Wednesday, August 19, 2026

SEAOI Member Spotlight

We want to feature you in a future SEAOI Member Spotlight! Please briefly answer a few of the questions below. While you may answer all questions if you wish, we may not be able to feature all responses due to space limitations.

Name:	Steve Elver
Credentials:	Licensed SE, Licensed PE
Years in the SE profession:	40+
Alma Mater:	Univ. of Wisconsin - Milwaukee
Role in SEAOI:	Past president, 25+ year member
What's your favorite building and/or bridge?	Familia Sagrada, Barcelona

What is your favorite project you have personally worked on?

I was the designer of record leading the complete demolition and reconstruction of a 7 Megawatt Hydroelectric Plant in Kaukauna, WI. Called the Badger Hydro Plant, the design required incorporating recommendations from over 20 project stakeholders like local utility customers, Native American tribes, whitewater rafting organizations, state and federal regulators, US Fish and Wildlife, the State of Wisconsin Historic Preservation Office, etc. The design included redesigning a leaking, half-mile long water canal to the powerhouse, the new powerhouse including two large hydroturbines with all associated mechanical and electrical equipment, and rehabilitation of existing existing canal water control gate structure. The project was completed in 2014 for $57M. The power canal is incorporated into a new "Hydro" park which supports music concerts, farmers markets and other events.

When did you know you wanted to become an SE?

It wasn't until my sophomore year in college that I ended up leaning toward the structural engineering track in my civil engineering major. Actually, I intended to become a journeyman carpenter out of high school, but there was a waiting list to join the carpenter's training program where I lived. Was it fate that steered me to the career path I eventually took?

What advice would you give to your former self, just starting out in the profession?

I can't really think of advice to improve the way my career path developed. On a side note, I am glad to see that companies are more accepting of variable work hours, vacation, and parental leave than they used to be. I had only one week's worth of vacation my first year on the job. My wife and I had a baby that year, so one weeks' vacation was used up without doing anything special.

If you're a senior engineer, what advice would you give to current junior engineers?

Get good site experience, either day trips or extended assignments. Talk to all people on the project, especially people in the trades. Everyone can provide great insight into solving the problems associated with your assigned tasks.

Why are you a member of SEAOI?

I became a member of SEAOI when Carl Peterson, a co-worker and prior SEAOI president "talked me into participating". I found value in the camaraderie and connections through SEAOI ever since.

What do you consider to be your greatest accomplishment, technical or otherwise?

Moving to Illinois from Wisconsin in 1995, I was a practicing structural engineer in Wisconsin for 13 years before needing to take the IL SE exam. Needless to say, I was forced to study updated building codes: IBC, ACI, ASCE, etc. to pass the exam. I took the SEAOI SE Refresher Course (hugely helpful) and eventually passed the exam (not on the first try).

While passing the SE Exam was a huge career advancing event, my family has been the biggest accomplishment of my life. It includes my wife of 45 years, Julie, plus two sons, two daughters-in-law and 5 grandchildren. We recently rented a house together near Ft. Meyers, Florida and had a wonderful time.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Keep work-life balance going for you. My wife and I have made a point to travel regularly and that requires smart planning to pull it off. Pick an exotic spot well in advance, then book transportation and lodging early while rates remain lower. You can watch all kinds of videos online to help pick a spot and to prepare for the trip.

Headshot and/or fun photo of yourself: (Highly encouraged)



I consent to having my responses published, in whole or in part, in a future SEAOI Tuesday Update email.

I agree.