

OUTGOING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Ravinder Chona, SEM President



Ravinder Chona
SEM President
1997-1998

Fellow SEM Members,

It seems like just a short time ago that I was working on the first President's Message of my tenure and here we are at my sixth and last one (your cue for a huge sigh of relief). Seriously though, has it been challenging, enjoyable, and worthwhile serving as President of SEM? Yes, yes, and yes!

Our Society is blessed with a dedicated, professional, and hard-working staff. If this past year is any guide, combining this asset with a membership that includes people of diverse and technically very-rich backgrounds provides all the necessary ingredients for more and greater successes in the years ahead. Some of the important positive outcomes that have resulted from a vibrant staff-membership interaction during this past year include: a major re-vamp of both content and format for *Experimental Techniques*; the maturing and refinement of the thematic track concept for our Annual Spring Conference; the quantum improvements in our website; the re-focus on our technical activity areas as the core of our society; and one of the best IMAC conferences ever. For those of you who contributed in so many ways, large and small, and helped make all this happen, my sincere thanks.

Should we be content with our successes and roll over and hibernate for the next few years? Most definitely not! As with any field of endeavor, our profession and our organization both face many challenges that must be addressed during the coming years. For example, I believe that the area of electronic publishing will be one of the biggest issues that will have to be addressed, since it impacts key elements of what we, as a society, provide to our membership. How relevant will print media remain in the future as a vehicle for sharing technical information? What will this mean for *Experimental Mechanics* and our other publishing ventures? How will the distribution of technical information at conferences alter? Will we see a return to more full-length, proceedings-type documents, but on a CD-ROM instead of in print, or will we see even more abbreviated, abstract-type, formal documents with extensive references to websites and home pages for the details? On a related note, what material should be accessible to our members through the society's website and how do we monitor (or should we monitor?) the content of websites that we link to? Don't forget that SEM is not some shadowy, amorphous, and mysterious entity; it is a group of people like yourselves that are drawn together, primarily, by a desire for technical fellowship and a chance to exchange ideas and share thoughts. As such, the society's primary objective must always be to meet the needs of the membership and these needs can only be identified and addressed if you are proactive in voicing your thoughts and also take the time to respond to surveys and other requests for your input. Please make sure that you keep these links and channels open and keep those ideas flowing back and forth so that we can build on the momentum that we have acquired.

Before I was charged with this responsibility, I had very little idea of what being an officer in a technical society meant. For those of you that are inclined towards shouldering organizational responsibilities, let me close by giving you my perspective. The Presidency of SEM is formally a one-year responsibility, but is really a five-year commitment (Vice-President, President-elect, President, Immediate-Past-President, Past-President) during which one has the opportunity to develop goals and identify thrust areas, start implementing them, and then see them through to completion. The key to making all of this work is continuity of focus and consistent movement towards well-thought-out, long-term objectives. In this regard, I am particularly appreciative of the opportunities provided to me by my immediate predecessors, Dixon Dudderar, Mark Tuttle, and Beth Fuchs, to formulate and begin implementation of some of my personal goals during their respective terms of office. I am equally appreciative of the support and cooperation that my immediate successors, Charlie Harris and Igor Emri have already displayed in helping make things happen during this past year and in carrying things forward to the next stage.

Did all the goals I spelled out a year ago get fulfilled? Yes, to varying degrees. Which was the most important of them all? Undoubtedly the one about making sure that the society survived my year at its helm! Since that has been achieved in full measure, I can happily move on to become a Past-President (a.k.a. "Has-Been"). My sincere thanks to all of you for making this possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RChona', with a horizontal line underneath it.