



Scott L. Melnick

When I visited Montreal three years ago, I couldn't find a snow globe. This was a serious problem for me because I always bring my daughter a snow globe from wherever I happen to be traveling (my friends even sometimes bring her snow globes—her collection has expanded such that I need to add more shelves to house them!). Fortunately, I was able to remedy the situation on a visit this past summer.

But the availability of a plethora of snow globes is only one reason I'd recommend everyone visit this fabulous European-style city. More importantly, Montreal is playing host to the 2005 North American Steel Construction Conference (April 6-9)—and it looks like this year's conference will be one of the best ever.

I'm not even sure which part of the conference I'm most excited about. All three keynote addresses look fascinating—from Ken Flessas' look at "The Future of Steel Fabrication" to Werner Sobek's vision of "The Future of Engineering" to Jerome Hajjar's T.R. Higgins Lecture on "Continuity Plate Detailing for Steel Moment-Resisting Connections." (On a sad note, Bob Dexter, co-winner of this year's Higgins Award, passed away late last year. In addition to his contributions to steel, Bob was a genuinely nice person and he'll be sorely missed.)

With nearly 50 technical sessions offered, it's hard to mention just a few—and of course the sessions of special interest will vary based on whether you're an engineer, fabricator, detailer, or erector. But some of the sessions are sure to generate special interest.

For example, Mark Holland (from Paxton & Vierling Steel), Jules Van de Pas (from Computerized Structural Design), and Fred Tinker (from Pacific Drafting) will be presenting a session on "Overcoming Poor Construction Documents." And AISC's Cindi Duncan and Chris Hewitt will be offering "An Advance Look at the New AISC Specification for Structural Steel Buildings and its Impact on the Designer."

And while the conference prides itself on offering superlative take-home value, some sessions sound like they're worth attending just out of plain fascination. For example, Roger Cyr and

Sal Lorenzo from Martoni Cyr and Associates are offering information on "Designing & Building Cirque du Soleil Facilities." And David Stringer (David C. Stringer Engineering) and Jean-Paul Lebet (Steel Structures Laboratory) will be presenting on "Bridge Erection over Canadian Ice and in the Swiss Alps."

However, the technical sessions are just one aspect of the conference. Just as important are the formal and informal networking opportunities (more than 2,300 engineers, fabricators, detailers, and erectors are expected to attend the conference). The conference always attracts the industry's leaders—designers (such as Larry Griffis and Jon Magnusson), detailers (NISD will hold its annual meeting immediately following the conference), educators (from Bill McGuire to Ted Galambos), fabricators (leaders from companies like Paxton and Vierling, Douglas Steel, and Havens), and erectors (including Ted Sheppard and Eddie Williams). And, of course, there's an extensive exhibition hall showing everything from the latest fabrication equipment (we run full beam lines right on the show floor) to software to bolt manufacturers.

Amazingly, the conference is remarkably inexpensive, especially when compared to other conferences—both in the design/construction industry and in other industries (my wife is an occupational therapist and I'm always bogged by the fees she pays for seminars). Registration this year is \$350 for AISC/CISC/IMCA/NISD members (\$475 for non-members—and remember, AISC professional membership is just \$135 with substantial group discounts). And this year, a light lunch is included on Thursday and Friday.

To register for the conference—or to view the advance program, including hotel information—please visit www.aisc.org/nascc. Or you can call 312.670.5444 and we'll be happy to send you a printed program.

The only drawback to attending the conference is the packed schedule. I hope I can find enough time to pick up another snow globe—maybe I'll just have to go a day early!

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