

FROM THE EDITOR

A history lesson, state of the unions, and the Magna Awards



Having grown up on the Texas Gulf Coast, I know a little about disasters, natural and manmade. Galveston County, where I was raised, is home to the two worst disasters in Texas history—the 1900 hurricane and the 1947 explosion that rocked my hometown of Texas City.

Yes, it's a somewhat dubious distinction, but a definite conversation starter. And now, in a photo essay on Page 44, it's time to look back at number three on the list.

The March 18, 1937, explosion of the London School in New London, Texas, is the worst school disaster in U.S. history. More than 300 people were killed in a blast that, by all rights and reason, could have been avoided.

Seventy-one years later, the survivors still bear the emotional and physical scars from that day. And 71 years later, schools still are making the same mistakes in terms of how they keep chemicals safely away from children.

"Time to Heal" is both a slice of history and a cautionary tale for school leaders. Read it and appreciate what the survivors have lived with for more than seven decades, then go and ask questions about your district's chemical safety plans. You'll be glad you did.

focus on a topic of interest to board members and administrators across the country. In "State of the Unions," on Page 22, Senior Editor Del Stover examines how school leaders can develop and maintain solid relationships with their teacher unions.

Senior Editor Naomi Dillon writes of the growing merit pay trend on Page 28, and Oregon school board member Steven Klein tells of lessons he learned during a contract negotiation in "Hammer It Out" on Page 31.

Also this month, *ASBJ* honors the winners of the 2008 Magna Awards with a special supplement and a story on the three grand prize recipients that appears on Page 36. This marks the 14th year the magazine has presented the awards, which recognize outstanding efforts and out-of-the-box thinking by school districts, with the help of our corporate sponsor—Sodexo School Services.

Thanks go out to this year's judging panel, led by the venerable Harold Fisher, and to the magazine staff who did the editorial and production work on this special project—Kathleen Vail, Carrie Carroll, Margaret Suslick, and Donna Ernst.

Until next month ...

A number of stories in this issue

Glenn Cook, Editor-in-Chief