



The Drawingboard

Queens Chapter

New York State Society of Professional Engineers

September 2006

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In This Issue

- President's Message
- Next Meeting – Sept 28th @ 6:30PM
- UPDATE – Dept. of Buildings News Brief
- Useful Websites for Engineers
- Profile of an Engineer
- 2006 Meeting Schedule
- Professional Directory and Sponsors
- PIE August Newsletter (attached)

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President's Message

*By Brian Flynn, P.E.
President*

Welcome back, I hope everyone took some time to enjoy the summer weather. It was a wonderful summer marred only by the Park's Department last minute cancellation of the PDC Picnic in August. Now that fall has arrived, we are back in full swing with our schedule of Chapter Meetings and events. This month's meeting promises to be very interesting with our sponsor Hilti discussing Firestopping techniques. As you all know Professional Development Hours (PDH's) are available for free to our members at all of our meetings every month. In addition, the PDC has a lecture series for additional PDH's every month as well. The next lecture on Tuesday, October 17 will most likely feature **Tim Lynch**, PE of the Building Department's Forensic Unit to discuss shoring and underpinning.

I would like to announce the appointment of several individuals to head chapter committees. First is **Sal Galletta**, PE who will head our Committee for Political Action to spear head actions to promote licensed engineering, including the proposed resolution to create a position of Deputy Mayor for Infrastructure, who is a licensed engineer or registered architect. **Ed Baird**, PE has been appointed the Membership Chairman. **James Manoussoff**, PE is head of our Professional Development Committee. **Robert LoPinto** is continuing as the the head of the MathCounts Committee. **Chris Petallides**, PE will continue to report on the Building Department Industry Meetings as well as the sweeping zoning changes that affect our neighborhoods. I am continuing as the chairman of the 2006 Journal Committee which needs all of our help. These committees are how we can focus our efforts to accomplish our professional goals for the chapter. They are all worthwhile and I ask that you get involved in our success.

[\(Continued next page\)](#)

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Nominating Committee

John Zurita, P.E.	Chair (212) 788-8199
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In an effort to reach out to the community and public officials, I would like to announce that the chapter is joining the Queens & Bronx Building Association. We are already members of the Queens Chamber of Commerce. This will allow all of our members to attend meetings by both of these organizations for networking with public officials and others. Look for notices of upcoming events.

Our state chapter is sponsoring the Northeast Regional Meeting as part of the fall conference. The meeting is from October 19th to the 21st in Saratoga Springs, NY. It is a worthwhile conference to find out what the State (NYSSPE) is really doing to protect our license in Albany.

Finally, I would like to thank our outgoing President, Chris Petallides, PE for his continued support and efforts for his colleagues and his community. Chris made it look too easy, but it took a tremendous effort on his part over the past few years to push us forward.

Queens & Bronx Building Association

The chapter is joining the QBBA in an effort to network with public officials and others in our industry. The 2006 QBBA Building & Design Awards entries must be submitted by October 16. The awards will be presented at the awards gala on December 7th. The Annual Trade Show is to be held at Terrace on the Park from 5:30 - 9 PM on Wednesday October 25th. More information will be available at the Chapter Meeting, September 28th.

Upcoming Meeting Information

Our Next Chapter Meeting

Thursday September 28, 2006 – 6:30 PM

At the first meeting since the summer break, we will be showcasing a presentation by the Hilti Corporation discussing products and methods to improve Firestopping in structures.

Location:

422 Weaver Ave., Fort Totten, New York

Sal Galletta,
P.E. (212) 788-8199

Gregory
Georges,
P.E. (718) 274-4800

Michael
Karantinidis,
P.E. (718) 726-2226

Please Note:

Members are advised that the Queens Chapter meeting on Thursday, March 23 will be held at our Fort Totten office. At the Fort Totten gate tell the guard you are a member of the P.E. Society and that your name is on the list that they keep there. Any non-members and guests not placed on the list will be denied entrance-If this happens the guest should ask the guard to call the phone number on the membership list. A board member will then come down to bring the guest in

Computer and Office Donations Needed

Is your firm or company updating its computer or other office equipment and planning to get rid of the older systems? If so, please consider donating such equipment to the Queens Chapter of the NYSSPE.

