

President's memo

WHOSO DIGGETH A PIT SHALL FALL THEREIN

Proverbs Ch. 26: Verse 27



Some years back I asked an ACI president-elect what his number one priority item was for accomplishment during his term of office. His answer: Abolish the practice of publishing a monthly "President's Memo." He was a great president but that's one job he didn't get done.

Goal definition and goal setting for the new president seem to be *de rigueur* for the first memo. This is a dangerous practice. A highly regarded economist noted for his forecasting, when asked what advice he would give to young aspirants in the field said, "Be positive, be specific, be unequivocal . . . but *never* put it in writing." That's good advice, but impossible to follow in the present situation.

Institutional introspective analysis, redefinition of objectives and goal setting are a way of life in my business. I've had a lot of practice at writing fuzzy statements of ten and twenty-year goals for higher education. But an ACI president is in office for just one year without option to renew and a recent report of a committee charged to define the duties of the ACI president states, "Each president — is expected to *accomplish something* during his term of office." That's sort of a radical notion, but it's certainly not a fuzzy statement. It demands response in kind. (Parenthetically, I should note that when this committee report was considered recently by the Board of Direction, I spoke against it. However, in a surge of unparalleled unanimity, the entire Board agreed to ignore me.)

There are four areas in which I should like to concentrate my efforts:

1. Federal regulation of voluntary consensus standards-developing bodies.

In the past several years, committees of the United States House of Representatives and Senate have studied proposed legislation to regulate voluntary consensus standards-developing bodies, such as ACI, and the standards they produce. In addition, the Office of Management and Budget and the Federal Trade Commission have proposed administrative regulations in the same areas. Why? Because of reported abuses of the system for the benefit of the few and to the detriment of the public at large.

One cannot doubt that there have been abuses, but each of the proposals for regulations remind me of the guy who hunted humming birds with a 12 gage shotgun. Standards writing is an area fundamental to ACI's purpose and we have to provide leadership in efforts to maintain a system responsive to public need, but free of unnecessary repressive regulation.

2. Broaden the understanding of ACI among those who design and build with concrete.

It is easy to fall into the trap of familiarity and expect everyone to know what we know. ACI may have 14,000 plus members, but there's a lot of folks out there who don't know ACI from CIA. If we are to grow in membership and undertake new, needed programs, this image question needs attention.

3. ACI has sought to define and implement its proper role in education for several years. We have enjoyed success in some ventures while others have produced disappointing results. Our charter defines clearly an educational mission for the Institute. I don't have a specific goal for the coming year that is measurable in dollars or new programs, but the whole area deserves attention.

4. We recently embarked on a joint venture with Comite Euro-International du Beton (CEB) to explore development of performance based building code criteria. The Board approved ACI's participation in this activity at the Houston meeting. This is an extremely important joint activity that needs continuing support by the officers of the Institute as well as by the newly appointed working committee.

The title of this memo? It really has no relationship to the content, but would you have read this far if the title was "My Presidential Goals?"

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jim Langley". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

President's memo



A Warm Reception

Writing a memo such as this is an awesome responsibility. It gets prime space and elegant editorial treatment, picture and all, in a practically brand-new publication which is sure to become recognized as *The* authoritative source for news, practical information, standards, and recommended practices for concrete design and construction. One really ought to have something to say in order to justify taking up space in so prestigious a publication — and, I do!

On this sixth "luniversary" of the issuance of *Concrete International: Design and Construction*, I wish to report to the membership and subscribers that the reaction and response to this new venture has been overwhelmingly favorable; an almost unqualified positive expression of support from many, many readers who evidently feel that ACI did the right thing when the decision was made to issue two monthly publications, this one and the JOURNAL.

Such revolutionary change did not come easily. If you think that peace negotiations in the Middle East were labored, you should have been in on the agony and ecstasy experienced during this gestation period and birth. But, no apologies are in order; indeed, we should have nothing but good words for the enormous volunteer and staff effort that went into the many studies of feasibility, financial impact, format, content, title, — the whole bit — emerging finally with a proposal to management. Add to that the problem of bringing this novel, if not radical, recommendation to the Board of Direction immediately following a period when Institute finances were strained to say the least, and you begin to get the idea that we have in the Institute, people who are innovative, far-sighted, and willing to devote a lot of time and effort for the betterment of the industry.

We evidently have a good thing going here, but a six-month's publication record does not guarantee *Concrete International* a place in history with *Playboy* or even *Time*. Continued success depends upon contributions from you who work in the concrete industry and who are willing to share your experiences with others.

