

# Memories: TeamCS and MWGTW

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By Sheldon Wolfe, RA, FCSI, CCS, CCCA, CSC

I've been having a lot of fun lately, going through boxes of old *Construction Specifiers*, paper files I accumulated at the office, and digital files I've acquired in the last forty or so years. Among my own articles, I found a couple of series that might be interesting to look at again.

One of them was *TeamCS*, CSI's first attempt at an online magazine; forty-one issues were published from 1998 through 2003. Each month, a topic was given to four authors, representing the four team members as envisioned by CSI at that time. There were a couple of changes in authors over the years, but the ones I remember were Tom Deines, speaking for the constructor; Paul Bertram, speaking for the supplier; Phil Kabza, speaking for the designer; and me, speaking for the owner. Here is an example (the links to the four teams are not active):



July 2003

## The Future of Specs and the Project Manual

This month's installment of TeamCS was inspired by the musings of a specification writer in one of the various online industry discussion forums. He seemed to strike a nerve in that particular discussion group with the following:

Specification requirements can be considered superfluous until they're needed... Good contractors don't need the specifications to tell them how to build the project, but when there is a problem, the specs become silver bullets, and the information that most architects and owners didn't even know was there can save their bacon... Which segues into one of my favorite sayings: Look at drawings in the field and specs in court.

Is that all specifications amount to: Exhibit A in the courtroom? Are they so pointless in the construction process that the only people actually reading them are construction lawyers when a job goes to litigation? Most importantly, what is the future of specifications and the project manual?

These questions were put to the TeamCS columnists, and they all agree specifications are not getting the respect they deserve. However, some feel specs have become too unwieldy to be practical, while others try to teach non-specifiers about the importance of complete construction documentation.

What is your opinion? We know you have one, so take advantage of **Team Talkback** and tell our columnists what you think. Submit your comments to [Team Talkback](#) and have your say.

-- Editor, TeamCS

The TeamCS Archive contains articles on dozens of topics, each analyzed from the perspectives of the four teams. [Check it out!](#)

*The opinions expressed in TeamCS are those of the columnists and not necessarily those of the Construction Specifications Institute, nor the columnists' respective organizations.*

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I don't know how many readers we had, or what the response rate was, but I suspect both were low. Nonetheless, we authors had a good time.

Another series was my own "Mr. Wolfe Goes to Washington." One of the things that bothered me before I was elected to the Institute board of directors (and still bothers me today) was the lack of communication from the board to the members. In response, I wrote a piece each month I was on the board, the intent being to tell the members what the board was doing. This was my first column:



## Rookie - on the road to Washington

1 July 2005, Alexandria, VA. Today was my first day in office as Institute Director for the North Central Region. Nothing went wrong today, and I am enjoying my term so far. My calendar is pretty much open today, so I'll take a few minutes to recall some of the events that led to this momentous day.

*August 2004.* CSI elections aren't far off, and the North Central Region still doesn't have a candidate for Professional Institute Director. Through most of my CSI career, I've been a lone wolf, preferring those activities that can be done at my convenience, and avoiding politics.

After talking to several CSI friends who are current or past Institute directors, I am encouraged by their comments. They all tell me it's a lot of work, but they also tell me it's the most satisfying work they have done for CSI. A few reassure me about the politics, saying there really isn't much to worry about. Taking strength from their encouragement, I call my region's Institute directors, and tell them I am interested.

*15 September.* Today I learned that Gerard Capell, a friend from another chapter, is also in the race. I met Gerard several years ago in Alexandria; while I was serving on the Institute technical committee, he was a member of the Institute certification committee. He had impressed me then with his work for CSI, and in the years since I had heard many good reports of his work for the Milwaukee chapter. In the last year, Gerard performed an amazing feat, leading four chapters in organizing a region conference in less than a year.



*Gerard and I ran a dignified race, free of petty squabbles*

Gerard's interest in being the next Institute director posed an interesting question. Was I willing to run against someone I would otherwise vote for? We discussed the matter by phone and, as you might expect, concluded that we would remain friends and support each other's efforts regardless of the outcome.

And so, it was off to the races!

*4 February 2005.* After a friendly battle for office, the ballots are finally in the mail. One of our chapter members calls and tells me my name is not on the ballot. Not yet having seen one myself, I think, "That's an interesting way to lose an election!" As it turns out, there are many defective ballots; we are assured that replacements will be issued, and the results will be valid.

*11 March.* Terry Lunn, Institute Secretary, informs me that I will be the next Institute director from the North Central Region. One congratulatory message reads, "The good news is that you won the election. The bad news is that you won the election."

*Next month: My first Institute Board meeting.*

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I had hoped to return to the board this year, anticipating how much easier it would be without trying to work around a full-time job. However, unlike when I ran for Institute director in 2004, when no one was interested, several members were interested in serving this year. With the drive to get younger members involved, there isn't much room for septuagenarians, so I'll just continue on in my role as Curmudgeon at Large.

What memories do you have of CSI? Leave your comments at

<https://swconstructivethoughts.blogspot.com/2018/08/memories-teamcs-and-mwgtw.html>

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