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GEC – Panama

By Nick Golon

Dateline – Panama City, Panama (*ciudad de Panamá*).

Located at the Pacific entrance of the Panama Canal, Panama City played host to the 2014 ASCE Global Engineering Conference (GEC) in what turned out to be a most memorable experience for this engineer. Given the chance to attend this event on behalf of the NH-ASCE and equally important as a representative for our Country, was an opportunity I could not resist and most gratefully accepted!

With an abundance of culture, history, and not to mention nightlife (try Casco Viejo, Panama if you are looking to accomplish all three in one day) this political and administrative center of the country did not disappoint. Celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Panama Canal and the soon to be opening new third lock of the canal was the focal point of the event and the knowledge and pride the country shown in these endeavors was evident from the moment you stepped off the plane.

Program highlights of the GEC included topics such as Giga projects with the focus on the construction, financial, political, and engineering aspects. When not hearing from industry leaders on this and various other topics attendees were treated to the chance to mix and mingle with a melting pot of peers that one would not typically meet in a lifetime, never mind within the 5 day span the conference covered.



Personally, nothing topped the combination guided tour of the Panama Canal as we watched a gigantic ship pass through the locks, and were then whisked away to pay homage to the active construction site that will become home to the new third lock. Having worked on job sites such as the Big Dig in Boston would have seemingly prepared me to pay witness to such an undertaking but it was truly awe inspiring to witness such an engineering marvel in creation.

The GEC program, which was a partnership between ASCE and Engineers Without Borders (EWB-USA), closed in exciting fashion with a less than traditional presentation by Grant

Imahara, Engineer on Discovery's "Mythbusters", as he treated us to his thoughts on the evolution of the engineer as well as a multitude of explosions, typical to his famous show.

I offer my many thanks to the friends from near and far I made while in Panama (not to mention my family and work that did without me for a week) who helped make the 2014 ASCE Global Engineering Conference such a memorable event. I hope to see you all again soon as we as Civil Engineers accept the challenge of our ever-changing world to maintain and adapt the infrastructure that our society depends on every day.

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