In the inaugural issue of *Concrete International*, just six months ago, the editor underscored this notion when he wrote, "The ultimate success of the magazine and its value to you, our readers, will depend heavily on *practical* articles submitted by experts in the field of concrete construction. You are the designers, engineers, contractors, and technicians who have first-hand knowledge and experience.

. . . ACI members want to receive more practical information in concrete . . . share your knowledge with (our) readers. . . . We urgently seek articles that will benefit our readers . . . If you have a story to tell, let us get it down on paper and in print."

It is no secret that an important factor in the decision to launch *Concrete International* was a criticism from the membership that the JOURNAL had become overly academic, and some members with less academic interests were leaving ACI. It was particularly gratifying therefore, to receive a letter saying:

"Enclosed please find my money order for my 1979 membership. I had really decided not to continue my membership . . . Over the years you have concentrated more and more in the JOURNAL on articles of interest mainly to those engaged in design or structural design research or academics.

However, with the arrival of the first issue of *Concrete International*, I have decided to renew my membership for another year in the hopes that the trend initiated in this first issue continues throughout the year in providing for those of us on the practical side of our industry, articles of equal interest to this first issue. Please keep up the good work!"

Thank you sir, we'll certainly try.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Sample". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.



A Standard Tale

The bible for ACI Technical committee operations is the *Technical Committee Manual*. The latest revision (February 1979) no doubt occupies as prominent a place on the bookshelf of every chairman as does the *Holy Bible* on the bookshelves of many households. One hopes that both are referred to frequently.

One section of the Manual covers definitions and procedures for those documents that are the Standards of the Institute — Standards produced by voluntary consensus procedures that have been the subject recently of proposed regulation through legislative action or administrative rule-making. It is not my purpose here to comment on this concern. It is a grave one, but the response to it by the Board of Direction has been made known to members on pages 10-14 of this issue. Instead, I want to go back to square one and lay out the definitions and purposes of the various classes of Standards that the Institute publishes as they are now approved by the Board of Direction. There's been a change or two in recent years so if you haven't been paying attention, listen up!

Standards of the Institute are Codes (strictly speaking, Code Requirements), Code Cases, Specifications and Standard Practices. The following excerpts from the Manual define each class:

Codes are intended to be adopted by governmental bodies as legal documents setting forth minimum requirements. As such, they must be worded in explicit mandatory language so that there is only one possible legal interpretation. Since all portions may legally be part of the code, including appendixes, synopses, and footnotes, no references other than to complete, explicit, mandatory specifications or codes may be made.

Code Cases are intended to provide interim interpretation of codes. Specific requirements in code language are used to provide interim rules for additions or alternates not covered by an existing code. Code cases insure that such clarifications and provisions are given general distribution.

Specifications are intended to be referenced as part of a contract between an owner and a builder and must be worded in explicit, mandatory language subject to only one possible legal interpretation.

Standard Practices (formerly "Standard Recommended Practices") are intended to present the recommended and acceptable methods and materials to be used in design, planning, execution, or inspection of construction and in preparing specifications. Where possible, the standard should be written in obligatory language. However, since various methods and materials may be used to secure the desired end result and may differ only in degree of performance, alternate methods may be recommended and discussion of advantages and disadvantages is proper. Similarly, variations may be necessary because of weather, work location, type of structure, economic considerations, etc., so that the standard must include the necessary background and analysis to permit acceptable adjustments to be made. Introductions, discussions, explanatory footnotes, appendixes, and references are permissible and often desirable.

Complementary to the various classes of ACI Standards are two additional types of documents that are produced by technical committees and published without going through the standardization procedure. These bear the names "committee report" and "guide." They encompass subject areas or fields where practice, materials, and usage are varied, where information or experience is limited, or where controversy exists so as to preclude writing a standard.

The product of our technical committees is one of the main strengths of ACI. However, it is as important to use these documents properly as it is to write them correctly to begin with.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John L. ...". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

President's memo



Get Smart

For about three years, in the mid 1960's, I wrote an almost once-a-month article for *Concrete Products* carrying the title "Technical Talk." No one has seen fit to reprint the series in paperback nor have I heard that those issues are now collectors' items, but periodically, I am reminded of the themes of a few of them. One month the theme was education. I climbed a soap box to decry the unwillingness of concrete practitioners of all sorts to work to the state of the art, suggesting strongly that if half of the available knowledge on concrete was put into practice, 95 percent of the problems would evaporate.

