Letters

Precast Studios helpful to students, industry

For its first PCI Foundation precast/prestressed studio at the University of Southern California, my partner, Karen Kensek, and I developed a comprehensive studio for fourth-year undergraduates. We selected the extreme climate of the Southern California inland desert and a nonprofit client in the National Park Service. Students examined precast concrete from many viewpoints: the use of precast concrete as a high-mass thermal material, manufacturing and transportation, specialized formwork and materials, and structural and architectural concrete. Students were asked to physically cast models and to reuse formwork.

A component of our research was supported by the PCI Foundation. The students explored the use of precast/prestressed concrete as a prefabricated structure and envelope material. The selection of Joshua Tree National Park as the site for our work was partially based on the inherent advantages of precast/prestressed concrete in a distant environment and in a climate with pronounced diurnal temperature oscillations.

Our other studio sponsors were Clark-Pacific and PCI West. The people in these organizations have been especially supportive, and we look forward to presenting them with our final projects in our book. We will be very proud to show the students' work at the PCI Convention this fall.

The studio group this semester was an especially wonderful group to work with. We were eager to attend the studio each day, and we could tell that all of the students were enjoying the studio as well. The studio was filled with enthusiasm. We are sure that none of the students had ever had a studio in which they held a detailed discussion of the sizes, configurations, and weights of precast concrete elements and how they could be cast, transported, and erected. We believe that the emphasis on precast concrete helped aim the projects and allow us to gain a deeper understanding of materials and assembly. We are certain that precast concrete perfectly matched the climate and construction conditions and the occupancy/building types we had for the Joshua Tree project.

The studio visits from PCI representatives, engineers, and architects helped ground the work in realism while maintaining powerful designs. The special Precast Concrete Conference at the University of Southern California in February helped us see some leading-edge work. The pairing with professional offices was very successful, and the site visits to precasters and Joshua Tree National Park helped make our studio a truly special experience.

It was clear that everyone obtained a deep understanding of precast concrete materials and methods, from precast concrete structural systems to enclosures and hollow-core panels. We had some inspired experimentation with precast/pretensioned/posttensioned concrete elements, and we pushed the envelope of the possible uses of precast concrete.

We want to thank all of the students and PCI supporters for all of their hard work in this studio and for making this an extraordinary experience for us. We have been students or

faculty members in more than 50 studios, and the PCI Joshua Tree studio has been the best studio experience ever. We sincerely thank everyone involved.

Karen M. Kensek
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Los Angeles, Calif.

Douglas Noble, FAIA, PhD
Discipline Head for Building Science, Associate Professor, School of Architecture, University of Southern California
Los Angeles, Calif.

Accelerated bridge construction a good read

Thank you for the complimentary copies of *PCI Journal*. Great job with the article, "Accelerated Construction of a Bridge in Rural Texas," by Michael Hyzak, Benjamin Tang, and Rachel J. Detwiler, *PCI Journal*, Spring 2013, pp. 32–36. I enjoyed reading this issue; it has and will continue to have a special place in my heart. I appreciate your leadership and publishing expertise in making this special issue for me.

Benjamin Tang
Bridge preservation manager, Oregon Department of Transportation
Salem, Ore.

Corley obituary appreciated

Thank you very much for your beautifully written tribute to my classmate, Gene Corley. I knew Gene for well over 50 years. We had some very good times together. I will miss him. Thank you for your thoughtfulness. I love the new and improved version of *PCI Journal*. Keep up the good work.

Robert N. Bruce
Boh Chair Emeritus in Civil Engineering, Tulane University
New Orleans, La.

Comments?

The editors welcome comments on the contents of this issue and on general matters related to the precast/prestressed concrete industry. Letters should include the writer's name, title, company, city, and email address or phone number. All letters become the property of *PCI Journal* and may be edited for space, clarity, and style. Letters are limited to 250 words and are published at the discretion of the editorial staff. The opinions expressed are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of PCI.

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