
Newsletter for the San Luis Obispo / Central Coast Branch • April 2007

APRIL 2007 MEETING:
Pride in the Engineering Profession

For our April luncheon, we are pleased to have Fred Schott from Fred H. Schott & Associates reprise a presentation he witnessed at a recent banquet in Southern California. Richard Weingardt was the guest speaker at the Student Scholarship Awards Banquet for the Structural Engineering Association of Southern California (SEAOSC) on February 7, 2007. Mr. Weingardt is an award winning Structural Engineer (over 4000 projects), author (7 books and more than 500 published papers), industry activist, artist, etc. Mr. Weingardt's discussion took the audience from historical through present day contributions to society by engineers and how virtually every man-made improvement on this planet was due to the work of engineers. According to Fred, the speech made one proud to be an engineer and urges one to be a leader. Mr. Schott was motivated by the talk and enthusiastic about the prospect of sharing it with our Branch. Fred's presentation will be based upon Mr. Weingardt's notes from the SEAOSC Awards Banquet. Make sure to mark your calendar and join us at Rosa's in Pismo Beach for this motivational presentation.

APRIL 2007 MEETING

LOCATION:

Rosa's Restaurant
491 Price Street
Pismo Beach, CA

DATE & TIME:

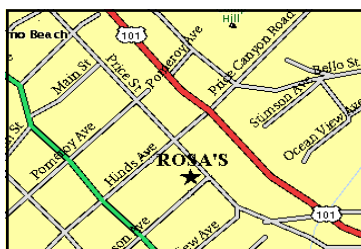
Thursday, April 19th
12:00 pm (Noon)

MENU:

Food served "family style," including: salad, two pasta dishes (chicken and vegetarian), fresh baked bread, and dessert.

RESERVATIONS:

Please sign up by 1:00 pm Friday, April 13th, at the Branch web site (<http://ascslslo.org/>). For questions, contact Nola Engelskirger at 805-788-2100 or by email at nengelskirger@co.slo.ca.us. The cost is \$15 for members or guests and \$6 for student members.



PRESIDENTS PERSPECTIVE:
Carpentry and Engineering

A friend of mine used to work as a carpenter, repairing boats in Morro Bay. He took a great deal of pride in his work and enjoyed the challenge and attention to detail that was required to match the unique shapes and exotic woods used on the higher end cabin cruisers and sailboats he repaired. Though he seemed to have enough work to make a comfortable living, there were times between big jobs that were much leaner, and it was during these times that he would often be approached by someone looking to hire him for a job with a budget that would not allow him to do the quality of work that he set as his standard. My friend told me that he typically turned these jobs down because the quality of the work he did was ultimately his business card, and shoddy work would last longer and speak louder than the quick money he would get for it. I always admired my friend for having this attitude and felt that it was an appropriate one to have for many careers, especially engineering.

As engineers, we are regularly pressured to save time and money. The pressure could be to reduce up-front design costs, resulting in inadequate scopes of services, cutting corners for site visits, inspections, submittal reviews, etc. Sometimes reducing construction costs is achieved by deferring unreasonably higher operating, maintenance or replacement costs for the future. Too often, I have seen projects that were designed with little thought given to the difficulties faced by those who would need to construct, operate, maintain, or expand the facility. For most of us, gaining a proper perspective comes with working in our profession for a while and being willing to learn from our mistakes. I had an associate tell me once that he always paid careful attention to the engineer's estimates ("opinion of probable costs") he produced, because of the embarrassment he suffered the time or two that he ended up being the low bidder on his own project. One recurring fear I have is that I might get a phone call from a contractor holding a set of my plans and telling me something couldn't be built as shown, or operations staff asking me how they were expected to maintain or get access to repair it. This fear has helped develop a tendency in me to try and put myself in the contractor's or operator's shoes when I design something or review plans prepared by someone else. When I am designing a complicated facility, I try and meet with operations staff for their input and will often call a local contractor to get his advice about how he might approach building it. One of the biggest compliments I ever received came during the middle of such a meeting with operations

Check out the photos taken at recent branch meetings on the SLO Branch website at www.ASCESLO.org/Gallery

(Continued on page 3)

MEET THE MEMBER - JIM HANSON**FROM COLD LANDFILLS TO
THE SUNNY CENTRAL COAST**

Meet Jim Hanson, a Cal Poly faculty member in the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department since September 2005.

A specialist in geotechnical engineering, he received his degrees from the University of Wisconsin and the University of Minnesota. Before coming to SLO he taught at Lawrence Technological University (a private school in the Detroit, Michigan area.)

At Cal Poly he's teaching geotechnical engineering courses and developing graduate courses related to ground improvement, geosynthetics engineering, and geoenvironmental engineering. While the class sizes are larger than at Lawrence, Jim notes an improvement in the student quantity/quality mix. "At Cal Poly the high end is more fortified. You can find top students at any university, but you'll find more than one per class at Cal Poly."

He's enjoying the SLO life. "I knew the weather here was nice, but I am continually surprised at just how nice. The cool evenings set up a nice dynamic. Having spent nearly a decade in overcast Michigan, I am particularly enjoying the sunshine to make up for lost time."

On a personal note, he is married and pleased that he and his wife Nazli are together again after some



time apart during the cross-country moving process.

Jim enjoys swimming, golfing, and playing music. He owns several guitars and a mandolin. The music he plays depends what instrument he's playing. It ranges from rock or folk and finger-picking style, to jazzy (for an old archtop guitar), to bluesy (when playing a Dobro).

Jim's primary research involves analysis of performance of landfills in various climatic regions. He has partnerships with 6 landfills in different climatic regions located in three different countries. His most recent field research activities (and some of his favorite research experiences) have been conducted in conjunction with a landfill in Anchorage, Alaska.