Things may be somewhat improved in 1979, but we have by no means reached the millennium. Technology continues to expand, bringing new opportunities for improved practice if a person only had the time to learn it all. Unfortunately, other matters demand increased time and effort. Regulation of all sorts continues to mount so that it takes an hour to get ten minutes' work done. The only thing that has not inflated is the length of the day — it continues to have only 24 hours. So what do you do? There's only one thing you can do, and that is to make the segment of your time devoted to continuing education as productive and as efficiently used as possible. Helping you to do this is a large part of the educational mission of ACI.

The education of people who design and build with concrete permeates Institute activities. Our chartered objectives are ". . . gathering, correlating, and disseminating information for the improvement of the design, construction, manufacture, use, and maintenance of concrete products and structures." Broadly, this is education. In practice, it is education based on a technical and educational committee structure that synthesizes information, old and new, needed to solve problems, and makes this information available to practitioners in the best possible forms. *Concrete International* with its articles, committee reports, standards, etc., is one form. The *Journal*, *Symposia Volumes* and *Monographs* are others.

The education medium that has the largest unrealized potential is, in my opinion, the one day seminar where people in a relatively restricted geographic region come together to explore, with informed leadership, a specified technical topic about which information is sorely needed. For several years ACI has been involved, through its chapters, in conducting educational programs. Many have been outstanding successes. Others have been less successful and we don't always understand why. I believe that this area deserves another look. The need for continuing education is manifest — it's already a legal requirement for some people in some states. Our chapters, working with the Education Department and the resources to be found in the expertise of ACI members, can make important contributions to continued progress in ACI's education programs.

I would appreciate hearing from you, our readers and members, if you have comments on ACI's educational programs or have suggestions on what is needed in the seminar field.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John S. Langley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

President's memo



Who Shapes The Future?

Membership in ACI doesn't just happen, it is caused.

There are all sorts of reasons for **maintaining** membership in the Institute. There are reasons based on perceived contributions to the industry through committee activity; opportunities to participate in new developments, to exchange technical information, and to receive new technical information that has the seal of reliability members have a right to expect of materials published under an ACI label. There are altruistic reasons, pragmatic reasons, and even selfish reasons for maintaining membership. You have them; I have them. But how does one get started as an ACI member? Where does it begin? And, for that matter, should you care about these questions?

Being unencumbered by any data to refute (or support) me, I'm free to assert that readers of this page have more than the average interest in the continued growth, vigor, and prosperity of what we loosely call the concrete industry. You also have some feeling, explicit or nebulous, that having an ACI around promotes that interest. It most certainly does, and that's the reason you **should** care and give some thought to how we maintain and advance an institution that not only stands for progress in concrete materials, design, and construction, but also produces and disseminates basic information that helps make progress possible.

A most essential ingredient to advancement is growth of the Institute's membership, and particularly growth of that component which is just entering the field. These are the people who will shape the future of the industry. Concentration on membership recruitment of the next generation of ACI Committee chairmen, code writers, prize winning designers, constructors, and researchers should be a high priority item for all of us.

The current status of ACI membership is healthy and the trend is encouraging. At the close of 1978 our membership totaled 13,653, an increase of 510 from year-end 1977. In addition, 590 new memberships were processed in 1978 for 1979 whereas the counterpart number for 1977 was only 138. We're projecting a total membership of over 14,000 by the close of 1979.

This is all very encouraging. It reverses a slight downward trend and reflects the efforts of many members carrying the message to co-workers and also the efforts of that much maligned breed, the college professors, carrying the message to students. It is not a situation, however, that should give rise to feelings of complacency. There are thousands more out there who **should** be ACI members, and many hundreds who enter the industry each year who have to be made aware of the benefits of ACI membership, and, yes, of a responsibility to support an organization that materially benefits the industry in which they earn a living.

We have a newly established standing committee on membership recruitment as a result of action taken by the Board of Direction at their March meeting. Their mission is to develop and implement a national and international continuing program of membership recruitment in all classes of membership. The action reflects recognition of the importance of applying continuous effort to expand and renew ourselves with fresh minds and new ideas. A committee can do only so much; ultimately, it becomes one-on-one. That's where you come in.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John L. Langley". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

President's memo



Happy Anniversary ACI!

Institutions, unlike people, revel in growing old. It's understandable; an institution can legitimately aspire to immortality. Each passing year of existence is *de facto* evidence of survival, success, and thus a step in that direction. Institutional aging can be a sign of strength, continuing need, accomplishment, and realization of purpose. It's a good sign and reason for celebration. This rationale, however, is not one that I use on the occasion of my wife's birthday.