The Queens Chapter is seeking donations of computer and office equipment. For more information contact Chris Petallides, Queens Chapter President at 718-961-4342

Hotline for Members

Are you an NSPE member with a question about engineering ethics, licensure, or law? If so, call 888-285-NSPE (6773) or e-mail legal@nspe.org. Please provide your 9-digit NSPE member number.

Department of Buildings News Brief

by Chris Petallides, P.E.

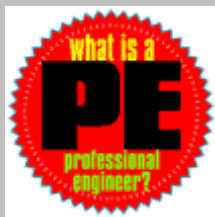
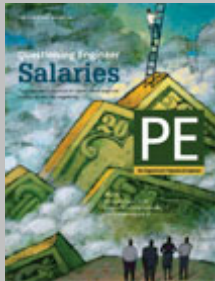
Monthly Industry Meetings at the Queens Department of Buildings (DOB) continued to be held on a regular basis during the summer, all of which were well attended. The latest one was held on Tuesday, August 29, '06, where Hon. Derek Lee, RA, - Acting Borough Commissioner and other DOB key staff members briefed about 20 attendees (PE's & RA's only) on the latest staff and procedural changes, designed to further streamline the various filing processes. The biggest single procedural change announced at that meeting was agenda Item No. 4, namely, **Professional Certification Pre-screening**. This procedural change was to go into affect on Tuesday, September 6, 2006, (the first business day after Labor Day '06) and it called for all professionally certified New Building (NB) Applications and Alteration Applications Type 1 (ALT. I), i.e., all applications going for new Certificates of Occupancy (CO's) to be pre-screened at the time of pre-filing to ascertain compliance with major zoning requirements, i.e., zoning designation, minimum lot size, density, setbacks and height restrictions, floor area and open space (lot coverage) restrictions, etc. During the 3-5 day pre-screening period, the subject application will be held in a "SUSPENDED" mode, until it is either "APPROVED" or "DISAPPROVED". If it is approved, the previously accepted procedure will be followed, including the 20% random audits. If it is disapproved, the applicant of record will be so notified in order to make the necessary corrections before further action is taken. The purpose of pre-screening all Pro-Cert NB's and ALT. I's is to help catch any major zoning errors which plagued the professional certification process in the past, either deliberate or inadvertent, which caused not only embarrassment to the design professions (all of us) and the Department but also caused undo financial hardship to some homeowner and/or community criticism of our professional integrity and the Departments ability and/or willingness to enforce the law.

Both the AIA and the NSPE Queens Chapters approve and endorse the DOB's initiative in this respect. We anticipate and hope that this initiative will go a long way in debugging the "Pro-Cert" process, for everyone's benefit.

New Members

Chapter President Brian Flynn, P.E. would like to welcome our newest members, who we look forward to seeing at a meeting in the near future:

- **Steve Chon**, P.E.; Flushing



CSI Announcement

by **Scott J. Tobias, AHC, CSI, CDT**
CSI Metro NY Chapter Secretary

The **Metropolitan New York Construction Specifications Institute** is pleased to invite you to attend the **2nd Annual Trade Show & Education Conference Event** to be held on Wednesday, September 27, 2006 at Gotham Hall. The show is co-sponsored by the NY Chapter USGBC, AIA New York Chapter, NY Industrial Retention Network, Industrial & Technical Assistance Corporation and Professional Women in Construction.

This year's show will feature Bradford Perkins, Principal, Perkins Eastman Architects and networking expert, Michael Goldberg of Building Blocks Consulting. Ten (10) individual, accredited seminars will be presented throughout the day from 8 AM to 4 PM with an opportunity to earn up to **six (6) free AIA/CES-H.S.W. credits**. Additionally, you will want to take advantage of the more than 40 exhibitor booths on site featuring specialized products, services and information vital to your field.

There are no entry or seminar fees. Show hours are 9 am to 7 pm with seminars starting at 8 am and a cocktail hour at 5 pm. Please mark your calendar to join us for an exciting educational opportunity you won't want to miss!

