

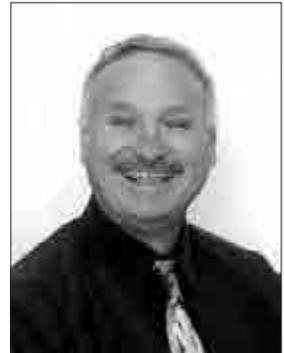
# One Hundred Years of Civil Engineering Excellence in San Diego

**Timothy M. Shell, P.E., M.ASCE**

**2013 President, ASCE San Diego Section**

Have you ever considered the impact that civil engineers have in our community and throughout the world? I hope this special edition of *The Journal of San Diego History* will provide a window into the world of civil engineering for those who peruse its pages. This edition is the second of its kind, being the sequel to an earlier edition published in Winter 2002 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). At that time the local San Diego Chapter of ASCE partnered with the San Diego Historical Society to publish a series of articles under the title “A Legacy of Civil Engineering.” In his Director’s Statement, Robert Witty, Executive Director of the Society in 2002 lamented that no article on the bridges of San Diego was included. Now the ASCE San Diego Section has finally fulfilled Mr. Witty’s wish by featuring the bridges of San Diego in this edition.

Although many people may not understand all of the work done by civil engineers, it is my hope that the readers of this edition of the *Journal* will gain a greater understanding and appreciation for the role that they play in shaping our world and improving our quality of life. The reader will also discover a wealth of



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historical information about the impact of civil engineers on our local systems of transportation, our local water supply, and the developments where we find places to live our lives. Civil engineers of San Diego have been striving for excellence for more than 100 years, and will continue to do so for many years in the future.

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) is a professional membership organization representing more than 150,000 civil engineers nationally and internationally. It began when twelve founding members met at the Croton Aqueduct in New York City on November 5, 1852, and agreed to incorporate as the American Society of Civil Engineers and Architects. ASCE is now the worldwide leader for excellence in civil engineering, which is the goal of the civil engineers in San Diego. ASCE's mission is to "provide essential value to our members and partners, advance civil engineering, and serve the public good."

The San Diego Section of ASCE was formed in 1915 when Edwin M. Capps, a civil engineer, was serving his second term as mayor of the City of San Diego. Mr. George Butler was the first president of the ASCE San Diego Section, and although Mayor Capps never served as ASCE President, he played an important role in the founding of this organization. I am honored to have served the organization and the public during my term as President of the ASCE San Diego Section in 2013, and I hope you will find this edition of the *Journal* enlightening.

In 2015 the San Diego Section of ASCE celebrated its Centennial Anniversary along with one of San Diego's iconic bridges, the Cabrillo Bridge, which carries Laurel Street into Balboa Park. These 100th Anniversaries happened to coincide with the 100th birthday of one of the civil engineers who played an important role in the development of San Diego's transportation system, Jacob Dekema, who served as the Director of Caltrans District 11 from 1955 to 1980, and who was affectionately known locally as the father of San Diego's freeway system. Mr. Dekema also served as the President of the ASCE San Diego Section in 1974. A portion of Interstate 805 is named in his honor. This special edition of the *Journal* includes more about these two centenarians—the Cabrillo Bridge and Jacob Dekema—and other accomplishments of civil engineers throughout the history of San Diego.

The purpose of this special edition of the *The Journal of San Diego History* is threefold:

1. To commemorate the Centennial Anniversary of the San Diego Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers, and
2. To inform the public about the important leadership role of civil engineers in the planning, design, construction, maintenance, and operation of infrastructure

necessary for providing public health and safety and improving the quality of life in our community throughout our history.

3. To encourage young people to consider a future career in civil engineering.

It is my hope that these goals will be accomplished.

Civil engineers are always looking for challenges that they can overcome, and this special edition of the *Journal* was quite a challenge. I would like to acknowledge and thank the following for their support in this effort, without which this project would not have been possible:

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