Jim has participated in national level committee work at ASCE, becoming involved in leading edge activities both on educational as well as technical fronts. "Being involved in these activities has taught me a great deal about effective leadership

skills. Technically, ASCE sponsors some of the best conferences for civil engineers and makes available high-level publications for the profession."

His advice to young engineers: "Remember the big picture. Projects are multi-disciplinary and are completed in teams. Solid calculations are of course needed, but the softer skills of dealing with teams, effective communication, and leadership (to name a few) can be equally important. These life skills are not generally taught in an engineering classroom setting and make all the difference in the world in your careers. Tapping into professional organizations is one sure bet to improve these skills. Also, I recommend you read as much of anything that interests you as you can (and not just technical materials)."

UPCOMING COURSES**SUSTAINABLE WATERSHED
MANAGEMENT**

Five-Day Short Course

When: June 18-22

Where: UCSB Campus

The objective of this course is to familiarize participants with the process and tools used for developing a Watershed Management Plan (WMP). For information, call (805) 893-4200.

**CULVERT AND ROAD
DRAINAGE PRACTICES TO
PROTECT AND BENEFIT
STEELHEAD AND WATER
QUALITY IN THE CENTRAL
COAST**

Three-Day Course

When: August 14-16

Where: Arroyo Grande

The course will include several sessions in the field and will cover topics including: ditch relief and stream crossing culvert design, installation of rolling dips, culvert sizing, and much, much more! For information, call Nicole at (805) 473-8221.

CAL POLY SOFTBALL GAME & BBQ

The Cal Poly CE/ENVE Department invites all Cal Poly alumni, faculty, and students to a Softball Game & BBQ!

When: April 22, Noon—4pm

Where: El Chorro Regional Park, San Luis Obispo

Cost: \$10 for alumni, friends, and faculty. (Cost includes BBQ Lunch, Event T-Shirt, and Networking/ Recruiting opportunities. Parking is \$2 per vehicle.)

RSVP: Wendy Martin at wendyenve@yahoo.com or 805.260.6077 or Jason Waudby at jgwardby@yahoo.com by Friday, April 13.

This is great way to make Cal Poly connections and have a lot of fun! Bring families, friends, pets, gloves, bats, sunscreen, and anything else. Meet up with old friends! There will also be opportunities for networking with and recruiting the current students. We hope to have a great turnout this year so we've planned the BBQ on the Sunday of Cal Poly's Open House weekend!

MEMBER CORNER

Do you know of a Branch member's recent accomplishments worthy of mentioning in next month's newsletter? If so, contact Syllas Cranor at (805) 781-5260 or e-mail at scrantor@co.slo.ca.us.

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PRESIDENTS PERSPECTIVE (CONT)

(Continued from page 1)

staff. While we were discussing a set of plans I was checking, the maintenance supervisor received a phone call from a consultant on a major project that was currently in the design phase. After he got off the phone, he turned to one of his staff in the room to complain that this "dumb engineer" was proposing to omit certain features important to the operations staff from the project to cut costs. I jokingly reminded him that I was an engineer also, and that I might be offended by the "dumb engineer" reference. His reply was something to the effect: "you're not an engineer; you're one of us."

A much greater compliment was recently paid to the speaker scheduled for our luncheon this month. At a Branch luncheon a couple years ago, a presentation was given on damage sustained by the Atascadero City Hall during the San Simeon earthquake. Steve Kahn, the City's Public Works Director, described the tense moments after the event as his staff were evacuating the building. In introducing the presentation, he stated that previous seismic retrofits made to the building several years ago were designed by Fred Schott, and that the improvements prevented a brick façade on an upper level from pulling loose and falling on a landing at one of the building's exit doors, the very one that Steve and his staff used in evacuating the building, and Steve credited Fred with saving his life.

I tend to agree with my carpenter friend that our work is our business card and my hope for each of us is that our business card always speaks well of us.

~ Jeff Werst

Visit The ASCE Central Coast Website at:

www.ASCESLO.org

TORT LIABILITY 2-DAY WEBINAR

Location: County Government Center, Room 271
1055 Monterey Street, San Luis Obispo

Cost: \$10 per day (Cash or Checks payable to ASCE will be taken at the door or can be mailed to Courtney Howard, c/o County Government Center, Room 207, San Luis Obispo, CA 93408)

PART I: THE PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

Tuesday, April 24, 2007 9 to 10:30 am

This webinar is the first of a two-part series that provides hands-on training for engineers and other technical staff working for public agencies on how to the Tort Liability process works, the common law immunity modifications, standards of care, what constitutes public and personal liability, and risk management strategies. The webinar also provides a thorough understanding of the legal process involving lawsuits and each step involved from the initial filing of a claim to the eventual participation as a witness in a trial in front of a judge and jury.

PART II: THE CIVIL ENGINEER'S ROLE AS A WITNESS

Tuesday, May 8, 2007 9 to 10:30 am

This session examines the civil engineer's role in legal process involving lawsuits. Each step beginning with pre-trial discovery, responding to interrogatories, production of documents, giving depositions, the various forms of evidence and preparing for trial are discussed in detail.

A SPECIAL THANKS

A special thanks goes out to Courtney Howard, Indra Ghosh, Jeff Werst, and Syllas Cranor for their active involvement in the SLO branch by picking up trash on our Adopt-A-Highway section of Highway 101 last month.

ASCE BRANCH OFFICERS

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ASSISTANT EDITOR	Malcolm McEwen - Boyle Engineering	489-1321 mmcewen@boyleengineering.com
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