2nd Annual Trade Show & Education Conference Event

A Metropolitan New York Construction Specifications Institute Event

FOCUS NYC

Focusing on those who work, build and design in the New York City area

Learn About *:

- New local green laws
- Local manufacturing
- A premier NYC green building
- Specifying the right green stuff
- LEED® for Existing Buildings

Wednesday, September 27, 2006
Seminars: 8:00 am - 6:00 pm
Show: 9:00 am - 7:00 pm


1356 Broadway at 36th Street, Gotham Hall
New York, NY

* Earn up to 6 free AIA/CES-H.S.W. credits

No entry or seminar fees

Go to www.csimetronewyork.org for seminar information.

Co-Sponsored by:
NY Chapter USGBC, AIA New York Chapter, NY Industrial Retention Network,
Industrial & Technical Assistance Corporation and Professional Women in Construction.



Chapter Seeks Donations to PDC Library

The Queens Chapter is still seeking donations of books for the Professional Design Center Library

Queens Chapter President Brian Flynn would like all to know that the Professional Design Center Library is still in need of Books, Magazines and other materials. The Queens Chapter is asking all members to donate any reference material, such as textbooks, catalogs and product literature that they can.

Useful websites for Engineers:

National Society of Professional Engineers	www.nspe.org
New York State Society of Professional Engineers	www.nysspe.org
American Institute of Architects	www.AIA.org
American Engineering Alliance	www.aeaworld.org
American Institute of Chemical Engineers	www.aiche.org
Amercian Society of Automotive Engineers	www.sae.org
American Petroleum Institute	www.api.org
American Society of Civil Engineers	www.asce.org
American Society of Engineering Education	www.asee.org
American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning	www.ashrae.org
American Society of Mechanical Engineers	www.asme.org
American Society of Plumbing Engineers	www.aspe.org
American Welding Society	www.aws.org
Society of Petroleum Engineers	www.spe.org
Society of Fire Protection Engineers	www.sfpe.org
Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc.	www.ieee.org
City of New York	www.nyc.gov
NY State Senate	senate.state.ny.us
NY State Assembly	assembly.state.ny.us
NY City Council	nycouncil.info
The White House	whitehouse.gov
Ed Turner Responsible Charge	www.responsiblecharge.com

Profile of an Engineer

by Chris Petallides, P.E.



BERNARD HABER, P.E.

Quick Links

[Hardesty & Hanover, LLP](#)

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[MTA Bridges and Tunnels](#)

[George Washington Bridge](#)

[Third Ave Bridge](#)

[Greenpoint Avenue Bridge](#)

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[Bayside Historical Society](#)

Bernard Haber, P.E. has had two outstanding simultaneous careers, his 48 year professional career and his 36 year civic career. In both he has been honored as one of the outstanding engineers in the New York metropolitan area and one of the most involved and knowledgeable citizen in New York City affairs.

Bernard Haber is a CCNY Civil Engineering graduate of the class of 1951. Until his retirement in 2001 he was the Managing Partner in the 118 year old firm, *Hardesty & Hanover, LLP, Consulting Engineers, NYC*, the oldest and one of the largest bridge design firms in the Country. He started with the firm in 1953 after his discharge as a Lieutenant from the *U.S. Air Force*. Mr. Haber specialized in the design, inspection and rehabilitation of bridges, highways, and transit systems. In 1961 he became an Associate of the firm and in 1972 he was invited into the partnership becoming a Senior Partner in 1981 and Managing Partner in 1995.

[\(Continued next page\)](#)

Under his direction his firm designed, inspected, rehabilitated, or reconstructed thousands of bridges throughout the United States, especially in the New York Metropolitan Area. A few N.Y.C. bridge design, rehabilitation and reconstruction projects under his responsibility were:

- Cross Bronx Expressway
- Interstate Route 80
- Bruckner/Cross Bronx Expressway / Hutchinson River Parkway Interchange
- Whitestone/Van Wyck Expressway/ Grand Central Parkway Interchange
- Triborough, Whitestone, Throg's Neck and Verrazano Suspension Bridges
- George Washington Suspension Bridge
- The new Third Avenue Swing Bridge across the Harlem River,
- The new Willis Ave Vertical Lift Bridge across the Harlem River (to be constructed)
- The new Greenpoint Avenue Bascule Bridge across Newton Creek
- The new 9th Street Vertical Lift Bridge across the Gowanus Canal
- The NYC Transit Linden Yard Development Program

