

Walking Around Hollywood

Arthur T. Johnson

Appeared in volume 31, number 4 issue of the BMES Bulletin

Walking in the neighborhood of the Renaissance Hollywood Hotel where the 2007 BMES meeting was held brought a rush of thoughts about life and things in general. Here was an interesting mixture of sights and sounds not completely unexpected in a city as cosmopolitan as Los Angeles. The location immediately surrounding the Renaissance was glitzy and unreal, with Grauman's Chinese Theater, the Hollywood and Highland Center flashing bright lights, and faux-Hollywood happenings. This area could be described as exciting, unreal, glamorous, and glitzy. A block or two away in any direction, and the scenery changed drastically. There were houses and shops that could only be described as commonplace, ordinary, or even downright seedy. The Hollywood Walk of Fame, composed of stars embedded in the sidewalk dedicated to famous and accomplished personalities extended from the Renaissance area along Hollywood Boulevard farther than I was inclined to walk. Some stars seemed to shine in the sidewalk while others farther away seemed out of place in front of the cheap shops nearby.

On Franklin Street near the Renaissance was the Magic Castle Hotel that looked like a fairyland compared to its surroundings. Up Highland Avenue from the Renaissance was the Hollywood Bowl amphitheater that looked quite ordinary from the street but revealed an impressive entertainment complex farther up the hill.

This juxtaposition of the glamorous with the mundane was interesting. I could imagine Walt Disney saying to himself that if he could select all the glamorous edifices

and concentrate them in one location, excluding the run-down apartments and stores, then he could transport visitors from their ordinary worlds to a fairy land devoid of cares and troubles. And so, Disneyland could have been conceived.

Our biomedical engineering world is like that. We have the mundane, the ordinary, and the commonplace. We have hard work, unsolvable problems, and so many distractions. But we also have sublime moments when we realize that we have made progress, that what we are doing is important, and what we are doing is good. We have our teaching with so many tedious details, but we also have inspiring classes when we have just given performances so perfect that the endorphins flow like rivers through our heads.

We can dwell on the commonplace, on the tedious details, and on the ordinary. Or we can inspire and be inspired by those significant achievements in our careers and those of others. We can be guided by the highest aspirations and advancements. And, if we put them all together, we can create our own professional Disneyland of glowing achievements. That's the purpose, after all, of the BMES Annual Meeting.