

editor's note



IF YOU LOOK CAREFULLY AT THE COVER OF THE FIRST ISSUE OF MODERN STEEL CONSTRUCTION, YOU CAN SEE MY OFFICE. And I don't mean that in some metaphysical sense. I mean it literally: One of the buildings displayed on the cover of the 1961 inaugural issue is One East Wacker Dr. in Chicago, the current home of AISC.

Reading through issues from the past 50 years is an eye-opener (if you're curious, we've posted every issue of MSC at www.modernsteel.com—simply click on the archives button in the top right hand corner of the screen). Some of the highlights of just the first decade include:

- In 1961 we led off with a discussion of high-strength steels and predicted that A36 (which had just been introduced the year before) would eventually dominate the market—a prediction that held true until the introduction of A992 in 1998. While in the 1960s we were still touting least weight equals least cost, we had begun to realize that labor costs were growing at a faster rate than material costs—and we started to talk about the need to minimize labor-intensive designs, such as the use of cover plates.
- In 1963 we talked about the future of the industry and introduced many of our readers to the potential of the “electronic computer” for steel detailing. While 3D drawings and visions of a BIM-centric world were still far in the future, these new machines showed promise in carrying out the extensive geometric computations that were so time-consuming to complete manually.
- In 1965, one of the winners of the Architectural Awards of Excellence (a precursor to the current IDEAS² program) was the New Jersey Tercentary Pavilion at the New York World's Fair. While I don't remember that particular building, my first childhood memories were of the 1964 World's Fair. That same year, we gave a special award (as part of the Prize Bridge Awards—a program that continues today) to the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge.
- In 1967 we attempted to explain the origins of the topping out ceremony—a topic we'd revisit in much more detail in 1995 with one of our best read articles of all-time: “Why a Christmas Tree.” (If you're at all curious about that custom, read the article at www.modernsteel.com/backissues).
- In 1968 we wrote about a new observatory designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill for

Northwestern University's Evanston, Ill., campus. While the original article was unexceptional, it has personal significance to me. Not only did I attend Northwestern, but 27 years later I wrote an editorial describing the difficulty a local contractor had in demolishing the structure—a tribute to the reserve strength of steel. My favorite line: “Not to be denied, the workers next decided to hook chains up to the structure and simply pull it down. But again, the effort was to no avail. Instead of pulling down the observatory, all they did was create the Leaning Tower of Evanston.”

- Also in 1968, we discussed a new 111-page manual titled Plastic Design of Braced Multistory Steel Frames. The entire article covered less than half a page. By comparison, when we introduced the 2005 Specification, we ran an entire series of articles explaining the new provisions in detail.
- In 1970, we discussed the creation of the T.R. Higgins Lectureship Award, a program that has since become one of the most prestigious in the industry. The list of winners (and of course we continue to cover each in MSC) reads like a who's who of the design and construction industry.

To me, the most surprising thing about reading back issues of MSC is the common threads through the decades, such as: the emphasis on steel's construction speed; the need to design for total cost not simply least weight; the importance of the AISC Quality Certification Program. It's remarkable how many people and projects are readily recognizable. And it's impressive how many advancements are recorded during the magazine's 50 years—and how the steel design and construction industry continues to grow and improve. I hope the next half century is just as exciting and noteworthy.

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