An event that was a tragic highlight of his career was the collapse of the Schoharie Creek Bridge on the *New York State Thruway* [NYSTA] on April 5, 1987 during one of the worst floods of the State's history, killing 10 motorists and severing the Thruway. The next day Mr. Haber was asked by Governor **Mario Cuomo** and the NYSTA to determine the cause of the collapse and to design the replacement bridge. The design and construction of the new 720 ft long, 115 ft wide and almost 80 ft high bridge reconnecting the severed thruway was completed in only 8 months, a record NYSTA project.

[\(Continued next page\)](#)

There are very few New York City major bridges and arterial roadways that Bernard Haber did not have a hand in during his 48 year professional career at Hardesty & Hanover. In addition to his projects around New York City, his bridge and design work carried him to many States and Europe. From 1975 until his retirement he served as the Consulting Engineer to the *Niagara Falls Bridge Commission* which operates three major international bridges between the US and Canada including the world famous Rainbow Arch Bridge, also known as the honeymoon bridge, at the base of Niagara Falls. At the time of his retirement he was involved in the design of the new \$2.5 Billion Woodrow Wilson Bridge project across the Potomac River in Washington D.C.

In 1981 the *American Society of Civil Engineers* [ASCE], Metropolitan Section selected Mr. Haber as the **"Engineer of the Year"** and in 2004 awarded him the **Thomas C. Kavavagh Service Award**. In 1989 the *City College of New York* awarded him the Engineering School's **"Career Achievement Medal"**. In 1998 the *American Consulting Engineering Council* [ACEC] gave Mr. Haber the **"Engineering Service Medal"** for his work on behalf of his City, State and Nation. The *New York Association of Consulting Engineers* [NYACE], representing more than 300 consulting firms throughout the State of New York selected him as the **"2001 Engineer of the Year"** for his contributions to the engineering profession, community and association. In 2002 the *New York State Senate* awarded him the **"Senate Liberty Medal"** for his exceptional achievements and dedication on behalf of the people of the State of New York. In 2004 the City College awarded him the prestigious **"Townsend Harris Medal"** for his post graduate achievements. He has been honored by the **U.S. Congress**, the **NYS Legislature** and the **New York City Council** for his community and civic work. He was the recipient of the **"2005 Mayor's Award for Excellence in Science and Technology"** for his engineering achievements.

He has been a member of the *New York State Society of Professional Engineers* and the *Queens Chapter* since 1956. He has served as Chairman of the *American Consulting Engineering Council's* [ACEC] National Transportation Committee and was a Director and Vice President of the *New York Association of Consulting Engineers*. He is a past President and a current Director of the *Planning and Design Division of the American Road and Transportation Builders Association*. He is a fellow and Life member of the *American Society of Civil Engineers*, and the *National Society of Professional Engineers* and is a licensed professional engineer in many States. Mr. Haber retired as a **Lieutenant Colonel** from the *U.S. Air Force Reserves* after 23 years of service.

[\(Continued next page\)](#)

Mr. Haber published more than 40 professional papers on engineering and civic issues and helped author the book for the long range plan for New York City "**New York Ascendant**" while he was a member of the "**Mayor's Commission on the Year 2000**" 1984 to 1988. He has lectured extensively at most engineering schools and at public forums on bridges, infrastructure rehabilitation, zoning and community involvement and "Why Bridges Fail".

His career in *Community Involvement*, using his engineering expertise, is as important as his professional career was, having carried on both simultaneously. In the 1960's Mr. Haber became an active participant in New York City affairs. He was appointed to the newly established *Community Board* [1969] in his district of Northeast Queens, elected as the first Vice Chair in 1972 and became the Chair when **Claire Schulman** moved to Borough Hall to eventually become the Queens Borough President. Mr. Haber served as the elected Chair of the Board [Community Board 11], involved in every aspect of the life of his district in Northeast Queens for more than 30 years, retiring in 2002. He remains on the Board chairing the transportation committee. During that time he also served on many other City boards and commissions notably the "Mayors Commission on the Year 2000" [1984-1988] and the "**NYC Industrial Development Agency**" and the "**NYC Capital Resource Corporation**" [since 1986] where he continues to serve as the Director of the two Agencies. After his retirement as Community Board Chair he continues to serve as the Chair of the **Queens County Traffic Safety Board**, Co-chair of the **Queens County Zoning Task Force**, and is a member of the **NYC Procurement Policy Advisory Board**. He is also the Chairperson of the **New York State Northeastern Queens Nature and Historical Perseveration Commission** [NYSNEQC].

