

editor's note



THE STEEL INDUSTRY LOST ONE OF ITS GIANTS LAST MONTH. While we often metaphorically state that someone “wrote the book” on a subject, in the case of Omer Blodgett and structural welding, we mean it literally. His book *Design of Welded Structures* is the definitive work on the subject—and for more than 50 years, Omer was the first and last word on structural welding.

Sadly, Omer passed away on January 11 at the age of 99.

When I first started at AISC nearly three decades ago, Omer was an active contributor and commentator for *Modern Steel* and *Engineering Journal* and a frequent speaker at the Steel Conference. And even though he was the nation's leading expert on structural welding, I'll always remember how humble he was. When he called, he never expected anyone to know him; he was just a welder from Minnesota. So every phone call began the same: “This is Omer Blodgett. I'm with The Lincoln Electric Company.”

In an article about mentoring published in *Welding Innovation*, Duane Miller, Omer's mentee and successor at Lincoln, remembered the remarkable advice he gave him over the years:

- ▶ Provide a path for the load to be transferred to a member that lies parallel
- ▶ Don't over-weld
- ▶ Don't design with your heart
- ▶ Remember what you are designing for
- ▶ Listen to the welder

Many of these same lessons were presented in a podcast he participated in just a few years ago (you can listen to Omer by visiting www.aisc.org/podcasts) and again in a *Modern Steel* article, “Blodgett's Treasures,” February 2013).

I think anyone who has been in the steel industry long enough has an Omer Blodgett story. “When my partner and I started STS Steel 33 years ago in a rented 7,000-sq.-ft warehouse, our one piece of equipment was a used Lincoln welder,” reminisced Jim Stori, former chair of AISC. “When we ran into a weld

cracking problem on some tricky triangular (three-pipe chord) trusses a decade later, it was Omer we turned to. He then taught us about carbon equivalents and the corresponding preheats. But more than any particular discussion or problem Omer helped us to solve, I think of him for his down-to-earth lectures.”

Humility is a common thread in any discussion of Omer. “Most structural engineers think of Omer as an icon in the field of structural engineering,” explained Jim Fisher, former chair of AISC's Specification Committee and vice president emeritus at Computerized Structural Design. “The amazing fact is that most do not realize that Omer was not educated as a structural engineer. He studied mechanical engineering and metallurgy. He is, however, a truly gifted engineer, and his contributions to the AISC *Specification* are invaluable. In 1983, Omer received the T.R. Higgins Lectureship Award, one of the highest honors given by AISC to individuals who have contributed to the structural steel industry. I was excited to be in the audience to see him accept the award, and to hear his lecture. The most memorable part of the event was his acceptance speech. I could not believe how such an icon could be so humble in his accomplishments. This is something we should all emulate.”

Although Omer has been retired for more than a decade, his work will always live on.


SCOTT MELNICK
EDITOR

Modern STEEL CONSTRUCTION

Editorial Offices

130 E Randolph Street, Suite 2000
Chicago, IL 60601
312.670.2400

Editorial Contacts

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

Scott L. Melnick
312.670.8314
melnick@modernsteel.com

SENIOR EDITOR

Geoff Weisenberger
312.670.8316
weisenberger@modernsteel.com

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Tasha Weiss
312.670.5439
weiss@modernsteel.com

DIRECTOR OF PUBLICATIONS

Keith A. Grubb, SE, PE
312.670.8318
grubb@modernsteel.com

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

Megan Johnston-Spencer
312.670.5427
johnstonspencer@modernsteel.com

GRAPHIC DESIGN MANAGER

Kristin Hall
312.670.8313
hall@modernsteel.com

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ACCOUNT MANAGER

Louis Gurthet
231.228.2274
gurthet@modernsteel.com
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contact Louis Gurthet or visit
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subscriptions@aisc.org

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Megan Johnston-Spencer
312.670.5427
johnstonspencer@modernsteel.com