

## For Deborah Berg, WTS-LA was a Presidential Primer

PRESIDENTS 30TH ANNIVERSARY SERIES



*Deborah Berg (Berg & Associates, Inc., founder and President), Photos © John Livzey, 2015*

Berg & Associates, Inc., founder and President Deborah Berg distills the virtues of being WTS-LA president in 2000 into its most important essence as she sees it.

"Networking. Meeting the decision makers and being among the first to meet new public sector appointees is something you don't really get to do in any other capacity. WTS Los Angeles receptions are frequently the first public event for new office holders in our industry. So they hold special meaning and provide a unique opportunity. This is where work is discussed. You hear about what is being planned way before that information is available anywhere else."

The Berg firm—now known as BergCM (Berg Construction Management)—was founded in 1980. BergCM provides complete project management, engineering, and inspection services to public works agencies. A registered disadvantaged business enterprise and woman-owned business enterprise, BergCM specializes in bridges, rail and grade separations, highways and interchanges, transit and infrastructure, street improvements, lighting and electrical, parks and land development, utility relocation and installation, storm water and water distribution pipelines and pump stations, associated buildings and structures. (Bottom left, the beautiful Wilmington Waterfront Park at the Port of Los Angeles, on which Berg served as project manager.) Berg credits her ability to build such a successful, multi-discipline business with lessons gained as WTS-LA president.



"Working together with highly esteemed colleagues was an honor, a privilege, and an education. Excellence takes many forms. And it was wonderful to be challenged to step up in that regard. I learned the importance of connecting with clients and colleagues, and remaining informed. On a more personal level, I learned that to be taken seriously as a businesswoman, I had to take myself seriously. I had to recognize the importance of expanding my knowledge base and be willing to share that knowledge by mentoring new leaders."

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And that is exactly what she did. For example, WTS Inland Empire's online history cites Berg's seminal contribution in providing guidance and support in the establishment of that chapter in 2005, along with Riverside County Transportation Commission Executive Director Eric Haley, San Bernardino Associated Governments Executive Director Norm King, and Caltrans District 8 Director Anne Mayer. But that was by no means her only focus.

Berg is particularly proud of having launched preparations for the chapter's successful hosting of the 2001 WTS annual conference in Long Beach. She also credits attending the WTS annual conference in New York as a highlight that provided her firm with national exposure. But Berg is also quick to acknowledge that she didn't achieve this success alone.

"My presidency was blessed with a really incredible board that was making changes that have since been adopted by WTS nationally. Our board and committees expanded our scholarship program and changed the way scholarships were awarded. Alexandra Spencer of AECOM and her team supported a robust communications and public relations campaign. We began our relationship with the newly created International Trade Education Program at Banning High School founded by Port of Los Angeles Harbor Commissioner Carol Rowen and LAUSD Administrator Emilie Gino, both WTS-LA board members. It was a great benefit to work side by side with public sector executives, many of whom were working members of our board, to promote the advancement of women in transportation.

"So much was happening both in terms of WTS development and the industry. It was an unusual and dynamic period. I'm proud that I was one of the early chapter presidents to invite senior men who could champion women's advancement to be on my board. I was very fortunate to be president at a magnificent period in WTS history, where we really took it up a notch, where WTS went from being a women's association to becoming an international leader in the transportation arena. It was a marvelous and exciting time!"