



The Engineering Voice

American Engineering Alliance

September 2006

Chairperson's Report

By Salvatore Galletta, P.E.

Mark your calendar. On Sept. 26, 2006, AEA will be holding its Annual Membership and Social Event. This year we are going to build on the success of last year's 10th Anniversary Celebration, which featured Frank Lombardi's rousing presentation. We are bringing Mr. Lombardi back to address our members and invited guests. We plan to invite distinguished Engineers, leaders in the Engineering Community and members of the Academia, specifically Engineering Deans and activist Professors. The purpose of this is to create an environment for dialogue between the various members of the Engineering Community. In particular, we would like to engage Academia in addressing some of the serious challenges that face our Profession.

One of the faults or flaws of our Profession can be traced to the failure of Academia to produce Engineers who are true professionals. The Engineering education that is imparted to our students, in general, does not cover ethics or professional conduct. The Engineering professors, typically, cannot serve as accurate role models. They do not generally interact with actual practicing professionals in the performance of their work and therefore have no way of guiding their students or preparing them to enter the Profession. They do not adequately convey to Engineering students, the concept of belonging to a noble Profession and the need to act as true professionals.

Engineering professors, typically, do not view themselves as being an integral part of the Engineering Profession even though they play a critical role in incubating its future members. Academia is key to creating a truly viable Profession. They are entrusted with shaping the young minds that will later lead the Profession. If they don't do their job, the Profession suffers. That is why it's so critical that we dialogue with Academia. We need to influence the education of our Engineering students so that they can be prepared to enter the Profession as true professionals. Right now this is not happening and we need to do something about it. AEA intends to start this dialogue.

At this Annual Meeting, we have the opportunity to convey to our members the progress made in advancing the goals of AEA. We can go into greater

details on the various issues AEA has addressed and initiatives undertaken. This is the time for members to ask questions of the AEA leadership, raise any concerns they may have or proffer advice and personal assistance.

As I reported in the last Newsletter, AEA is in the midst of mobilizing support for our Infrastructure Resolution. Right now the Infrastructure Resolution is in the Governmental Operations Committee, chaired by Simcha Felder. In the coming weeks we have to generate overwhelming support for the Resolution by writing, e-mailing and phoning the Committee members and its chair as well as the Council Speaker Christine Quinn and Mayor Bloomberg. If we generate enough support the Resolution will most likely be adopted. You can do your part in this effort. As I indicated before, you can contact the Mayor and the Council members by going to the New York City web site (www.nyc.gov). To get contact information on City Council members you can go directly to the following web page:
www.nycouncil.info/constituent/member_list.cfm

We will print the above contact information in future Newsletters until the Resolution gets adopted.

After much deliberation the Board has decided to revamp the AEA web site. We have selected a web designer who is now in the process of upgrading our web site. We hope to have the new site up and running in the next couple of weeks.

In conjunction with our new and revamped web site, we are launching a monthly e-mail communication with our members who have furnished us with their e-mail addresses. We will communicate to you the actions taken by AEA at the monthly Board meetings. This way you will not have to wait till the quarterly Newsletter arrives in the mail. We want you to know that your Board is continuously working to advance the objectives of AEA.

Hope your summer has been enjoyable. Stay cool and see you all on September 26.

- Salvatore Galletta, P.E.

Adjutant's Call

Combating Distraction, Demoralization and Apathy

In pursuing our professional careers, we are often swamped with work, and a multitude of various divergent chores make a heavy demand on our time and our physical and mental energy. Moreover because most of us perceive that we are relatively powerless to control the way we perform our sacred mission as guardians of the Infrastructure, cynicism and hopelessness sometimes invade our vision of how we can improve the situation.

It is true that our plates are full. However everyone fills his/her own plate, and because modern life has so many varied demands on us, we discard what is perceived to be of lesser importance. The empowerment of Engineers is more than simply getting for ourselves better salaries and working conditions. It is an essential part of avoiding such natural and social disasters brought to light by Hurricane Katrina, a tragedy (as apparently only Engineers understand) that began hundreds of years ago.

Just as the behavior of a structural material may be understood by examining what happens on a microscopic level, the effect of the Engineering Profession as a whole can be understood by examining what is going on with the individual Engineer. Reflect on this. Look to your left, look to your right, and look into yourself! Are you and your fellow practitioners aiding the cause of Engineers taking charge of their work? Or perhaps the way you do your job may be working against that goal?

A respectful revolution like ours needs Engineers to step up, be counted and roll up their sleeves to do their part. Success in any endeavor has never been achieved without dedication, hard work and the belief that victory can be achieved. A few individuals can lead a group to a goal, but cannot achieve it by themselves. It takes the determination and work of many to do that. This leaves YOU as the key to success!

The AEA needs YOU, not to be a bystander, but to participate in the struggle. If we haven't gotten you off of the sidelines, sure it's our failing, but it's your failing also. Remember, we are telling the general public that Engineers are the people with the vision **and brains to make society work**. However too many individual Engineers can't see the forest for the trees when it comes to they own destiny. Don't they

understand that each one of them is necessary to enable a strong collective power base to exist? At major part of the problem can be described in three words, "Distraction", "Demoralization" and "Apathy".

In addition to the demands of our work, we have many family and social responsibilities. Many of us make choices on how we spend our time, and financial and personal resources based upon our immediate individual space, and do not take the time to consider the world around them and how seriously it affects them personally. In this way they are distracted from understanding some of the things that are truly important to them, and opt not to take part in collective action. This type of distraction can result in a squandering of energy that could be applied the betterment of our society.

In the face of the seemingly overpowering outside control of our profession, it is not surprising that many of us are demoralized. Well believe me our goal can, and with the help of many individual Engineers, will be achieved. Remember, nothing was ever achieved without dedication and effort, and the belief that something is impossible is a self-fulfilling. That is why demoralization is a deadly enemy to improving our condition. When we finally take our proper role we will not be able to afford the luxury of timidity, so we had better get our shoulders to the wheel now. To do that, "You've "gotta" believe!

We are aiming for a leadership role in society. We will not be qualified for such a role if we have apathy for others. Apathy is the enemy of society. It prevents collective action and that fosters tyranny. The basic tenet of our profession is to serve and protect people. This is why I personally have great difficulty understanding the apathy that I have seen in too many of my fellow Engineers, who do not seem willing to take one step out of their normal routine to help any worthy cause beyond their close relations.

In the final analysis, the key to any group of people achieving any goal depends upon the individuals who comprise it. We must have a large number of Engineers dedicated to the cause and willing to make at least some small sacrifice for the good of all. Too many have been prevented from doing so by distraction, demoralization and apathy, and we as individuals must escape from their clutches in order for all Engineers to be elevated.

- Lou Comunelli, P.E