

Follow the Fellows

This feature conveys the observations and advice of members of the SEAOC College of Fellows. The Fellows include seasoned and dedicated members of the profession and the association. Each month, we ask them a question that may be technical, career-oriented, or simply fun. Enjoy!

Are you glad you chose structural engineering as your career? Why?

"I am very pleased that I chose structural engineering as a career. It has been forty-five years of pushing the boundaries of design innovation and seeing your efforts through to completed projects. One key satisfying experience was my involvement with our professional societies and the interaction that provided with colleagues."

- Ronald L. Mayes, Ph.D., F(SEAOC)

"Yes, I am very glad I chose structural engineering as a fulfilling career. It has provided me an ability and forum to exercise creative skills in designing and seeing built structures in which I can take pride. No less important, it allowed membership in a profession where fellowship and camaraderie, to say nothing of technical exchanges, are shared like no other group to my knowledge."

- Ephraim Hirsch, F(SEAOC)

"Yes, because it lead me into earthquake engineering, community resilience planning, and public policy advocacy."

- Chris D. Poland, S.E., NAE, F(SEAOC)

"I am very glad that I chose structural engineering as a career. It enables me to combine the rigor of science with the leap of art into the design of buildings that shape the environment we live in. It is extremely fulfilling to have a positive impact on designing buildings to withstand natural forces of gravity and earthquakes. I've had much satisfaction in seeing new buildings constructed as well as extending the useful life of existing buildings with renovations and seismic retrofits. And now I'm extending that information from the individual building into the broader picture of improving the communities we live in. Let me add that the structural engineering community is quite supportive and a great group of people!"

- Grace S. Kang, S.E., F.SEAOC

"I wanted to be a structural engineer when I was in high school. I liked seeing how buildings went together and I was good at math."

- Rawn Nelson, F.SEAOC

"I grew up on a farm in New York State and rebuilt John Deere tractor motors at age 13 and removed and replace car motors, 1954 Mercury V8 and 1960 Plymouth Slant 6 when I was 14 and 15 years old. My two cousins, Arnold and Sigwalt are ten years older than me and both attended Syracuse University School of Engineering. Arnold studied Chemical Engineering and Sigwalt studied Electrical Engineering. I knew by my 7th and 8th grade that I would study engineering. I chose Civil Engineering to be different than my cousins. My first job after my BS was structural engineering of offshore oil production platforms. I went to UC Berkeley SESM graduate school to broaden and strengthen my knowledge. I have a passion and interest in design, aesthetics, and in construction. Structural Engineering was the "perfect" career for me. I have imagined, developed, designed, engineered, and constructed many marine structures, bridges, buildings and water storage structures. I got involved in SEAOC in 1977, and that is rewarding in many ways. I still restore old cars. Current project, 1966 Mustang convertible."

- Reinhard Ludke, S.E., F.SEAOC

"I have been happy to have chosen structural engineering as my life's work. It is gratifying to be a significant and "constructive" contributor to society. I have had recognition from both my peers, from local and state government; and from most of the people I have encountered. My only regret is that I did not take more risk and been "independent" (i.e.-business minded) earlier in my career. "

- Manuel Mordon, S.E., F.SEAOC

"Yes. It is a creative profession. And while I could still ride a bicycle, I could see buildings and say, I did that."

- Jim Willis, F.SEAOC