What was ACI doing at other significant milestones in its history? Fifty years ago, the 25th convention of the Institute was held in Detroit; registration totaled 685 and considering that the convention was held in February, and total membership in 1929 was 2738, that's a pretty good track record.

E. D. Boyer announced in his President's Address the abandonment of the yearly publication of the *Proceedings* (a collection of papers, reports and discussions covering activity at the annual convention) and the substitution of a monthly journal devoted to technical papers and discussions, abstracts of literature, newsletters and similar material. He also announced an ambitious plan to index the *Proceedings* from the year 1905 to 1929. He did *not* include in his address an action taken by the Board of Direction to discharge *all* technical committees of the Institute. This was left to the printed report of the Board in the *Proceedings* where the discharge was announced and it was stated that about 40 new committees were being organized most of which were to have ". . . but four members — an Author-Chairman who will write the report asked for and three critics who will criticize it before publication. A majority of a committee must approve before a report becomes acceptable."

What an ambitious undertaking! I don't blame President Boyer for omitting announcement of that action from his speech. I would have ducked it myself.

The 50th Anniversary was celebrated during the presidency of Henry L. Kennedy. The February 1954 issue of the *JOURNAL* was covered in gold and the contents devoted to the preceding half century of progress of the concrete field, tracing developments in the fields of building code requirements, concrete pipe, and concrete construction, both cast-in place and pre-cast. It's a fascinating issue; I recommend it. The lead paper, "A Story of Progress — Fifty Years of the American Concrete Institute," by ACI deputy executive director Bob Wilde and the late Bill Maples by itself is worth the price of admission.

One last point. How did the cost of ACI membership in 1929 and 1954 compare with the cost of membership in 1979? Forget federal statistics on inflation and cost of living index and let me use a gut source for comparison: average gross salary of civil engineering professors from that wonderful place that feeds me and mine, versus ACI dues. One can compare the numbers in a variety of ways but the end result is the same. ACI membership is still a bargain. Here's one comparison: from 1929 to 1979 individual member dues increased by a factor of 4.6 — and salaries increased by a factor of 8.9; from 1954 to 1979 dues increased by a factor of 3.8 but salaries increased by a factor of 4.1. I'll admit that the comparison lacks economic sophistication but I maintain that the basic premise is supported.

P.S. To the president in 2004 — please feel free to quote me.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Langley". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a light-colored background.

President's memo



I can read the words, but what do they mean?

The morning mail brings the requests phrased many ways: "Does Section 4.2.7 of ACI Standard 319-81 specifically prohibit the use of . . .?"; or "Section 5.3 of ACI 904 seems to imply that . . ."; or "I can't make heads or tails out of the last sentence in Section 11.4 or ACI 007. For one thing, it seems completely contradictory to what's required by Section 9.2, and furthermore. . . ."

Whatever form the inquiry may take, the bottom line is always the same, "Will you please give me an official interpretation?" No, sir or madam, as of now the Institute will not. No ACI officer, staff person, committee or subcommittee chairman or member, or combination of these, has the authority to render an "official" interpretation of an Institute Standard. We do have an option called "Code Cases" available under the Standardization Procedure for clarification of the intent of specific requirements of a Code but that takes consensus action of the responsible committee, TAC and Standard Board approval, and publication for discussion etc., etc. That's not exactly what folks have in mind when requesting an official interpretation.

Currently writers or callers making such requests to a staff engineer are told that there is no official interpreter. The engineer may comment or provide information, but such is clearly labeled unofficial. In addition, the engineer may refer the inquiry to a member or officer of the responsible technical committee who, if he or she chooses to respond, does so on personal authority, not that of ACI or as a representative of one of its technical committees.

This position has strong support in some quarters but, as you might expect, not everyone is happy with the current state of affairs. Persuasive arguments are made on both sides of the issue. Within the past two years, two different committees of the Board of Direction have considered the question and have reached opposite conclusions. It's a complex problem; the solution to which must include consideration of the needs of the users of our standards, the mechanisms whereby these needs might be met, the integrity of consensus principles, cost and, not insignificantly, the potential liability of the Institute, individuals, or groups of individuals who might be authorized to speak for it on such matters. The American Society of Mechanical Engineers has issued interpretations of their Boiler and Pressure Vessel Code for many years. As a result of a response to an inquiry and the subsequent events, the Society was sued under the Sherman Antitrust Act in 1975. In February of this year they were found liable for \$3.3 million in damages, *which is trebled* as provided in the Act. The total of \$9.9 million was reduced to \$7.5 million owing to other circumstances; and the case is now under appeal. Nonetheless, ASME has placed in escrow almost \$8.2 million to cover the award plus interest.

