



President's Message

International System Safety Society President
Dr. Rodney Simmons

Forging a Future for System Safety

The Nominations Committee has established a very strong slate of candidates for the upcoming election for officers who will begin their terms on July 1, 2017. I sincerely thank the Society members who have come forward as candidates. Be sure to review their qualifications and goals included in this issue of *Journal of System Safety*, and then cast your ballot.

In my last couple of messages to the Society, I cited Andy Grove, former CEO of Intel, who, in his 1998 book, *Only the Paranoid Survive*, advanced the concept of the “strategic inflection point” (see figure), and then discussed its implications for our Society, both from the standpoint of influence and relevance. I think that the Society is making good progress in that regard.

Our Society has an important role to play as the go-to organization for learning how to effectively implement system safety engineering and management, regardless of the application. This is part of our “export” strategy, whereby we help other sectors to adopt the system safety approach. In mid-December 2016, I represented the Society as an invited speaker at a conference on NORM (naturally-occurring radioactive material) in Abu Dhabi, which focused on the upstream oil and gas industry. It is significant that many of our members are active outside of the traditional defense/aerospace sector, and they are doing great work to expand our influence in business, industry and academia.

We have members who are active in a variety of sectors — including healthcare, automotive and energy— in addition to our traditional defense base. During the past year, members of the Virtual Chapter, led by Charlie Hoes and Russ Mitchell, have been brainstorming regarding the ways that the Society might position

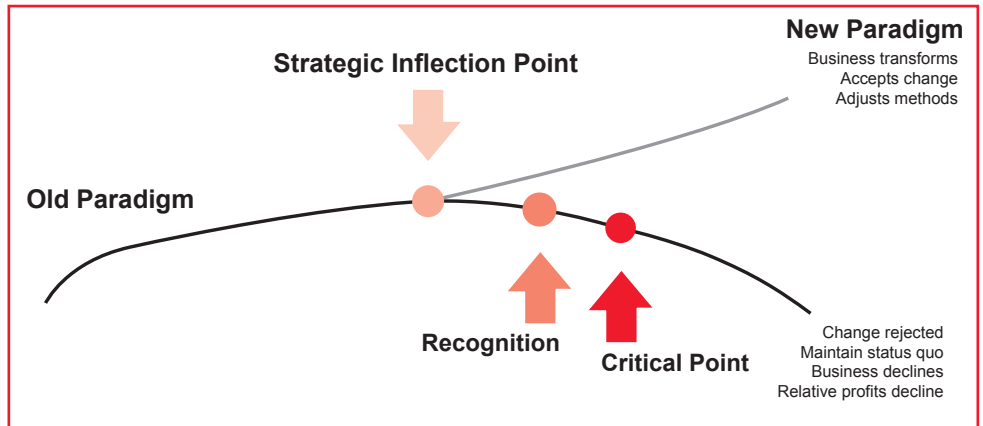


Figure 1 — Strategic Inflection Point (after A. Grove, 1998).

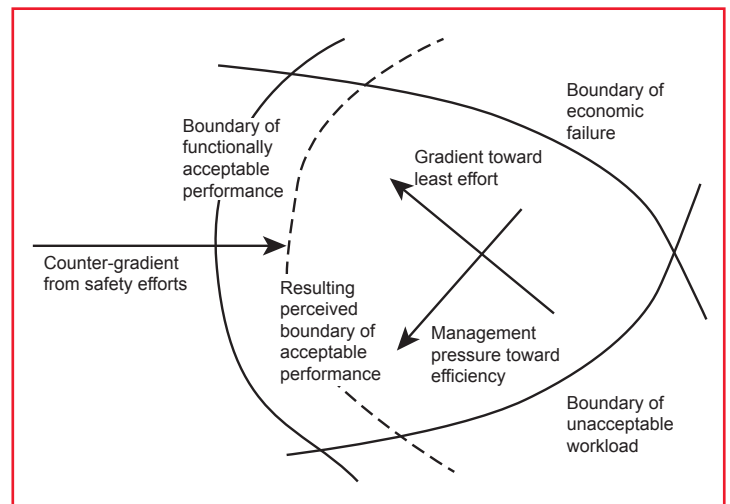


Figure 2 — A model of organizational action, bounded by three constraints: safety, workload and economics. (after J. Rasmussen, 1997, “Risk management in a dynamic society: A modeling problem,” *Safety Science*, 27(2/3), 183-213).

