

# The Motley View

## .....a melange of irregular comments on professional life



by Dr. Edmund Medley, PE, CEG (MS 1991, PhD, 1994)

It is with pleasure and amusement that I accepted an invitation to write a short opinion piece for the Berkeley GeoEngineer Newsletter, although I am not so amused right now because I must meet the deadline.

Since I get to write the first article, I get to name the column: The Motley View. The word "motley" is appropriate for several reasons: "motley" means an assemblage of various fabrics and colors, as used by Jacques, a character in Act II, Scene VI of Shakespeare's "As You Like It": "... I met a fool i' the forest, a motley fool...". Motley thus describes a clown, a harlequin, a tricky buffoon dressed in the patchwork garb of the Court Jester.

"Motley" could also describe the complexity of geoenvironmental engineering, which encompasses geotechnical engineering, geological engineering, engineering geophysics, geoenvironmental engineering and many other geo-whatevers. (Note to myself: we need some guidance on when and where we stick the prefix "geo")

Motley also describes the heterogeneous appearance of chaotic melanges, fault rocks, weathered rocks and other complex geological mixtures: such messes are my professional specialty (for more see <http://bimrocks.geoengineer.org/>). And, my professional career is a motley patchwork of experiences gained during over 35 years of mineral exploration prospecting, geological engineering, geotechnical engineering, and world travel. The current patch in my motley career is as a Senior Consultant with Geosyntec Consultants, in Oakland, California.

So: Medley (mixture) is not a bad name for someone writing a Motley column, is it?? My hope is that this neighborhood of the newsletter will periodically present opinions, advice, and harangues with professional and practitioner hues. Many of you also have a rich quilt of experiences from which to write articles useful to alumni just starting their own wanderings. Please contribute them!! Contact me at [emedley@geosyntec.com](mailto:emedley@geosyntec.com).

## The Motley View: The Vitality of Good Contacts

My career evolved because of my vital network of contacts: by "vital" I mean both life-sustaining and necessary. Over the 40-year random walk of my adult life, the suggestions, encouragements, ideas, insults, challenges, job leads and personal introductions from other people nudged me bit-by-bit from my first full-time job in 1966 (as a clerk for a UK food company) to my current position. That is what a "contact" is: someone who can prompt movement in our way of thinking or our careers.

Because of the vital importance of contacts in my career, I am happy to share with younger alumni some thoughts on the importance of making and sharing contacts in professional life. Those of you who are more experienced will have your own, perhaps very different opinions: share them with your younger colleagues or post them on the Berkeley GeoEngineer Alumni Website!

Record Your Contacts in a Database. Stacks of business cards are intimidating to search! Use Outlook, or some other digital contact database, and enter the personal details of people who call and email you, or gather them from the business cards of people you meet. Scribble where and under what circumstances you talked to them, and other particulars, such as details you glean from the Web. Sometimes your contacts may be useful to someone else in your network, so share!

Contacts Abound. There are many resources available to you to make contacts.

You now have a great resource in the Berkeley Geoengineering Alumni Association. At work, your boss may be the closest resource, but still seek out the most outgoing members of your firm. You meet other people all the time - clients, structural engineers, geologists, plumbers, real estate agents. On occasion I have provided the names of a couple of real estate agents to colleagues and clients (including one remarkably adventurous realtor friend who is a geotechnical engineer, with a PhD in Geotechnical Engineering from Berkeley).



### **Making Good Contacts is Vital in GeoEngineering**

Network in Your Office. The simplest network is the one you weave at work. Your colleagues are your most intimate contacts. Do you know all the names of the people in your office? What do you know about them? Do you ever discuss their projects with them? Are they structural engineers or environmental geologists, disinterested in geotech? Try interesting them by making a geotechnical connection for them. To do that you first must be interested in what they do.

Contact unto others as you would have them make contacts for you. Be a Golden Rule Contact: share your ideas when you see an opportunity that you cannot take advantage of, but other people may. Giving contacts ideas is akin to giving Lego to kids and then watching them build something with the pieces, even if you don't get to play. Golden Rule Contacts are rare: few people will send unsolicited ideas, contacts and thoughts. Value those contacts immensely and try now and again to send them ideas in return.

Be a Knowledge Node. A network is a mesh of interconnected lines, with the cross-overs being nodes (people), some of whom are more vital than others. Strive to be one of those vital nodes, a Knowledge Node, a person that other people come to with questions, or for advice, contacts and ideas. And if you cannot answer a question, maybe you know another Knowledge Node in your network that can.

What Goes Around Comes Around (Sometimes as a new project or a new job).

