and schedule. (For a look at a prototypical solution, visit www.aisc.org/solutions and click on "conceptual solutions"). And the best part?

The services provided by the AISC Steel Solutions Center are free!

While membership in AISC isn't free, it's probably the best bargain in town, especially for engineers, detailers, contractors, code officials, and inspectors. While fabricator, mill, and service center membership is an investment in the future of the industry, membership for most others represents a great return on investment. Professional and Affiliate Membership is typically less than \$40 per person (in some cases, much less—visit www.aisc.org/membership for the particulars) and not only provides online access to not only all of AISC's design guides, but also to every issue of *Engineering Journal* and many conference proceedings. In addition, members receive 50% off printed publications (including \$175 off the non-member price of the new *Steel Construction Manual*) and substantial discounts on seminars (www.aisc.org/seminars) and the Steel Conference (www.aisc.org/nascc).

Speaking of the *Manual*, it too bears Lou's influence as far as better serving our constituents. The engineering community said they were tired of having to pick between LRFD and ASD, and now they don't have to. Values for both approaches are given. And they wanted simpler design; so AISC is providing two small cards containing basic design information—information that should be applicable to more than nine out of every 10 projects constructed in the U.S.

Did Lou come up with the Steel Solutions Center? No. Did he develop the plan for the revised membership program and the ePubs online documents? No. Did he work on the new manual? No. What he did do is create the environment where these ideas could prosper and provide the leadership to move these ideas forward. In recognition of his contributions, the steel industry has already presented Lou with the Robert P. Stupp Excellence in Leadership Award, which recognizes those who, through their leadership, have had an outstanding impact on advancing the use of structural steel in the construction industry.

I know I'll miss Lou. And I'm sure the Institute and the steel industry will too. (Of course, if you want another chance to see Lou, make sure you attend this year's NASCC: The Steel Conference; Lou will be roaming the exhibit hall throughout the conference.)

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