



# THE FORGE

Newsletter of the Birmingham Branch of ASCE

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## Meeting Information for January

*THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE JANUARY 3<sup>RD</sup>...*

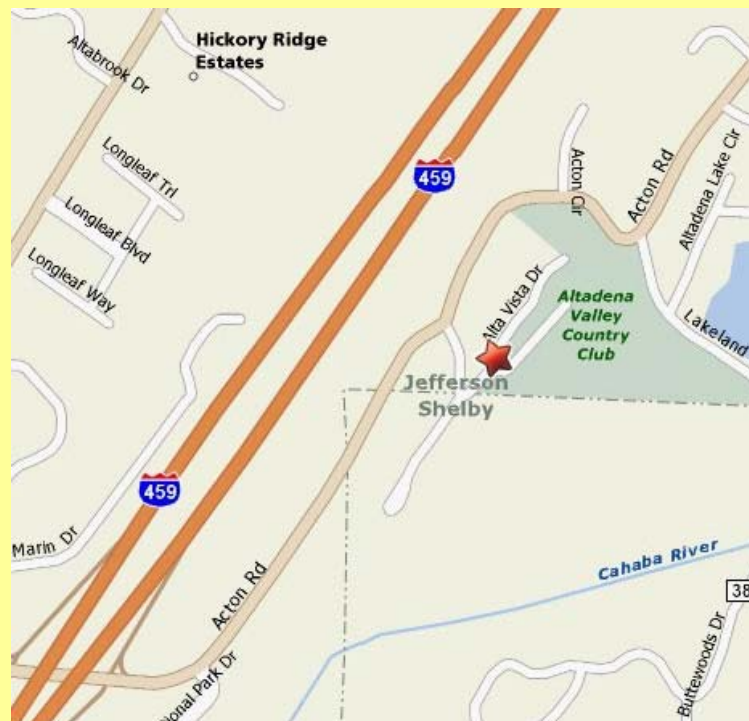
The meeting will be held at the Altadena Valley Golf and Country Club off of the Acton Road exit on I-459. The meeting will be at 11:30 with time to interact with each other, conduct branch business and have a presentation by a guest speaker.

We need an accurate head count a week before the meeting which means we have to let the club know the Thursday before each meeting. The price is \$14.00 which you can pay to the Branch Secretary/Treasurer at the meeting or online.

The Club's address is 2651 Alta Vista Drive, Birmingham, Alabama 35243 and can be reached from the Acton Road exit just west of Highway 280 on I-459. The club's phone number is 205.967.5322.

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## A Message from the President

By Jonathan Byrd



*“Examine your own paths to the level you are as an engineer?”*

Last month I asked for input on where the members of the Birmingham Branch lived and worked in an effort to update the geographic base for our Branch currently listed by the Society. One of the replies that I received was from a name that sounded familiar, and after a brief email exchange, I discovered that it was the first civil engineer I had ever met. This may not be such a substantial event for some of you in the Branch, but I was born and raised in Biloxi, and at the time, he was working for Mississippi Power. This got me to thinking about how I got to where I am.

Some of you who know me know more of the details of the story that got me to where I am, and while I love to share them I suspect that most of you have stopped reading this article by now anyway. It has all the makings of a ‘look back on the past’ or a ‘where are we headed from here’ story that there are simply way too many of at this time of the year. While I have not yet read any articles or watched any shows about what happened this year in case I was not paying attention when it happened, I do not want to be blamed of having written one either.

In that first meeting, I was able to see a wide variety of things that an engineer did. I was confident I wanted to be an engineer before I started, and that meeting cemented the thought. After a brief stint in college when I was taught the hard way that it you cannot major in alcohol and women and actually get a degree, I joined the military. During those years I flipped through a textbook lent to me at our first meeting, sometimes even doing a few of the exercises in the book, just to get a feel for what I would be doing as an engineer. I surveyed in the Army, so when I got out, it was natural to start there. Soon after that, I started back to school, later moved from fieldwork to office work and eventually into the engineering department. By this time, I had my own textbooks to browse, but not much time to waste. I had two kids and a wife while going to school full-time and working full-time. After taking a year off from school I thought that since I had done it once I could do it again, and went back to get a Master’s in Civil Engineering. For the record, do not go to graduate school full-time if you work full-time unless you are insane. Many times I thought about sending the book back, since there was an address in the cover, and it was only lent to me, not given to me, but I never quite got around to it.

The day after I emailed Mr. Pike, I went home and dug out that old book from a box. It is not in the same condition as it was when I first got it 20 years ago (am I really old enough to say that), but ever since that day in 1987 I knew that I would be an engineer, and I have not regretted going down the path.

Examine your own paths to the level you are as an engineer. Maybe it was a longer road, maybe shorter, maybe your parents wanted you to do it, maybe you drove yourself, and maybe it was a chance interaction. The question is, was it worth it to you? I look forward in the very near future to be able to hand back this book and shake the hand of the man who helped me see where I could go. I can only hope that I one day get to meet someone else who can say the same thing twenty years from now.

