

Honoring Our Profession’s Best

PRESIDENT’S NOTE



FROM THE FIRST shoots of green in the garden to buds emerging on the trees, spring is a time when we notice the exceptional in the world around us. So spring is a fitting season in which to honor the outstanding civil engineering leaders whose lifetime accomplishments and contributions have made a significant difference in our profession. It's also when we recognize exemplary civil engineering projects that illustrate superior civil engineering creativity and talent and make a significant contribution to the civil engineering profession and to society as a whole.

Did you know that ASCE confers more than 80 awards each year? There are awards for papers, for leadership, and for projects. The majority of these awards are presented at ASCE and institute conferences throughout the year; just a few are presented at the Outstanding Projects and Leaders (OPAL) gala, which typically takes place at the end of March. If you can imagine an Oscars awards ceremony for civil engineers, that would be the OPAL gala.

It was my privilege on March 20 to present the 2014 OPAL awards to the five individuals being honored this year for lifetime achievement: Joseph P. Welsh, P.E., F.ASCE, for construction; Jon D. Magnusson, P.E., S.E., F.SEI, Dist.M.ASCE, for design; Jeffrey S. Russell, Ph.D., P.E., Dist.M.ASCE, for education; John R. Njord, P.E., M.ASCE, for government; and J. Richard Capka, P.E., M.ASCE, for management. The event also saw this year's Henry L. Michel Award for Industry Advancement of Research go to Seth L. Pearlman, P.E., D.GE, M.ASCE.

True leaders influence and inspire others to achieve excellence. The OPAL gala also celebrates unique projects that reflect the work of a team. This year's finalists in the competition for ASCE's Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement (OCEA) Award were a widening project for the Huey P. Long Bridge, in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana; a project to expand the Interstate 15 corridor in Utah County, Utah; the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal Surge Barrier, in New Orleans; the Taizhou Bridge, which crosses the Chang (Yangtze) River in China's Jiangsu Province; and the Tom Lantos Tunnels, on Route 1 in California in the area known as the Devil's Slide. The winner of the 2014 OCEA Award is the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal Surge Barrier, a 2 mi long engineering marvel that is protecting the city of New Orleans and is the largest surge barrier of its kind in the world.

This year's Charles Pankow Award for Innovation went to a team of experts who created the RABIT bridge deck assessment tool, a multifunctional evaluation platform that facilitates the assessment of bridge decks. The team included the Federal Highway Administration's Turner-Fairbank Highway Research Center; Rutgers University's Center for Advanced Infrastructure and Transportation; Geomedia Research & Development, of El Paso, Texas; and IDS Ingegneria Dei Sistemi, headquartered in Pisa, Italy.

The OPAL gala also honors civil engineers at all stages of their professional lives. In addition to ASCE fellows, distinguished members, and industry leaders, several of those honored in our program New Faces of Civil Engineering were in attendance.

As civil engineers, we have been changing the world and making our mark on society for centuries. Celebrating within the profession is important, but showcasing the value and contributions of our work to the public is equally important in advancing the profession.

Each year ASCE confers landmark status on projects both here and abroad through our Historic Civil Engineering Landmark Program. The Lake Pontchartrain Causeway, in Louisiana, was included in the program earlier this year. This 24 mi long bridge was the country's first on which assembly line techniques were used for its construction. Also named landmarks this year were New York's Troy–Waterford Bridge and its predecessor, the Union Bridge. The latter opened in 1804. The Troy–Waterford Bridge, a four-span steel structure completed in 1909, was built on the Union Bridge's masonry piers.

ASCE also joined ASME and the United Kingdom's Institution of Civil Engineers and Institution of Mechanical Engineers in paying tribute to the Titan Clydebank, a crane constructed around 1906 that was used to build warships and such luxury liners as the *Queen Elizabeth 2*. The groups named the crane a landmark in recognition of its importance in the history of both civil and mechanical engineering.

As we honor society-changing civil engineering projects, profession-changing leaders, and engineering landmarks, it becomes apparent that the exceptional in our profession is all around us. Help inspire the next generation to join us by honoring outstanding civil engineers and civil engineering projects in your communities.

—RANDALL S. “RANDY” OVER,
P.E., F.ASCE