



## The Wise Men

In early November 1967 President Lyndon Johnson brought together a group of respected individuals in order to seek counsel regarding the Vietnam War. Statesmen such as Dean Acheson and Averill Harriman along with military figures such as General Maxwell Taylor and General Omar Bradley attended. Joining them was Justice Abe Fortas as well as a few others who met to render their considered opinion on the direction the Administration should take regarding the increasingly troubling Asian conflict. This gathering, similar to others before it, became quite significant and came to be known as the meeting of the Wise Men.

Every year the CSEG President is asked to seek counsel from his circle of Wise Men. It is a gathering of all the Past Presidents of our society. In our case the gathering is not restricted to the male gender. Fortunately we have the benefit of the fairer sex as well. This past November along with the current Past President Oliver Kuhn and Vice President Francois Aubin we met for two sessions. The first meeting invites the 10 most recent Presidents to provide their advice on any compelling issues that confront the society. The meeting is chaired by the current Past President. While the current Executive is not compelled to follow any specific advice their collective opinion is such that it should not be dismissed. They provide a much needed voice of experience for the society. At the conclusion of this session, referred to as the Presidents' Advisory Committee (PAC), a luncheon is provided and open to all past Presidents. As of 2007 we have 58 individuals in that category. Due to the passing of time, as one would expect, their numbers have been reduced and some are no longer with us.

After the lunch the President and Vice President deliver a "state of the union" – like address to those in attendance. The past year was very generous to our society in terms of membership totals as well as the important financial category. As to compelling issues only two were brought forward:

- 1) *Should the CSEG continue to elect its Directors? and*
- 2) *Should the CSEG look at ways of increasing the attendance at our monthly technical meetings?*

Along with these issues Vice President Francois Aubin presented the three Initiatives the Society is currently involved with:

- 1) *The undertaking of a 2007 Membership survey;*
- 2) *Plans for the upcoming January 2008 Brainstorming session; and*
- 3) *Participation at the SEG's 2008 General Assembly in Tulsa.*

Advice was liberally dispensed and appreciated by both Francois and myself. Their comments will be shared with the current Executive and used as input at the Brainstorming session in January 2008. In total the two sessions took close to 3 hours. Why would we spend 3 hours discussing what appears on the surface to be a very healthy situation?

After completing an intensive one hour question and answer session I mentioned that I was pleased to be presenting with all the Society in such good health. I would hate to present with anything less positive than our current state. Yet overall it was a enjoyable and interesting experience. It needs to be recognized that it is much easier to change direction in good times rather than when the situation is deteriorating. When you have the advantage of viewing the situation from a distance, as Past Presidents do, subtle indicators may become more apparent. It is from this vantage point that the Past Presidents weigh in with their comments and advice. Considering their accumulated contributions to our Industry it would be folly to ignore what they have to say.

As to direction, the intention is to stay the course regarding an elected Executive. The work undertaken by Bill Nickerson and his committee has been excellent and the 2007 Technical Luncheon program was top notch. We need to continue to make our Luncheons something that is pencilled in on all members calender. Both issues will be revisited at the Brainstorming retreat.

We need to return to those other Wise Men who had met in that early November meeting. They delivered to President Johnson the advice to "stay the course." As history records just shy of five months later the same group met again, albeit with the inclusion of some additional "wise men." While not unanimous, their reconsidered opinion was now that the President should disengage. I suppose the moral being that even wise men reserve the right to change their minds in less than a half a year.

Our wise men and women, while available, will most likely not meet again for another year. I would submit that on a personal level I merely ask for my wife's opinion and follow it to the letter. She has informed me that she has never been wrong and even if she was, I am not about to tell her! *R*

*Doug Bogstie  
President*