I am a Christian and wish you a Merry Christmas. I also do not mind wishing you a Happy Hanukkah or Happy Kwanza if you celebrate those traditions. If you are an atheist or an agnostic I would love to talk to you about it (if you are so compelled), and Merry Christmas anyway.



NOT EVERYONE GETS TO BE AN ASTRONAUT WHEN THEY GROW UP.

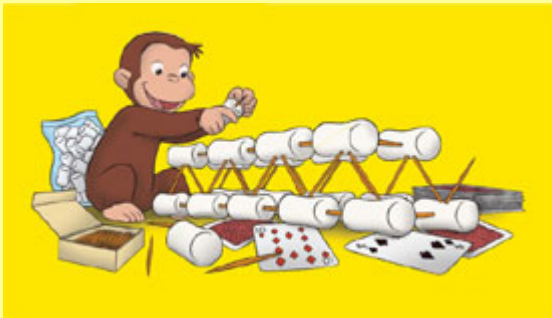
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## Birmingham Wrap-Up 2007

*By Andy Faulk*

2008 is upon us and it provides us an opportunity to look back and reflect on how we did as a group in the areas of outreach, membership and educational development. Every year we hold fundraising events, ask corporate friends and colleagues to make donations to our causes. Every year we provide money and opportunities to children and young adults to learn and better themselves. Every year we attempt to grow our numbers to provide manpower for our causes and to help educate ourselves with the exchange of ideas and information.

This year I feel extremely privileged to inform you all that we have had record turnouts for our monthly meetings; the highest anyone has seen in a few years. I hope we can keep the momentum after the first of the year, because we have a lot we want to accomplish in the upcoming months.



*Scholastic and ASCE Team up for K-1 education*

Susan Goertz is heading up the scholarship committee and would like to see a larger bank account in order to offer the potential recipients of our annual scholarship a larger check. With Dwight Turnipseed heading up the golf tournament committee this year I think we can help Susan with her dream. Dwight is planning two tournaments for this year and is looking at another type of fundraiser as well. He will need a number of warm bodies to pull it all off.

Bobby Nolen is in charge of the annual coloring book competition this year. He is

doing a great job, and so has Kerry Henneberger in the past. The problem is that is the same few folks year after year either heading it up or volunteering to help. There is nothing wrong with their continued efforts but I'm sure they would rather pass on their knowledge and experience to others for that program's future.

Other ideas we touched on this past year included the Kindergarten program and offering continuing education activities at the branch meetings. If we continue to increase our membership and the number of those taking an active part in the branch who knows where we can be this time next year...

All this is to say Kudos to you all and let's keep up the effort!

## Information About ECOB Awards

The deadline for the ECOB Award nomination has been extended until the second week in January. Please let Andy Faulk (205-218-8631 or [afaulk@wiserco.com](mailto:afaulk@wiserco.com)) know as soon as possible if you have anyone in mind for the award. We need to know ASAP!

1. The awards are given for the year prior to the banquet, but should consider the nominee's overall contributions to engineering.
2. Each society represented on the Engineering Council of Birmingham may submit one nomination for each award.
3. The nominee must be 35 years of age or under on July 1st of the evaluation year for the "Young Engineer of the Year" Award, and over the age of 35 on July 1st for the "Engineer of

See ECOB Awards on page 5

## A Streetcar... Desired

*By Hawk Andrews*

Birmingham is proposing a new streetcar line for 2009. The plan was presented by David Hill, the executive director of the Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority board on Wednesday. The proposal is for \$33 million to lay track, construct a building and to purchase 10 vintage streetcars. This is apparently a directive of the new mayor, Larry Langford as Hill said, "The mayor was very direct on it. If he wants streetcars, I'm going to put them on the street."

The money for the streetcars will come from the Birmingham business license fees; nearly \$8 million a year from existing fees and an estimated additional \$9 million a year expected to come from a recently approved doubling of those fees.

The details haven't been worked out, but Hill said he expects construction of a streetcar maintenance building, probably near the combined bus and train station on Morris Avenue, to be a large part of the cost, which works out to \$33 million per mile, since the route is only about a mile long.

Much of the proposed route would run along 18th and 20th streets between Morris Avenue and Linn Park, with stops likely at each block and service running every 10 minutes from 6 a.m.-10 p.m., seven days a week. Hill said he envisions 20th Street as a pedestrian plaza with streetcars running down the middle and sidewalk cafes, but that keeping cars on the street is also an option.

The cars themselves may come from Milan, Italy, which has a fleet of vintage cars from the 1920s for sale for \$25,000 to \$35,000 each. Hill said most fully restored vintage streetcars cost \$200,000 to \$800,000 each; in this case, the city would have to do some updating, such as adding air conditioning, but the cars are generally service-ready.