itself to influence adoption of system safety engineering concepts, not just by those in the mainstream system safety community, but more broadly by all engineers. In this issue of *JSS*, Charlie reveals what their group

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In Memoriam

Erskine Harton

Erskine Harton was a great man, and truly a key contributor to the International System Safety Society in general, and especially to the Washington DC Chapter. I will let others speak in detail to all of his professional accomplishments. My comments address him as one of the finest human beings I have had the privilege of knowing. I first met Erskine in the summer of 1975 when I moved to the Washington DC area to accept a position with the Naval Facilities Engineering Command. I was tasked with developing and implementing the first Facilities System Safety Program Plan. From our first meeting, Erskine was a kind, personal and positive individual who, along with many other senior Chapter professionals, reached out to welcome me warmly, both personally and professionally. Acting as a mentor and friend, he introduced me to many of the System Safety Society professionals locally and nationally, who he thought could help me address this challenge and provide wise advice, not only on the technical challenges, but perhaps more important, on the political, economic and organizational challenges. Erskine demonstrated this unselfish quality to always be willing to help others without any interest or expectation of personal gain.

Erskine always lit up a room wherever he was because of his smile and contagious sense of humor, which meant that he always had a new joke to greet you with and laughter would be your companion. During the next 20 years, I would serve with Erskine on many International System Safety Society committees and positions as a Chapter officer, as well as at the national level. During these years, the Society faced many challenges at both the local Chapter and at the national level. In facing these challenges, there were often different and oppos-

ing personal opinions among our officers and chapters, and Erskine was always a positive peacemaker. He managed the meetings and, whenever he sensed that perhaps tempers or issues were getting too heated, would bring us all back to earth by injecting his humor. He truly was a voice of reason and helped us craft the compromise positions that the International System Safety Society needed to move forward.

During this 20-plus year period, when I was most deeply involved in the ISSS, I cannot think of any time when Erskine did not put forward a positive and supportive position. He never had a negative comment about any person — even when they may have deserved it. He was a man of strong Christian faith who lived his life as a positive example. One cannot speak of Erskine without also mentioning his lovely wife, Nancy; together, they were even lovelier and they complemented each other. In social meetings, Nancy took in our spouses, making them feel welcome, especially when we sometimes drifted apart and forgot them while we engaged in discussing business. Erskine lived a good life, and each of us who had the pleasure and privilege to be with him and Nancy has been fortunate. We can look back with our own special memories and know that, although they have left us in this world, they will always be in our hearts.

Gary T. Staffo, PE, CSP, CPE, is a Senior Member of the International System Safety Society and has served the Society on many committees and positions as a Chapter officer, as well as at the national level. He is currently the Department of Energy (DOE) Accident Investigation Program Manager, located at DOE Headquarters in Washington, DC. ●

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has been doing to advance the profession and raise the profile of the Society, through their work with Arizona State University, which has the largest engineering enrollment in the U.S. Read his TBD column in this issue to learn how you can support this important activity. I expect that there will be a lively discussion of this activity at the 35th International System Safety Conference in Albuquerque.

The 2017 Albuquerque ISSC team, led by Stacey Durham, is working to build an exciting program that will provide a wonderful educational opportunity for system safety engineers, whether they are brand new to

the profession, or have decades of experience. *They need your involvement!* Get your paper, poster and tutorial proposals submitted to the conference Website (<http://issc2017.system-safety.org>); you can also volunteer to serve as a session chair. Stacey's team is also working to attract members of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board and other allied organizations to our conference. All of this fits into our strategy of increased relevance and service to the Society members.

Stay in touch.

With best wishes,
Rod