



People and Places (SPIE's 50th Year)

When I think of my involvement with our Society, I find that most of my recollections are tied to my colleagues in SPIE and the places we have visited. I don't remember the first SPIE conference I attended. Starting as a graduate student I attended the American Physical Society meetings in New York, where I stayed at the YMCA. Later as my interest shifted from physics to optics, I attended Optical Society of America meetings in Washington and a number of other venues. In 1983 I joined SPIE. My membership certificate was signed by Warren Smith, who was SPIE president at the time. I don't remember most of the early conferences beyond staying at the cheaper motels around Hotel Circle in San Diego and the meeting that took place just after the Northridge earthquake in 1994.

But I remember quite vividly being introduced to Joe Yaver. We were at the Town and Country Hotel in San Diego and someone took me over to a table in the shade of an umbrella by the pool. It was there I met Joe, looking a bit like an Italian "godfather" but welcoming me more like a long lost uncle. Joe asked my opinion about some issues, told me how terrible things might become, and asked me to help in a current effort he was pursuing. Just like that, I had been "enlisted" into SPIE.

Later in my SPIE life, the locations that became familiar were the hotel meeting rooms where SPIE committees meet to do the business of the Society. There, in addition to some very savvy SPIE staff members, assembled a variety of interesting and skilled scientists and engineers, who were willing to keep this amazing information machine, called SPIE, going.

Photonics West always amazes me. With its numerous conferences and the exhibition spilling across the street, it still seems a bit of a miracle that this all comes together in the space of days, providing formal presentations of new work in optical engineering in the conference rooms and informal discussions in the hallways. I bump into col-

leagues and my former students. I get ideas for Special Sections of *Optical Engineering*, and I meet researchers who let me put a face with a name on a paper. They are, on the whole, generous and gracious members of our profession.

Then, when SPIE members elected me to the SPIE leadership chain, I took my first trip to SPIE headquarters in Bellingham. My initial impression of the place was confusion. It took time to orient myself to this oddly designed building with multiple wings and levels. Once I could find the cleverly hidden Journals department on my own, I finally felt at home. Now, after that visit, I enter the lobby with a sense of anticipation because I know I will be working with a group of intelligent, interesting, and congenial people. I find the enthusiasm there invigorating. Their dedication to organizing conferences on the latest topics, for capturing the information at those conferences, and for providing the broadest distribution of the results is impressive.

Beyond those I meet at Photonics West and the Annual Meeting, I have regular contact with my collaborators in the SPIE Journals department. And although I have met many of the Associate Editors, who administer the review of papers for *Optical Engineering* and decide which manuscripts we will accept or decline, there are a few who are familiar only through our exchange of e-mails concerning our problem papers and procedures. The members of the Board of Editors of the journal and the staff that keeps us current represent the dedication to service and supporters of excellence that, for me, are hallmarks of our Society. It was serendipity, a fortunate happenstance, that those early photogrameters met in LA to establish SPIE. Little did they know how wide their Society could or would reach in fifty years.

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Editor