*A streetcar from Birmingham's past...the Bessemer No. 4*

## ECOB Awards, continued from page3...

- the Year" Award.
4. The nominee must be an active member of the nominating society.
  5. The winner must reside within the geographical boundary of the ECOB.
  6. Each nominee will be judged on his/her activities to the end of the year, ending December 31, prior to Engineer's Week in February of the following year.
  7. A nominee who has received the Award previously will be disqualified from winning the same award.
  8. The nominee's name must be omitted on all nomination forms except the first and last pages. If the nominee has his/her own consulting firm, please list it as "President or Owner of own consulting firm" in the Experience Section of the nomination form. If the nominee has publications and/or presentations, these need to be written so that the nominee's name is removed and the word "Nominee" is included and either bolded or underlined. Please make sure no reference is made to the nominee's gender, race, etc.
  9. The forms must be filled out as completely and accurately as possible, because this is the only means the judges have to evaluate the nominee. Word format forms will be emailed to all societies and the forms will be available on the website.
  10. The forms must be completed and received by the Awards Committee by the time indicated in the cover letter. Except in extreme circumstances, consideration will only be given to those nomination forms received by this time.
  11. Three (3) individuals who work and are very prominent in various aspects of the engineering profession, such as academia, utilities, or traditional engineering, which includes construction and manufacturing, are selected by the Awards Chairman as judges. The names of the judges are kept confidential and are known only by officers of the Council and the Awards Chairman.
  12. Each nominee is assigned a specific letter or number by the Awards Chairman. Then only the pages of the nomination form for each nominee, which make no name or gender references and the respective code, are given to the judges in order to assure impartiality and to keep confidentiality.
  13. The judges score each nominee on the basis of a point system with respect to the different areas:
    - Engineer of the Year and Young Engineer of the Year
    - A. Engineering experience and accomplishments, and
    - B. Technical/professional society activities and civic/humanitarian activities.

The maximum number of points possible for the judges to score for each area is 67 for engineering experience and accomplishments, and 33 for technical/professional society activities and civic/humanitarian activities. A total of 100 points is possible for each nominee from each judge.

    - Distinguished Service Award
    - A. Service to nominating society.
    - B. Service to general community.

The maximum number of points possible for the judges to score for each area is 65 for nominating society, and 35 for general community. A total of 100 points is possible for each nominee from each judge.
  14. For each judge's evaluation to have equal weight, the judges are encouraged to first determine the most qualified nominee in each area and assign that candidate the maximum number of possible points for that judging area and the least qualified nominee the least number of points for that judging area of 0 points. The remaining nominees are then assigned points according to each candidate's relative degree of qualification in that area.
  15. The Awards Chairman tallies the judges' scores, and the winner of each award is the nominee with the highest sum of total points (300 points maximum).
  16. If the scores for several nominees are close, the Awards Chairman checks the judge's score sheets to make certain that each judge used the evaluation method described in Step 14. If not, the judge who did not use the described evaluation method is asked to adjust the score so that the scores will have equal weight with respect to the other judges'. Then the scores are tallied again.

## ECOB Awards, continued from page5...

Last year we, as a group, did not submit an applicant for the different awards. Nominations are due in December, so everyone think about who you think merits the award and present their names and a brief description of why to one the branch officers.

## The Whole Nine Yards

### Upcoming Events

- Webinar Series on Long Term Recovery Issues, ASCE [18-Jan-08, 1-Feb-08, 7-Mar-08]
- ECOB Banquet [21-Feb-08]

### The Rest of the ...

- Check out the latest issue of the U.S. Drought Monitor at [http://www.drought.unl.edu/dm/DM\\_southeast.htm](http://www.drought.unl.edu/dm/DM_southeast.htm).
- Don't forget to check the US Consumer Product Safety Commission's website for the latest list of recalls on children's toys, furniture and clothes: <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerel/category/child.html>.
- Nominations for the OPAL, OCEA and CEFI awards are being sought. Check ASCE's website for more information: <http://www.asce.org>.
- You can now pay online for lunches, membership and other activities. Visit the website and click on the pay online link.

### Presenters Lined Up So Far

Month	Speaker	Topic
January, '08	Steve Newton	Drought Impacts on Alabama Water Supplies
February, '08	Fred Conway	ALDOT Bridge enginer will speak on the Minnesota bridge collapse and its implications for Alabama
March, '08	L'Tryce Slade	Alabama Environmental Regulations for Engineers
April, '08	Bobby Nolen	Threading a Needle - A Drainage Dilemma One way to drain runoff from a 58-acre basin unattenuated through an 8" opening.

## Newsletter Sponsors – Thank You



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**Support your branch! If you would like to advertise in next month's issue, please contact John Clark @205.321.1320**

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I take the vision which comes from dreams  
and apply the magic of science and mathematics,  
adding the heritage of my profession  
and my knowledge of nature's materials  
to create a design.

I organize the efforts and skills of my fellow workers  
employing the capital of the thrifty  
and the products of many industries,  
and together we work toward our goal  
undaunted by hazards and obstacles.

And when we have completed our task  
all can see that the dreams and plans  
have materialized for the  
comfort and welfare of all.

For 'tis the sport to have the engineer  
Hoist with his own petar; and't shall go hard  
But I will delve one yard below their mines  
And blow them at the moon.

- William Shakespeare, Hamlet

**Do you have something to say? Let's hear it, and maybe your thoughts will be in the next newsletter.**

**PLEASE RETURN THIS STUB WITH PAYMENT:**

DUES: ASCE Birmingham Branch (2008) Total Due: \$10.00(Tax Id. No.63-0371391)

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