

editor's note



IT'S NOT UNUSUAL FOR ME TO BE AT A MEETING OR CONFERENCE AND HAVE SOMEONE I'VE NEVER MET BEFORE ASK ABOUT MY CHILDREN.

It's always a happy moment for me, both because I love talking about my kids and because it usually means I'm meeting an MSC reader.

But the other day was even more fun. My family was at a benefit (The best part? My daughter's dance team was one of the performers—and they did a great job!) to help raise money to fight children's heart disease and one of my wife's colleagues introduced me to her sister, who happened to be an architect. We got to talking about steel (what else?) and she mentioned she had just referenced AISC's AESS guide (what she referred to as "the guide that was printed in that magazine"). The magazine, of course, was *MSC*, and when I mentioned I was the editor it led to all sorts of other conversations. (She had a reprint of the original special supplement we published back in May 2003 and which is still available on *MSC*'s website at www.modernsteel.com.)

She made my day when she said her firm would soon be working on a parking structure and asked whether there was any advantage to considering steel. I talked about cost advantages, about fewer (and smaller) columns, about durability and maintenance, and concluded with my favorite advantage of steel in parking structures: personal safety (I told her how even my rotund shape could easily hide behind a concrete column but that even my wife's trim physique wouldn't be concealed by a steel column). I told her I'd send her a copy of AISC *Design Guide 18: Steel-Framed Open-Deck Parking Structures* (available as a free download to AISC members and to architects who meet me at parties) and also told her about our 30-page booklet for architects on "Innovative Solutions in Steel: Open-Deck Parking Structures" (a free publication on our website www.aisc.org).

Unfortunately, she had never heard of the Steel Solutions Center. I recommended she add 866.ask.aisc to her Rolodex and explained how our staff not only answers technical questions about steel design and specifications, but also creates conceptual solutions that provide framing comparisons based on economy, ease of erection, and project schedule.

And she was excited to learn about SteelDay (scheduled for September 23 this year—visit www.steelday.org for more information). One of her colleague's father had worked at the old Gary Works so she had heard stories about steel mills and wanted to visit one (one of the many possible events on SteelDay). She was surprised when I told her that when the Gary Works was in its prime, it took around 12 man-hours to make a ton of steel but thanks to the same types of advancements that moved architects from drafting boards to computer screens, steel now takes less than .6 man-hours to produce a ton. But what was really exciting to her was when I mentioned that carbon emissions by the steel industry were reduced by 47% between 1990 and 2005 (with overall emissions down 67%) and energy use has been cut by almost a third.

On the car ride home, my wife asked what I had found to talk about with her friend's sister for 25 minutes and could only sigh at my one-word answer: steel.

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