Sometimes the rewards of networking are indeed circular: the path to my current job started with a lunch conversation with an attorney client who also worked with Geosyntec. In earlier times I had made introductions between him and other attorneys looking to change their positions. At other times there is no apparent direct reward for chattering with people. For instance: I have had scores of phone calls over the years from people looking for jobs. I willingly give advice and connections to them even if I cannot hire them, because I enjoy talking to strangers. But I am also repaying all the help I have had myself in my career from many contacts. Yet, every now and again, I may get a referral or kind words from someone I once helped.

You may think that networking, and making contacts is “socializing” and has little to do with geoen지니어ing. But geoen지니어ing practice depends on a heritage of shared experiences, whether through reports, papers, lectures, videos, brown bag lunch seminars or Friday afternoon “attitude adjustment sessions”. So, increasing your network of contacts may benefit you even more when you hear tales of their geoen지니어ing triumphs and follies.

Thanks to the Berkeley GeoEngineering Alumni web site and newsletter, I look forward to catching up on recent history with old Berkeley friends, and weaving new names into my network. Let’s connect!

Regards

Ed Medley

Biography: Dr. Ed Medley is a Senior Consultant in the Oakland, California office of Geosyntec Consultants, Inc. With about 30 years experience as a geological engineer, he specializes in the investigation of geo-failure, and the geotechnical and geological characterization of bimrocks (block-in-matrix rocks) such as fault rocks, weathered rocks and melanges ([www.bimrocks.geoengineer.org](http://www.bimrocks.geoengineer.org)). Contact Dr. Medley at [emedley@geosyntec.com](mailto:emedley@geosyntec.com) or by phone: (510) 836-3034 ext. 222

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ARTICLES FOR THE BERKELEY  
GEOENGINEERING ALUMNI ASSOCIATION  
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# 2005 Publications of Students and Faculty

## Geotechnical Earthquake Engineering

Vera Grunauer, X., Benitez S., Alvarez, V., Tandazo, E., Ramirez, J., Vera Grunauer, J., (2005) "Estudio del comportamiento dinámico del subsuelo y zonificación sísmica de la ciudad de Guayaquil" reporte UCSG- IIFIUC, tres tomos (Fase I y II : estudio geológico, peligro sísmico y geotécnico) Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil y M.I. Municipio de la Ciudad de Guayaquil, December 2005

Perri, J.F., Bea, R.G. and Pestana, J.M. (2005). "The Short-Time-Response-Spectrum," UCB/ GeoEngineering Report, University of California, Berkeley.

Perri, J.F., Pestana, J.M. and Bea, R.G. (2006). "Applications of the Short-Time-Response-Spectrum," Conference Commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the 1906 Earthquake, San Francisco, California.

## Geophysics/Hydrogeology

Silin, D.B., Holtzman, R., Patzek, T.W. and Brink, J. L., (2005) "Monitoring Waterflood Operations: Hall's Method Revisited". SPE Paper Number 93879, SPE Western Regional Meeting, Irvine, CA, U.S.A., 30 March – 1 April 2005.

Silin, D.B., Holtzman, R., Patzek, T.W. and Brink, J. L., (2005) "Waterflood Surveillance and Control: Incorporating Hall Plot and Slope Analysis". SPE Paper Number 95685, submitted for presentation at the 2005 SPE Annual Technical Conference and Exhibition held in Dallas, Texas, U.S.A., 9 – 12 October 2005.

## Geoenvironmental Engineering

Zekkos, D. P., Bray, J. D., Kavazanjian, E., Matasovic, N., Rathje, E., Riemer, M., Stokoe, K. H. II, "Framework for the estimation of MSW unit weight profile," Proceedings Sardinia 2005, Tenth International Waste Management and Landfill Symposium, S. Margherita di Pula, Cagliari, Italy; 3 - 7 October 2005.

Zekkos, D. P., Bray, J. D., Riemer, M. F. (2006), "Shear modulus reduction and material damping relationships for Municipal Solid-Waste", Proceedings of the 8th U.S. National Conference on Earthquake Engineering, April 18-22, 2006, San Francisco, California, USA, Paper No. 1324 (in proceedings cd-rom).

## General

Perri, J.F. (2005). "The Observational Method and the Human and Organizational Factors in the Failure of a Retaining Wall," Official delegate for Venezuela in the 3rd International Young Geotechnical Engineer Conference. Osaka, Japan.

Zekkos, D., Manousakis, J., Athanasopoulos, A. (2005), "Geotechnical engineering practice in the Mycenaean Civilization (1600-1100 BC)", 2nd International Conference "Ancient Greek Technology, 17-21 October 2005, Athens, Greece.

All Alumni are invited to submit the reference of their publications for inclusion in our newsletter.