

Reflections
2009 CSI West Region Conference
Berkeley, California

The CSI East Bay chapter put on a memorable West Region conference from Thursday, September 24 thru Saturday, September 26. The hard work that went into the planning and executing this successful event was clearly evident. Our kudos goes out to the organizers, sponsors and gracious hosts of this event!



Located at the scenic Berkeley Marina across the bay from San Francisco, the Double Tree Hotel was a great venue for this annual event. The setting was perfect for the conference agenda which included training sessions, seminars, business meetings and social events.

The conference was kicked off on Thursday afternoon with an informative Leadership Training session that touched on the fiduciary responsibilities, financial management and best practices for non-profit organizations like CSI. President-elect Wayne Parsons, past- treasurer Theresa Ae'a and I attended this workshop. The training and information shared by attorney and CSI member Brian Varner and by a certified public accountant specializing in non-profit organizations, were well worth the time. This is an excellent session that CSI offers to its officers and I strongly encourage all of our board members to attend this valuable training opportunity in the future. This is also a great opportunity to meet officers from other chapters to share knowledge and to network.

Each day the educational program featured seminars on relevant topics such as Sustainable Design, BIM and doing business in this economy. Some of the tech talk topics in the sustainability track included updates on PV technology, pervious concrete, alternative energy sources for buildings, award winning green buildings, and California's high speed rail system.



Keynote speakers touched on provocative topics dealing with the state of the global and local economies, career changes and visionary development. Economist Tapan Munroe, PhD, spoke about our changing economy and how going thru the current tough times will be good for us in the long run. He talked about how times like these tend to spawn innovations which spur recovery and renewed prosperity. He believes that innovation is the only way for us to sustain our prosperity.

Marty Lurie, a criminal defense attorney turned sportscaster, spoke about his drastic career change and the positive effect it's had on his life. His encouraging message was about following our passion and about how hard work and diligence in any field will provide valuable transferrable skills and habits to any other field.

Phil Tagami, a successful developer in the Bay Area with Hawaii ties, is an energetic, self-made business man. He is an example of a developer who is very knowledgeable about the construction process and gets intimately involved in his projects. From his background of community service, he advocates financially sound, socially responsible and sustainable developments that benefit and address the needs of the community. Examples of his projects motivated by such lofty goals include developments in downtown Oakland. Another visionary proposal with a partner company is to redevelop a major portion of the industrial area. This project that will transform the port of Oakland into a major West Coast shipping hub that will have better integration of efficient rail transportation than the port of Los Angeles.



Fox Theatre a project of Phil Tagami's

And of course, a West Region conference also includes fun, social extra-curricula activities. Picture postcard conditions and spectacular views of the city skyline was the perfect setting for an unforgettable dinner cruise in San Francisco Bay and under the new Bay Bridge on Friday evening. Still under construction, the structure is the world's largest self-anchored suspension span bridge and the largest public works project in California history. The cruise also took us by the brightly lit and crowded AT&T Field, where a Giants and Cubs baseball game was in progress!



Saturday afternoon's Chapter Challenge kite building and flying contest at the nearby waterfront park was a fun break from the seminar schedule. Kites were judged on aesthetics, how high they flew and how long they stayed in flight. Although the Honolulu Chapter's entry was the largest and one of the best looking (in our opinion), it was part of a group of kites that didn't get too far off the ground. Anyway, the effort was a lot of fun for all the chapters and our team included Gilman Hu, Wayne, Theresa and me!



In CSI tradition, the conference was capped off with Saturday evening's gala dinner and awards banquet. It was good to see deserving members be recognized for their selfless efforts during the past year. It was a fitting and fun way to wrap up this year's memorable West Region conference. I'm already looking forward to next year's conference in beautiful Yosemite which will be hosted by the Fresno Chapter. Hope to see you there!



Rodney, Gilman, Ruth, Theresa, Wayne & Stephen

Aloha,
Rodney Lee, AIA, CSI, CCCA, LEED AP