Locally he is a life member of the *Bayside Historical Society*, a Director of the *Douglaston Civic Association* and a member of the *Udall's Cove Preservation Committee*. In May of 2002 he was elected President of the *Douglas Manor Association*, a 600 home residential area. In 2003 he was elected to the Board of Directors of **St. Mary's Hospital for Children**, Queens.

2006 Chapter Meeting Schedule

Mark Your Calendar




For your convenience the Queens County Chapter NYSSPE meeting schedule is provided below.

Directors' meetings and general meetings are held on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month except November and December meetings which will be held on the first and third Thursday of the month due to holidays. So mark your calendar. The schedule is as follows:





<u>Directors' Meeting</u> <u>(6:30 PM)</u>	<u>Membership Meeting</u> <u>(6:30PM)</u>
September 14, 2006	September 28, 2006
October 12, 2006	October 26, 2006
November 9, 2006	November 23, 2006
December 7, 2006	December 21, 2006

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<p>(718) 274-4800 FAX (718) 274-4849</p> <p><u>VALUE ENGINEERING</u> Consulting, P.C. Engineers and Designers</p> <p>GREGORY G. GEORGES, P.E. 30-05 30th AVENUE PRESIDENT LONG ISLAND CITY, NY 11102</p>	<p>ISSAM M. ABOURAFEH, P.E. PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER</p>  <p>ARCHITECTS ENGINEERS PLANNERS CROSS ISLAND PLAZA 133-33 BROOKVILLE BLVD., SUITE 208 ROSEDALE, NY 11422 EMAIL: ISSAM@IMA-ARCHITECTS.COM TEL (718) 276-9200 FAX (718) 276-0722</p>
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<p>Tebulco Services Incorporated 39-15 29th Street Long Island City NY 11101-3707</p> <p>tebulco Engineers & Constructors</p> <p>TEL 718-707-0416 FAX 718-707-0418 wilson@tebulco.com</p> <p>Wilson Constantinides President & CEO</p>	<p>SIDERIS ENGINEERS P.C. Consulting Engineers</p> <p>217-22 Northern Boulevard Bayside, New York 11361 Tel 718-224-9091 Fax 718-224-9143</p> <p>Chris M. Sideris, P.E. Filolaos T. Kefalas, P.E. T.C. Sideris, P.E. (1923-2005)</p>

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Order Form

The Queens Chapter of the National Society of Professional Engineers will publish the chapter's 2006 Annual Membership Directory. Our members are found in key government agency positions, as well as senior and partner positions in private engineering firms, which design, specify and consult on Construction projects throughout the Metropolitan area. When they need to find a source for specific requirements they turn to their annual Queens NSPE Membership Directory. Now you and your firm can reach these key decision making individuals when they are looking for your services by placing an ad in the up coming 2006 Queens NSPE Membership directory.

Attached is an order form to place an advertisement in the 2006 Membership Directory.

In addition to our annual journal, the Queens Engineering Society Sponsors numerous events and seminars to further inform our members of the new developments in industry. We hope that you will help support our efforts. Please see the order form on the next page

**QUEENS COUNTY CHAPTER
OF THE NEW YORK STATE SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS**

OFFICERS:

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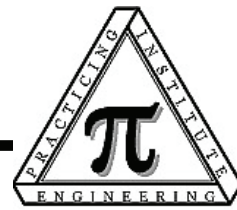
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AUGUST E-NEWSLETTER

Welcome PIE Members!

Hello and welcome to the brand-new monthly e-newsletter from the Practicing Institute of Engineering, Inc. These are exciting times at PIE as we move our headquarters to a larger office and work on finalizing both our procedures manual and our brand new website. We will be keeping you up-to-date on all these projects as they develop.

