



THE FORGE

Newsletter of the Birmingham Branch of ASCE

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Meeting Information for November

THE MEETING LOCATION HAS CHANGED...

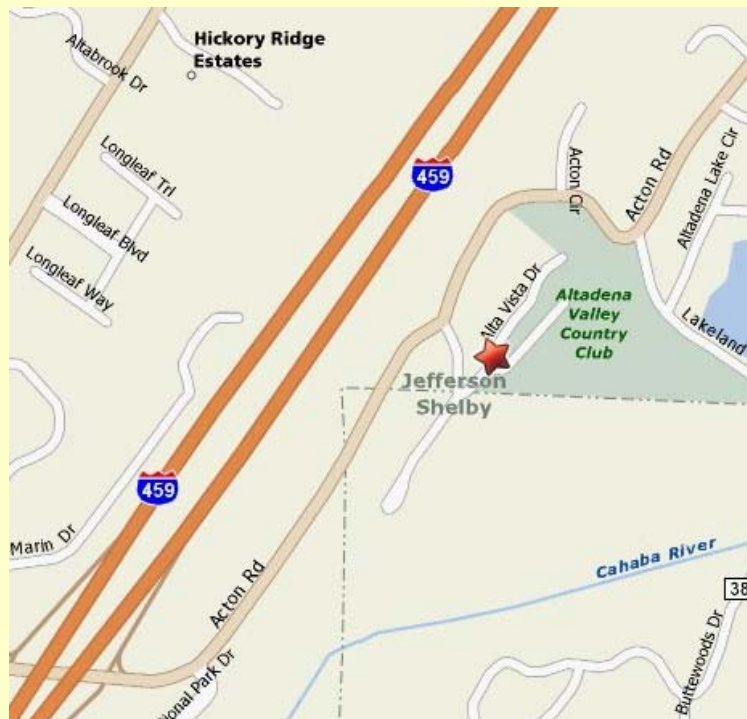
As many of you may know, the location has changed to the Altadena Valley Golf and Country Club off of the Acton Road exit on I-459. The meeting will be at 11:30 am as always and will proceed in a similar fashion as before.

The Branch will be responsible for lunch now, so we need an accurate head count a week before the meeting which mean 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.

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



“More than a few of you probably think I have mixed up my Star Wars analogy.”

Some of you may not know, but I recently made a transition. Those of you in government engineering positions may think I joined the rebellion, while those of you in the consulting world may think I have converted to the dark side. More than a few of you probably think I have mixed up my Star Wars analogy. The point is still the same, after nearly ten years of working in the private world of engineering and surveying, I have again joined the ranks of those who have their paychecks signed by the government.

This presents several interesting challenges for me. As a drafter, then junior engineer, and then project manager, I got used to looking at the plans upside down, trying to explain myself to the person supervising (and signing) my designs, and having someone over me who has done it before to decide how to do it this time. Either there was a constant demand to be angling for ways to show that my company could do the job just as good or there was a demand to show that my company was the only company who could do the project. There was a lot of picking up the check at lunch, and riding in the back seat when there were more than two of us. Dealing with developers and architects was another area entirely. Above all there was an awful lot of getting fed up with the way that the approving authorities never seemed to know how to design, thinking they were incapable of designing anything themselves, and that the major scope changes would never end.

Now being the person who gets to make the major scope changes is a refreshing change. I do consider myself not too far removed from the design process, so I do at least realize that it is not “just clicking buttons,” and still remember my second lesson in engineering that there is no such thing as changing one line (my first lesson in engineering was that architects are insane). Many times over the past few months, I have found myself reviewing plans thinking that this font should match, that this wording works better, or that the design should have been done this way. Then I remember that I only have to review the plans for thoroughness, not quality control.

As we enter the dog days of autumn and the season of Thanksgiving, let us try to remember that whichever side of the plan production role you find yourself on, it makes the whole process easier to think of the position of the other side of the table.

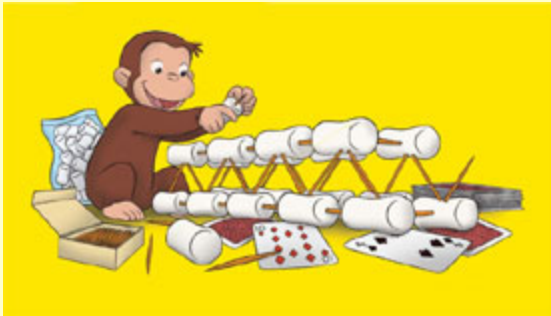


Curious Kids Like George

By Andrew Faulk

As part of our continued effort to reach children and educate them on the world of engineering I piloted the new Curious George program with a kindergarten class at the Jefferson Christian Academy (JCA). The new program is called "Let's Build!", and is an interactive series of four lessons that can be easily covered in 30 to 45 minutes. Its objectives are:

- * Understanding what a plan is and how it is used to build something.
- * Understanding how to recognize and name geometric shapes; learning counting and categorizing skills.
- * Understanding the difference between natural and people-made objects, learning different properties of objects and make comparisons.



