

The Coconut Wireless

A.k.a.: The Chairman's Newsletter to the Fellows
edition

15 May 2001

Mahalo! (Thank you) to all the Fellows who took the time to respond to my survey – by mail, e-mail and fax. Whatever the medium, you've responded.

HERE ARE THE STATISTICS:

200 letters sent. 105 responded. 53% participation. That's a lot better than the Institute's election.

Of those that responded, 30% indicated they had retired, 70% are still working.

On the question whether we ought to do something more than what we've been doing, the retired group of 31 responses: 12 said yes, 15 said no, and 4 had no comments. From the still-active group of 74 responses: 50 said yes, 21 said no, and 3 had no comments.

The high percentage of response indicates the Fellows have a strong interest in maintaining CSI as a strong and vital organization. A little over 53% of the respondents indicated they would like to be more involved in CSI than they currently are. They believe that as a group, the Fellows have a lot to offer CSI.

I'm impressed with not only the numbers, but also the quality of your comments.

HERE ARE SOME OF YOUR COMMENTS:

Since many of the comments were sent to the Chairman with the understanding of privilege information, I will exercise my discretion regarding public disclosures. Due to space limitations, I've GROUPED some of your sentiments to reflect the various subject matters. The order in the paragraphs has nothing to do with the importance of the comments:

General

Maybe we are not involved as much in CSI because of job retirement limitations, but we are still involved in the construction and social community. There is a vast talent in the Fellows that are untapped. We are too old for the current philosophy. The more I am into retirement, the less I want to be involved in CSI activities. I defer to the younger Fellows to carry on. I'm a new Fellow so I'll reserve my comments until I know a bit more about your activities. There should be more activities involving Fellows who do not attend the convention. Where are the leaders now that could comfortably sit on a podium next to the President of AIA or ACEC as a representative of CSI? These individuals (Fellows) offer history, vision and experience. Face to face meetings are not possible for me, I suggest we communicate in writing. Don't spend time talking about the past and complaining about the present, do something, anything, to contribute to the future. I think it would be noble for the Fellows to do something, but I question the sustainability of the effort unless it is somehow funded. There is a huge untapped resource in the Fellowship ranks. How to tap is another question. Us young bucks are active in other ways and the retired members may be enjoying retirement. Most who can be active, are. Let the rest who don't want to be, alone. Act as an advisory board to CSI. Fellows should be encouraged to mentor and remain involved in their home chapter. We may be too small and diverse a group as a whole to do much as a group.

Convention

The current format (of the Fellows Meeting) is a roll call of the "dead" - who is still surviving, not what we are still contributing to the construction industry. Fellows need more recognition at the Convention outside of the banquet venue (more visibility, etc). More time needed for Fellows meeting at convention. Assist in hosting groups from foreign countries at Convention. Utilize Fellows to introduce speakers at Conventions. Convince the Institute giving us (emeritus members) price breaks on convention registration fees.

CSI Programs

Write historical articles for *Construction Specifier* or *CSI Leader*. "Those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it". Endow a scholarship. Raise money to increase number of Awards for the Dale Moll Funds (suggested a donation of \$5/Fellows could yield \$1,000/year). Mentor Programs based on Leadership Academy. Anything that would promote awareness of and the use of good specifications. There is a present concentration of money toward education and training in CSI; this ought to be realigned, or "balanced" with other interests. Increase activities of Speaker's Bureau for student member as well as regular members. Work on retainage of current members. Establish a Chapter Advisory Committee. Outreach toward other trade organizations and city and county bureaucracies.

Institute Affairs

There is a national change in CSI which I am having a serious problem with identification. There seems to be a divisive element running rampant through CSI. The Fellows could be the force needed to unify the membership once again. The Fellows need to be involved in the direction CSI makes. Serve as sounding board for President and President-elect. Fellowship should be a brain trust in the future of the Institute – it should have some influence in the direction of CSI, instead Fellowship has become the pasteurization of our leadership and a place to bury its influence. There is too much division between members and the Institute establishment. You cannot find the word “specification” in the new general plan. The Fellows are the “Best of the Best” and should be, at the very least, used in some mentoring program or think-tank committee. Be a sounding board to review all major possible changes in policy or function BEFORE it is implemented. Be involved in the strategic plan for visionary input. Be involved in long-range planning. Utilize the Fellows in leadership training, how to communicate outside Board and Chapter meetings. Mentors to struggling chapters and new members. Mentor to specifiers, architects, and leadership. Authorship of articles. Help with grading of Certification exams. The first thing the Fellows should do is ask for a detailed look at the inside of the organization, then if we find what I think we will find, we should demand, first ourselves and if that doesn’t work, through a publicity campaign to all the members, the complete overhaul of the staff, from the top down. If it takes rescinding the power we have granted to the board, so be it.

