

# editor's note



**IT'S AMAZING HOW THINGS CHANGE IN JUST A YEAR.** Today, my three-year-old, Jason, can ice skate. My five-year-old, Joshua, is beginning to read. And my nine-year-old, Julia, has mastered writing in cursive.

The changes at this year's NASCC: The Steel Conference were almost as dramatic.

For the first time since I started attending Steel Conferences in 1990, I didn't hear any questions about LRFD or complaints about when AISC would be issuing the next ASD manual. Instead, the more the 3,200 attendees seemed genuinely excited about the new *Manual* that includes values for designing in both ASD and LRFD. (Of course, judging by the more than 6,000 manuals we've already shipped, they're not alone. If you haven't ordered one, visit [www.aisc.org/bookstore](http://www.aisc.org/bookstore) or sign up for a seminar on the new manual and specification at [www.aisc.org/seminars](http://www.aisc.org/seminars).)

This year I didn't hear disparaging comments about the impracticality of interoperability. Instead, the sessions discussing CIS/2, interoperability, and the future of Building Information Models were standing-room only. The number of companies sharing information is on the rise and engineers, detailers, and fabricators are giving the technology a serious look as an option to give them a leg up in the marketplace. And I won't be surprised if come next year we see some erectors getting involved.

And speaking of new technology, there was a lot on display. Sherwin Williams was talking up paint systems with substantially reduced curing and application times. P2 Programs was showing an inexpensive bar coding system that had attendees asking for P.O.s on the spot. The 3D models output from CAD files by Dimension Printing were simply amazing (we had a model of a staggered truss on display in the AISC booth). Autodesk's demonstration of Revit Structure drew quite a crowd, as did Bentley's nearby booth featuring the integration of STAAD, RAM, and their other A/E/C products. Mazak showed an impressive space frame system using laser cut tubes (they had tubes on display and pictures of their equipment; I'd love to have seen their actual laser cutting). And, of course, there was plenty of big equipment on display—including some radically new introductions from most of the big

names. With 163 exhibitors, there was something interesting and innovative for every attendee.

I also didn't hear a lot of questions about steel pricing. The price of steel has been relatively stable for most of the past year (a few dips and doodles, but nothing significant) and it has almost become a non-issue. Of course, it doesn't hurt that steel remains easily available from mills and service centers while shortages of other construction materials were rampant last year.

If you weren't at the conference, you missed some of the best talks I've ever heard. Gene Kranz of Apollo 13 fame was inspiring. And Jim Fisher, who was awarded AISC's J. Lloyd Kimbrough Medal, gave a lot of practical advice—in his own folksy style. "Design and construction go together like partners in a three-legged race," he said, later adding: "Good judgment is the single most important factor in providing success and reliability in design. Many of the solutions to constructability issues...are in fact judgment calls that we make to provide successful designs." And he offered some solid advice to engineers, fabricators, erectors, detailers, and educators: "Be a mentor. Talk about judgment to your young engineers. Give of your time to AISC, ACI, ASCE and other professional organizations. Provide input through various AISC publications and seminars. Teach students to think creatively. Concentrate on the fundamentals. Stress the importance of logical analysis." If you missed his talk, take heart. We'll be printing it in next month's issue.

Other topics/speakers that garnered a lot of attention were Duane Miller on Welding (a perpetual favorite speaker), anything dealing with seismic design or the new manual, information on getting paid, and sessions on HSS design and connections. The NASCC planning committee is already hard at work on next year's conference, so mark your calendars now. I look forward to seeing you on April 18-21, 2007 in New Orleans!

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