THE WORLD NEEDS MORE HUMBLE

Humble: Marked by modesty in behavior, attitude, or spirit; not arrogant or prideful.

... a little background on how this issue’s topic came to be. In a recent issue of Water Wire, there was a brief write-up on my receiving an award. In response, I received a number of congratulatory e-mails – this was very nice, and very thoughtful of the people who took the time to write.

While each of my e-mail replies was personalized, each generally noted:

- It is amazing what we can do when we surround ourselves with extraordinary people.
- While the award included only one name, it truly recognized the contributions of many co-workers and outside collaborators.

More replies than I would have imagined in some fashion called me out for “trying to be humble,” with wording that implied disingenuousness. I know most of the respondents well enough to recognize them to be well-intentioned and, hopefully, poking fun. However, I am beginning to wonder if humble is, well, “so 20th Century.” Please say it isn’t so!

We are all aware that focused hard work throughout a career can position an individual to be occasionally recognized by some facet of their profession or organization. We shouldn’t hide from that, and we should appreciate that others consider us worthy of recognition. However, none of this should blind us to the reality that this type of good fortune is, in almost every case, also a direct reflection of the people we have been blessed to work with: both within our own organizations and in our broader communities.

A note that fully captured this sentiment said, “Your humble, positive way and standard practice of sharing credit are endearing, and make the happiness of your success even greater.” That comment was on target! It does make the happiness even greater at these times to remember those with whom we have had the pleasure of learning and collaborating.

The person sending the quoted reply commented that her martial arts Grand Master teaches, “As we become more senior, we need to become more humble.” The Grand Master is a 9th degree black belt in his 70s; he bows humbly to each of his students.

Along the way, we can each identify talented, motivated and caring people who have contributed ideas and enthusiasm, done some needed heavy lifting, or provided much needed counsel. Most never ask anything in return and, therefore, quietly seed a parallel duty in our own minds.

We should each excel in areas where our talents lie, while consciously recognizing the mentoring, support, advocacy, and encouragement that have made those successes possible and more substantial. None of us works in a vacuum. The influences of others weigh heavily on our own lives. They should shine in our reflections and in the story lines we create in our heads.

This in no way diminishes my high regard for individual excellence. If individuals don’t step up and deliver, we don’t have much of a team. Our customers (we all have them) look at an organization’s performance and, to a very significant extent, paint the team with the same brush. The team is the only thing that matters, but exceptional individuals are the essential ingredient in making an exceptional team.

The 21st Century has brought with it a little too much “in your face” attitude that publicly celebrates egotism and narcissism. Personal victory dances and chest pounding bravado are overdone at sports venues. It has gotten out of control and this behavior is moving into our culture. Let us reverse the process and reflect instead upon the guidance of the Grand Master.

Recognition of achievement needs to reflect on those who created the fertile ground for achievement, those that provided critical guidance or input, and the reality that individual awards commonly recognize a team’s achievements. We, in turn, need to strive to be the Grand Masters for the next generation.


~ John Wooden

Thoughtful contemplation,
Humble moments of reflection;
Help us see beyond ourselves -
A look in the right direction.
PROJECT VISUALIZATIONS BRING CONCEPTS TO LIFE

Rendering images from computer models has become highly evolved. Three-dimensional modeling, rendering, and animations are now regularly used for enhanced project visualizations. We live in a world where “if you can visualize it, you can truly achieve it.” Rendering has moved from costly, hand-crafted works on paper or canvas, through crude stick figure representations, to digital image generation that can be difficult to differentiate from a photograph.

Many newer visualizations can be sliced to reveal inner workings; others can be set in motion. Once we get past the “wow factor,” the real power of visualizations comes to light. They are incredibly valuable, both for developing engineering insights and collaborating with clients. Rendered models illustrate and inform design intent far better than paging through engineering drawings.

Following are a few examples of project visualizations: concept to real world. The renderings shown span a significant change in technology. The most recent rendering, Pymatuning Dam, is so realistic that it is hard to distinguish it from the site photo.

LAKE TOWNSEND DAM
- This project was to replace a disintegrating gated spillway. The economy and efficiency of a labyrinth were selected. With 700 ft of folded weir length 20-ft high (30-ft high end walls), efficient construction design benefitted from visualizations that illustrated critical construction joint layouts providing both load transfer and complete waterstopped joints. This project was awarded as 2012 ASDSO Dam Rehabilitation Project of the Year.

DEEP CREEK WATERSHED DAM
- Comparing the rendering to the aerial photo illustrates the striking conformity of the rendering to the finished project. This project was awarded the 2013 USSD Award for Excellence in the Constructed Project.

Go to Schnabel’s VIMEO PAGE to see “animations” of our renderings. https://vimeo.com/schnabelengineering

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Rendering and site photo (top and bottom)

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PYMATUNING DAM
- This is an ongoing design for rehabilitation of the inlet tower. Modifications to the masonry/concrete structure focus on a new structure within the existing, to limit the need for cofferdams and to preserve historical appearance. Advanced rendering software accommodates dewatered and cut-away views to illustrate feature layouts and clearances. Rendering and site photo of tower and lake (top and bottom), plus a cut-away of tower showing structural modifications, gates and stems, and a dewatered visual from the reservoir approach channel.

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A TRIBUTE TO DAN MCGILL

On the morning of August 30, 2013, Dan McClure McGill passed away. Dan joined Schnabel in 1994. He was vital to the early success and on-going growth of the firm’s new dam engineering market. Dan was special in many ways, and extraordinary in others. He had a special way of infusing his passion for both people and dams, by dedicating himself to growing a business line that attended to both technical excellence and personalized service.

For those of you who knew Dan McGill, little needs to be said. Your hearts are rich with warm memories of a deeply talented, humble, humorous, and endearing gentleman.

For those of you who never had the honor and privilege of getting to know Dan, he was a truly outstanding dam engineer and among the most singularly charming people any of us have known. His first love was people. He had the knack of walking up to anyone, and walking away some time later having made a friend and having left the other person better off for the encounter… and he wouldn’t forget you.

The world is not a better place for having lost Dan, but it is a far better place because of all of the people who he touched with his profound humanity, depth of faith, country charm, and effervescent wit.

God bless you Dan McGill!