Scholastic and ASCE Team up for K-1 education

Mrs. Baker's class of 12 students knew exactly who George is, but only one knew what we as engineers do - my daughter. One child did say that an engineer drives a train. While I couldn't argue the use of the term with her, I think it proves the point that it's never too early to introduce such discussion.

As part of the presentation to the class I also took a set of roadway plans, a compass and bags of small marshmallows and stick pretzels. After introducing the concept of a

"plan" I showed them a few elements of the example plan sheets. One of the activities involves a printed compass and following directions, so I explained the concept of the compass. Now here is where I got in trouble with the kids. Apparently it is taboo for anyone to write on Mrs. Baker's board (thankfully she was out of the room at that moment). A simple sketch of a globe including the cardinal directions and we were off on the next adventure with George. At the end of the lesson sheets provided by Scholastic I let them build houses out of the marshmallows and pretzels similarly to the directions on one of the lesson sheets. They all enjoyed it and I had a few comments from kids and parents days later. All in all a very good program I could see the branch investing time to introduce.

Information About ECOB Awards

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 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.

See ECOB Awards on page 5

A Colorful Nightmare

By Bobby Nolen

Thanks to Andy Faulk and the other great staff at the Wiser Company, invitations were mailed to 123 schools the week of October 15. All seemed well until I began having a recurring nightmare during that week. What if, through some wild fluke, every school accepted our invitation to participate in the coloring competition?

Let's see. That's 123 schools with an average of 5 fourth grade classes each. Each class will average about 22 students. Great Scott!!! That's over 13,000 10-year-olds! Where would we find 123 Ambassadors to coordinate the activities? How many judges would we need to evaluate over 600 color books? Where would we get over 600 coloring books?

The nightmare will probably last until the application deadline passes on November 2. In reality, we will most likely have 25 to 30 schools accept our invitation. Each of you has the opportunity to volunteer as an Ambassador. The time commitment is short. On the front end, an Ambassador usually takes a couple of hours to retrieve competition materials, deliver them to the school, and present a short, energetic, entertaining program to a bunch of discerning 10-year-olds about civil engineering. On the back side, the Ambassador simply fetches the completed materials and delivers them to a designated drop-off point.

So with over 500 ASCE members assigned to the Branch, most of you will be left out if you do not get on the Ambassador list early. You may do so by sending an e-mail to Bobby Nolen (reepicheep@charter.net) or calling him (205.529.3390) and asking to be an Ambassador. There will be a sign-up sheet at the next meeting.

Now, if my nightmare becomes a reality, I wonder if ASCE supports conscription.



ECOB Awards, continued from page3...

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.

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

- 137th Annual ASCE Conference in Orlando, Florida [1-Nov-07]
- Free Web Seminar: Future of Licensure for Engineers in Construction, NSPE [27-Nov-07]

The Rest of the ...

- The Alabama Environmental Management Commission denied a petition by environmental groups that urged the state to adopt stricter standards to protect its waterways from cancer-causing pollutants. After its unanimous vote, the commission will allow a committee to review Alabama's water quality standards and report its findings in six months. "The petition has been denied, it has not been killed," said Dr. Laurel Gardner, a member of the commission. "It's still very much alive." The groups that filed the petition asked that Alabama join 28 other states that require carcinogen levels in streams to be low enough that no more than one in one million people could get cancer from them. Alabama uses a less protective risk factor that allows one in 100,000 people to get cancer. EPA allows states to use either standard, but most use the more protective one. Alabama Power Co., the Business Council of Alabama, the Alabama Coal Association and the Alabama Pulp and Paper Council all objected to stricter pollution rules. The Business Council objected to "a significant financial impact on the Alabama business community" and stated that the petitioners failed to justify the additional expense on industry. Clean water advocates said they were disappointed the commission discussed the economics of regulation so much and the cost of cancer so little. *U.S. Water News Online 7/5.*
- Investigators from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) criminal division are looking into a 2005 Missouri dam failure, the Associated Press is reporting. The Taum Sauk reservoir in southeast Missouri failed in December 2005 as a result of improperly installed and maintained water-level monitors. <http://www.ago.mo.gov/newsreleases/2007/052207c.htm>.
- Nominations for the OPAL, OCEA and CEFI awards are being sought. Check ASCE's website for more information: <http://www.asce.org>.
- We at the branch are working on the ability to process credit cards for the membership's convenience when paying for lunch. You will be able to pay online in advance. We'll keep you informed.

Presenters Lined Up So Far

| Month | Speaker | Topic |
|---------------|---------------|---|
| November | Jodi Saiia | BARD |
| December | Brain Davis | ALDOT Projects, Updates |
| January, '08 | TBA | TBA |
| February, '08 | TBA | TBA |
| 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. |

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"He that will not apply new remedies must expect new evils; for time is the greatest innovator." - Francis Bacon

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

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