

## **ASK AROUND**

by Ralph Liebing, RA, CSI  
Cincinnati, OH

Ask around, you'll be surprised at what you find out and what you hear (especially if you listen)!

In this age of communications, and gadgetry that seems to hold the whole of intelligence in a "cell", we talk a lot more--or at least it seems that way.

Hope you're not reading this driving your car, but for a moment, at a stoplight, look around and see how many people are talking "to their hands". How have we come to the NEED to talk constantly, when we really have so little of importance to say? What is so vastly important that it cannot wait 20 minutes until you get home to call and tell your friend of the sales at the store?

Oh, never, mind, there is no chance to change that growing mentality when everyday some new gadget appears, with some new and revolutionary attribute. There may be a growing need for the Good Lord to provide new-borns with pointier fingers, so they can push those itty-bitty buttons!

No, we're talking about that old-fashioned communication style--face to face! (Heard of the office that has a policy, in writing, that you cannot e-mail any one who sits within 15 feet of your cube-- you must get up and walk to them and talk verbally, not electronically!)

Asking around for those of more experience, and those of "vintage" backgrounds will provide a real education. Ask the CAD folks [never have come up with a good, expressive title for them—they are NOT designers, architects or engineers, on the whole] about their background, education and knowledge of construction. Now you are all in an office producing architectural/engineering projects, so wouldn't you think that those working not the project drawings should have a good, fairly in-depth knowledge of construction? Like, maybe, courses, in materials, methods, system, installation work, application, detailing, etc.? How about understanding the intent and content of the drawings they are producing?

How about a colored legend to explain what all those red, yellow and blue lines on a CAD display mean? How about line weight, line type, drafting expression, etc. instead of simply "recording" information in a spaghetti strewn array of same-width lines?

Well you might even broach the topic of "footings" in lieu of "footers"!

There has been a regression of sorts, even if we chose not to recognize it. Are your Leads back to doing hand-sketches of details, and then giving them over to the CAD folks for the line-straightening they do? Is your CAD to the level that even if they are short of construction knowledge, they know enough to ask good questions? Or even propose a solution, be it valid or not? Or do they use reference information at will, or only when directed as to church, pew, book, chapter and verse?

Ask around. Guaranteed you'll get really strange looks and reactions. You will be age-challenged and categorized as an old f \_ \_ \_ , but then, think of this--when your head full of construction knowledge is no long available, who will provide it [and remember each succeeding generation brings less and less forward at the rate we're going]?

Ask around. Even if all the gadgets can come to contain all of the pertinent information, some one still has to turn them on!! Might be well to know at least which button to push to do that!