

SEAOI Young Engineer Spotlight

This month's Young Engineer is from our very own Chicagoland. Having grown up in Mount Prospect, our young engineer obtained both his Bachelor of Science and Master of Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. After graduation he accepted a job at Nooter Ericksen in St. Louis where he collaborated with structural, mechanical, and process engineers to design components and supports of Heat Recovery Steam Generators for industrial use. One project that really stuck out to him was the design of support towers for a large outlet duct. An issue with procurement led to lesser strength materials than that used in the original design. In addition, an over reliance on computers led to a false sense of assuredness over the design. When it came time to design



the connections months later, he realized he had support towers designed with all slender elements. The additional overlooked local limit states ultimately led to a challenging product to complete, and a career-long learning experience. He is currently a Project Engineer at SP Consulting Engineers back in Sweet Home Chicago where he works on a variety of projects such as multi-family residential structures, and just recently, conducting façade inspections of existing buildings. Investigating buildings on swing stages has spurred an interest in forensics engineering. Our young engineer feels fortunate to have had great mentors and lives by a philosophy that pushes him to view all challenges as an opportunity to grow. He applies this ownership mentality to all aspects of his life, and will no doubt continue to reap success throughout his career. It was great getting to know him a little better and I'm sure you will enjoy it too, please welcome to the YEC Spotlight David Petlicki!

Jonathan Tavarez (Interviewer): What profession other than your own would you like to attempt?

David Petlicki (Interviewee): Software Engineering

Tavarez: What profession would you not like to do?

Petlicki: Law

Tavarez: Why did you decide to choose engineering?

Petlicki: I had a natural affinity for math and science, and like all structural engineers, spent my childhood playing with Legos.

Tavarez: Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Petlicki: I'd like to get involved in AISC, perhaps teaching webinars / night school or working on code committees.

Tavarez: Are you involved in any other groups, within or outside of the engineering community?

Petlicki: Not yet, though there are a few I certainly have my eye on including AISC and the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. I've been waiting to wrap up studying for my SE exam before I take on more time commitments.

Tavarez: What has been the most gratifying moment, thus far, of your young career?

Petlicki: I was very encouraged by how much easier it was to find my second job than it was my first. This showed me how much I had grown in my career and confirmed that I had so much to offer society through structural engineering.

Tavarez: What is one piece of advice you would like to share with other Young Engineers?

Petlicki: Don't fall into the habit of only working on stuff you are comfortable with. Doing so risks becoming over specialized. There will be failures along the way but keep building and expanding your talent stack.

Tavarez: What is something fun you enjoy doing on the weekends?

Petlicki: Rock Climbing

Tavarez: What is your favorite thing about the city you live in?

Petlicki: The diverse types of neighborhoods. There is something for everything within a short bus or train ride away.

Tavarez: What is an interesting fact that people wouldn't presume about you?

Petlicki: I'm a really good salsa dancer.

Tavarez: That's so much fun! How did you get into salsa dancing?

Petlicki: I had a great instructor who taught me how to lead. Once you get the basics down and learn to take the lead and run with it, you can creatively thread together different moves.

Tavarez: What's your go-to karaoke song?

Petlicki: Pump Up the Jam by Technotronic

Tavarez: What is the best vacation you have ever taken?

Petlicki: I rented a cabin with about 15 other people for a week-long rock climbing trip. Some of them I knew, some of them I didn't. We climbed all day and got really rowdy at night. For our rest day, we went on a float trip.

Tavarez: What is your favorite book; TV show; and movie?

Petlicki: I recently read Snow Crash. It's an old cyberpunk novel that mixes religion, drugs, VR, and mimetics. Amazon just bought the rights to it, so I'm going to go ahead and preemptively list it as my favorite TV show also. Favorite Movie: Star Wars Revenge of the Sith.

Tavarez: If you could have dinner with anyone (real or fictitious, dead or alive) who would you choose and why?

Petlicki: Ben Franklin. He had the breadth to both dabble in almost every field, while also having the focus to shift the course of a nation. He was a jack of all trades while also being a master of some.

Tavarez: If given a choice to skip work for a day, how would you spend the entire day?

Petlicki: If this is Friday or Monday, plan an extended weekend vacation to go camping and climbing. If this is a random weekday, I'd run some errands, clean up my apartment, and just sort of catch up on life.

Tavarez: Thank you for dropping in and taking a turn in the YES hotseat!