Volume I, Issue I, Aug., '06



Important Information Update: Course Titles

The Office of the Professions over at the State Education Department has vast amounts of continuing education materials to oversee. In order to review course approvals expeditiously, oftentimes it will be something as simple as a course title which catches their eye and causes them to ask that a course be pulled. The regulations state that our Professional Engineering continuing education courses must focus on *technical* engineering content. The easiest and quickest way to find those courses which may not be of technical content is to look at the titles. Many times a course will be pulled just based on the title alone.

Here are some examples of these "red-flag" titles:

Project Management Bootcamp
"Company Name" Spring Seminar

SAVE THE DATE!

PIE Membership Meeting
will be held

October 20th, 2006, from 1:30 to 2:30 pm, in conjunction with the NYSSPE Fall Meeting. The Fall Meeting will take place at the Saratoga Hotel Conference Center in Saratoga, NY. As the meeting date approaches, information will be posted on the NYSSPE website, which you can access at www.nysspe.org.

Frequently Asked Questions



**Have questions about PIE?
Send them our way!**

Q: How does one apply the fee schedule for a Program/Course Submittal?

A: Well there are two portions to the payment schedule for a Program/Course Submittal. The first part is a course evaluation fee. This fee is \$25, and it is waived if the Training Provider has a PIE Certified Evaluator willing to evaluate their course for them prior to submitting it to PIE.

The Second part is the course registration fee. This fee is either \$75 (for not-for-profit Training Providers,) or \$175 (for a commercial Training Provider). How do you know which category you fall under? Well the distinction is made by the type of entity the Training Provider is, in terms of how they file their taxes. If they don't file as a not-for-profit, they cannot get their course registered at the non-for-profit rate. It does not matter whether or not the Training Provider stands to profit from the actual seminar.

[More Details](#)

To remove your name from our mailing list, please [click here](#).
Questions or comments? E-mail us at nbkriss@nysspe.org or call [518-283-7493](tel:518-283-7493)

Q: What is a Professional Development Hour (PDH) and how does it relate to a Continuing Education Unit (CEU)?

A: A Professional Development Hour is one contact hour of at least 50 minutes in duration. Most continuing education providers give credit in hours; however, you may also see credit given in Continuing Education Units (CEU'S).

One CEU equals 10 contact hours. Therefore, .1 CEU equals one contact hour. To convert CEU's to contact hours, multiply by 10. To convert contact hours to CEU's, divide the contact hour by ten.

Q: As an instructor of a PIE approved Continuing Education program or course, am I eligible to receive PDH credit? And, if so, how much credit?

A: The preparation and teaching of a course accredited by an approved NYS Sponsor (such as PIE) and in an acceptable subject area is a legitimate Continuing Education Activity. Professional Development Hours credited for this activity can include actual instructional time plus preparation time, which may be up to 2 additional hours for each hour taught. Teaching experience will not be accepted if you have taught the course for more than one occasion without presenting substantially new or revised material.

Thank You All For Reading
and
See You Next Issue!

AutoCAD, Building Information Management, 3D, and the Real World.

Because of the facts that many of my clients are Architects and that almost all of them provide me with base drawings in AutoCAD format, I get to see a lot of different ways of using the program, none of which have impressed me, and more than a few of which have been the cause for much gnashing of teeth on my part.

While Autodesk continues to add useful capabilities with every release, I have never been asked if I could work in an Architect's 3D model instead of providing 2D MEP drawings, and have only rarely seen my clients use any but the slightest portion of the program's information management and parametric design capabilities.

Autodesk's ABS (née AEC) and "standard symbol" add-ons encourage better use of AutoCAD, but it's the old story about leading the horse to water. They can also bite you in the fanny. More later.

Not to get ahead of myself, but I just read a review where AutoCAD 2007 is the release which will make 3D so easy that we in the community of facility design professionals could be falling all over ourselves to turn out packages similar to those which have been produced by aircraft and automobile manufacturers for a decade or two now.

Really?

