Outgoing President's Message

by Mark E. Tuttle, 1995-1996

It has become traditional for the outgoing President to describe his/her activities during the presidential year, as well as to summarize her/his impressions of the overall "health" of the society. As reported in several of my earlier "President's Corner" columns, I represented the SEM at a number of technical conferences during the past year. I will not repeat my reports of those travels, but I would like to remind you of the 1st SEM International Conference on Mechanics of Time Dependent Materials, which was held in Ljubljana, Slovenia last September. I am convinced that the need for a thorough understanding of the time-dependent nature of structural materials is becoming more and more crucial, and I believe that SEM members will continue to make important new contributions to this field. We intend to sponsor an international conference devoted to this topic every other year, with the conference location rotating between Europe, North America, and Asia. The 2nd SEM International Conference on Mechanics of Time Dependent Materials is tentatively planned for 1997, at a location to be named in southern California. Please be alert for further details as they become available.

During the past year I spent a good deal of time working on (or worrying about!) our annual Spring Conference. I would like to acknowledge the major contributions to this effort made by Elizabeth Fuchs and Kristin MacDonald. Several changes to the organization and format of the meeting have been implemented, which are intended to streamline the technical program of the conference and also to stimulate increased participation by engineers and scientists working in industry. These changes will be reviewed following the upcoming VIII International Congress on Experimental Mechanics in Nashville. If you would like to suggest further modifications, or have other comments or suggestions, please feel free to relay them to me or to any Society officer.

Last June I appointed an ad-hoc "Committee on Electronic Publications," consisting of Steve McNeill (chair), John Sullivan, Charles Harris, Leanne Mitchell and Ken Galione. The charge to the committee was to forecast the capabilities which will be available within (roughly) the next five years, to suggest ways in which the SEM may use these capabilities to its advantage, and to recommend action items appropriate at this time. The committee has performed this task admirably, and will make its final report to the Executive Board this June. I wish to express my sincere thanks to each member of the committee. I believe that the SEM must eventually embrace all of the various forms of "electronic communication" currently evolving (e.g., posting of society activities on the world wide web, conference proceedings on CDs, electronic publication of society journals, etc.). The recommendations of the ad hoc Committee of Electronic Publications are a good start towards this future way of doing business, and I believe the Society has made significant progress in this area during the past year.

Currently, the "health" of the Society is robust. Indeed, one of the most lasting impressions I will retain from my presidential year is the international scope and stature of the SEM. The Society is recognized world-wide for its conferences and publications in the field of experimental mechanics.

However, in my opinion, we must broaden the technical image of the SEM to insure the long-term health of our Society. Let me point out that the lines of distinction between "analytical" and "experimental" mechanics, which existed in 1943 (when the SEM was founded), have been blurred almost beyond recognition. Today, most of us actually practice a "hybrid" method, using the term coined by Albert Kobayashi in his 1983 Murray Lecture, which combines the power of modern experimental, analytical and numerical methods. The activities of our members is accurately described as an appropriate mix of these methods. Those colleagues who have not followed SEM activities and publications in recent years are likely to view us as either "the strain gage society" or "the photoelasticity society." While we should be rightly proud of our contributions (past and present) to the science and technologies associated with strain gaging and photoelastic analysis, as individual members we should also insure that the breadth of our Society activities is properly perceived by the technical community. Secondly, I believe that we must also foster an atmosphere which attracts reserchers and engineers involved in fluid mechanics, robotics, biotechnology, etc., in addition to our traditional activities in the field of experimental solid mechanics. Most of us have colleagues who are working in these fields, but are not SEM members. I encourage you to invite these people to an SEM technical conference, and/or to suggest that they submit a manuscript for publication in our journals.

I wish to extend my congratulations to our new Society officers, President Elizabeth Fuchs, President-Elect Ravi Chona, and Vice President Charles Harris. Congratulations and welcome also to our two new Executive Board Members, Jonathan Rogers and Masahisa Takashi. I can assure you that all of these people are talented and dedicated SEM members; the Society is in very good hands. I also wish to thank Ken Galione, Kristin MacDonald and the rest of our Headquarters Staff for their assistance and support throughout the past year. In particular, thanks to E/T Managing Editor Pat Brothers for her patience with my habitual tardiness in submitting this column.

In closing, I have been deeply honored to have served as the President of the Society for Experimental Mechanics, and am very grateful for the experience. I look forward to continued involvement in Society activities in the years to come.