Like I said, it's a complex problem.

So there are some hazards. But there are also many potential benefits. The Executive Committee has asked a small group of Institute members to restudy the entire question and report to the Board at the March 1980 convention. If you have thoughts on this matter I'd be pleased to hear them and will transmit your ideas to the chairman of the group.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Laugel". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.



Follow the leader or be one?

The men and women who cut my hair on those occasions when it is obvious that something needs to be done "or else," are licensed by the State of Indiana. I am assured, by implication, that each has undergone some reasonable training program, has submitted himself or herself for review and examination and is qualified according to a set of established standards to engage in barbering. I have no such assurance with respect to the qualifications of technicians who are, to a large extent, in day-to-day control of the quality of concrete construction on projects in many parts of the United States.

Is this necessarily a bad situation? Do we need another layer of governmental regulation in order to make the industry better, more responsible to the public interest, and other good things? I personally think not; there are better ways to achieve these ends. I believe, as does the Educational Activities Committee (EAC) of the Institute, that we must look seriously at an intramural, voluntary program of education and certification of concrete technicians, develop a workable plan, and implement it before something not so workable and perhaps not so good is imposed from without.

At the fall meeting of the Institute in Washington, D.C., EAC presented a proposal to the Board of Direction for a certification program for concrete technicians. They argue that ACI must accept a leadership role in establishing and maintaining such a program for the purpose of improving and regulating the quality of concrete. This proposal did not spring forth overnight. The concept has been discussed and debated for several years in our Planning Committee, whose members made a proposal to the Board in 1977. The proposal was debated at length and finally turned back to the Committee for further study. At the spring 1979 convention, responsibility for this area of activity was shifted to EAC and they responded quickly.

We now have a second proposal, the intent and objectives of which are clear and commendable: to upgrade the concrete construction industry. The path that must be followed to reach these objectives is, as usual, less clear. The Board did not totally approve the proposal from EAC but neither did they turn it back. The compromise was reasonable; there are some steps that can be taken during the next year that are clearly in the best interests of all, and which will be productive even if we don't go whole-hog thereafter. EAC has agreed to proceed on this basis and in a year see where we go from there. Things *will* happen in this area of certification over the next several years.

Our job is to see that ACI leads the happenings.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, which appears to read "John L. Sample". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

President's memo



THE FINAL CHAPTER

It's the end of the road. The last memo from McLaughlin. We now pause while 14,000 plus ACIers thank their respective deities.

Frequently ACI presidents wind up their year of writing by reviewing their objectives, modestly remarking on accomplishments, and lamenting with dignity over failures. I wouldn't touch that with a ten foot pole. There have no doubt been successes and failures this past year because decisions have been made, programs started, others terminated, money spent, and money not spent, all of which influence the course of the Institute. The trouble is, instant evaluation is frequently not profound evaluation. The successes and failures will sort themselves out in the months and years to come. I'll give you a state of the Institute report in the traditional fashion in an issue following the Las Vegas convention; this month I have a few words to say on Chapters.

I'm probably the first ACI President, for many years, who came to office without ever having been to an ACI Chapter Meeting, to say nothing of having been a chapter member or officer. I live in one of those regions of the world which, until *very* recently, was not within the bounds of a chapter. My knowledge of chapter activities was all second hand, derived from attending Chapter Activities Committee Meetings at national conventions, reading CAC minutes and the Chapter Newsletter, and talking to people who were active in their chapter affairs. That's good as far as it goes, but it's like spending your whole life listening to records and never seeing a live opera. It was my thing this year to try to complete the picture. To a very satisfying extent I did so. While my track record is not up to that of many past presidents, a combination of Chapter Roundtables and individual chapter visits has given me a look at a side of ACI that will be most helpful in carrying out the duties that accompany my term as past-president member of the Board.

My thanks to all who invited me to spend an evening with them. My apologies for those times when, because of prior plans or press of University duties, I had to decline. To all of you who have the opportunity to be involved in Chapter activities and are not, you're missing something worthwhile. I urge you to get out and become active.

Finally, during the fall convention it was my pleasure to present banners to two new Chapters approved that week by the Board: the Maharashtra, India Chapter and the Indiana Chapter. The geographical boundaries of the latter include me. I plan to take my own advice.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John McLaughlin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.