I first saw AutoCAD when CP/M was the dominant PC operating system, and taught it for a few years beginning with the transition between releases 11 and 12. In all the intervening time, I have had, count 'em, 2, of approximately 540 projects where I received base CAD drawings which reflected the use of some of AutoCAD's advanced features, but even they were implemented in a way which made my life (and therefore the production of the project's design/construction package) more rather than less difficult.

We all (well, many of us, anyway) have read about how some (usually, but not always, large) project was executed by implementing cutting-edge CAD/BIM techniques and capabilities which, after an initial teething period, was agreed by all involved to be the greatest thing since sliced bread.

Why then, is one of the most constant complaints we engineers make, the one about how much effort is required to turn the base drawings we receive into something we can actually use?

Autodesk, welcome to the real world. This part was actually easier in the days of halftone mylars.

Because, as a one-person shop, I have to be many times more productive than a conventional professional design house, I've come to use lulls between periods of frenzied production to develop and refine the way I use the product. I can't tell you how happy I'd be if someone upstream in my various project design chains had a clear understanding of how to use AutoCAD, just in terms of turning out a clear, well-integrated, and efficiently produced, project package; BIM and 3D can wait a bit.

Let me tell you what I think does *not* contribute to such an end.

-The AIA (or any other) Layering Standard.

Let's see, everything we do is such custom work that our profession is as much art as science, but we gotta wrap it around standard layers, or to compound the counterproductivity, standard symbols developed by some committee or another.

-CAD operators who take the old "each draftsman/designer turns out packages which look so different from each other that they look like they came out of different offices" affliction to levels only attainable via CAD. ("To err is human, to really foul up, requires a computer.")

This is a real shame, and shows the huge disconnect between the AutoCAD knowledge of principals (not infrequently near zero) in some design offices and their CAD operators or CAD manager. One hopes, that as CAD fluent graduates become principals, this will go away.

-Add-ons such as Autodesk's Architectural Desktop and Autodesk Building Systems.

This is the fanny-biting I was referring to earlier. I mean, we can't even get ourselves to the point where we can get clean unencumbered base drawings when delivered by straight AutoCAD, and this is supposed to help???

I just completed a 28 drawing MEP design package where the base drawings I received did not, thankfully, contain the usual gazillion layers thrown in by the add-on the upstream design office happened to be using. There were other issues, however, which sent me in a direction where I shot myself in the foot on productivity, spending time on things that didn't require the effort I put into them.

Live and learn.

OK, so what's the good news?

Well, this last project I was speaking of, was the latest in which I've used the technique of putting the work of all trades on the same base plan, and halftoning it as I do the architectural background, for all trades except the one being shown in the drawing.

That is, while I show all the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing/sprinkler work on the same externally referenced background, on, say, the electrical drawings, all work *except* the electrical work will be halftoned. Carrying this further, the electrical notes and callouts are only on the electrical drawings, with similar treatment given to the work of other trades.

This is great for coordination of the work between trades, and is easy for me to do since I'm the only one who works on the drawings. This should, however, be implementable in a multi-person design house via clever use of the office network, file-locking, and automatic writes of temporary "working" files from the individual designer's workstation to the central file server.

(I am NOT a big fan of what has become the de facto standard in some offices, where a designer works on one huge file of all the project's plans, sections, and elevations, and ends up pushing a lot of electrons around, as this begins to become impossibly unwieldy as a project matures.)

Another thing I've taken to doing (for quite a while now) is to embedding things like equipment schedules and electrical panel schedules in drawings as live spreadsheets, editable in the source program via a double click on the item in the drawing. This is merely cool in the former case, and a real time saver in the latter, as the spreadsheet is doing all the necessary bookkeeping math vis-à-vis loading and balancing.

I've also embedded bitmapped copies of correspondence with agencies and utilities in the drawings showing work dependent upon that correspondence.

What I've been toying with doing next (in addition to figuring out how to make Autodesk's Field and Sheet Set data capabilities work for me) is adding electrical and plumbing layer and symbol information on my mechanical equipment symbol blocks so when I insert, say, a condensing unit on my MEP background plan, it already includes a local electrical disconnect on the electrical layer as part of the inserted drawing.

Now, if only I could get immediately usable base plans.