Other Items

Update History of Fellows annually. The new Fellows, class of 98, 99 & 00 have not received their copies, neither have the old timers received the updates. Are there other people who might have an interest on the History of Fellows (making it available for a fee?) Publish a Fellows-only directory. A newsletter by the Fellows, to the Fellows and of the Fellows, independent of Institute staff, anything to promote better communication between us and the Institute. Make better use of the Internet to save Institute money and maximize feedback. Some recommendations may be good but cannot be implemented because we are not elected officials on official matters.

Change in Convention Format in 2003

Advance planning required. I am so upset and concern with the change in format in 2003 that I’m boycotting this and future convention events. National gatherings would be beneficially difficult, however regional and local gathering should be supported by the membership. As for location, I think Chicago is fine, but not three years in a row. How much of this change was due to our past President who was associated with the National Glass Association? I think we should stop playing games with the numbers who attend conventions, it is already low enough (less than 10%). If CSI show is changing to an April date we are going to lose a bunch of people who normally use the Convention as a jumping off point for family vacations. School is still in session in April. Who has the time and money to attend 2 annual events (show and convention)? Let’s be realistic! The attendance at the exhibitions will only benefit those who are funded (Board members). The exhibitors will stay with us only if professionals attend. Even the glass companies, why would they spend time with us when they have their regular customers next door?

HERE ARE MY COMMENTS:

There is a frustration among the Fellows from those who are active and retired and those who attend or not attend the Convention. The Jury of Fellows takes care of the “gate”, who is admitted, and maintains the rules. With the exception of the staff who maintains the record and serves the Jury of Fellows, there isn’t any other “vehicle”, that initiate and maintain the needs and interests of the Fellows. Other than the annual meeting and the banquet at the convention, there is nothing to involve the Fellows, no communication, and no formal venue to discuss issues of, by, and for Fellows. The format of the annual meeting is too rigid and the time for it is too short for those who can attend the conventions. It is usually sandwiched between region caucuses and the social events that follow.

There is a need for a “vehicle”, such as a “College of Fellows”, and a better time slot for our meeting. I’ve resurrected my *Coconut Wireless* to respond because there is no time for this report to be read at the annual meeting. Even if there were time, this report would not be reaching every Fellow. The survey also revealed that of the 200 Fellows, I could send this report to 126 via e-mail with the balance 74 via snail-mail. One hundred percent of the Fellows-Class of 2001 has e-mail accessibility. This certainly will improve the networking capability of the Fellows in the future. We are looking into setting up a “Forum” within the CSI web page. When we can communicate efficiently, the Fellows, as a group, can contribute more.

The current arrangement is an informal one to address immediate need. There is also no assurance that the next Chairman of the Jury of Fellows will continue because our current structure does not provide for that “vehicle” or administrative arm to service the Fellows. As to finding a better time to meet, rest assured that this point would be made when I move on, July 1, and join the Convention Program Task Team.

Many voice the opinion that, as Fellows, we ought to be consulted on institute matters. I want to highlight some facts – Executive Committee and Board Members are elected officials. We are not. Our position is honorary. We have no authority. If you survey the ExCom and Board, there are Fellows in there, a majority in fact. What some of you are saying, especially those who do not agree with the direction or decisions made that the “right” fellows ought to be consulted. Who are the “right” Fellows? “They” is “Us”! Establishing a “College of Fellows” is the first step to handle the administration of the Fellows. A recognized “vehicle” will then be in-place to formulate “policies” or recommendations, to accept tasks, etc.

We must keep in mind that whatever we do, or the direction we take, it ought to be done within the framework of CSI. We ought to weight the sustainability of each project. We ought to take up tasks that will involve others otherwise we end up with “dictators” or “committees-of-one”.

This edition of *The Coconut Wireless* is issue in 3 groups of e-mail addresses, plus snail-mail. My software has a 50 address per group capacity. This allows for some expansion until someone else can suggest a more efficient way to communicate. If anyone wish to take the ball and run with the newsletter I would be happy to share the full mailing list, electronic and snail-mail. Those currently receiving this report via snail-mail, you will be converted when you initiate an e-mail to me to establish a connection. As you can see I’m at the entry level of the electronic age. Any help would be welcomed

Mahalo, again, for your great responses. Thanks to Dick Eustis for asking the question that started all this and helping me with this report to you.

We asked. You’ve spoken. Now let’s take time to digest what we said. Your comments, suggestions and volunteering are welcomed.

If the occasion comes for another edition of this newsletter, I’ll certainly consider it.

Aloha,

Gilman Hu
Chairman, Jury of Fellows, 2001
1245 Young Street, Suite 202
Honolulu HI 96814

E-mail: gilmanhu@Compuserve.com