

## A Gathering of Friends

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If I'd entered Purrington House in Mattapoisett Village through the side door, I would have noticed about a dozen pairs of shoes lined up along the foyer wall before I saw their owners, who were attending a literary event—incongruously attired in their stocking feet. The event, a reception and book presentation for *Building the World: An Encyclopedia of the Great Engineering Projects in History*, was held on a lazy Sunday afternoon. I suspected the ritual of taking off one's shoes and walking stocking-footed over the plush Purrington House rugs had less to do with sensory enhancement than with comfort, an opportunity many of the thirty-plus Harvard and MIT academics who'd been selectively invited to the reception took advantage of. I soon noticed this was not a standard book-signing event. This was a pleasurable gathering of friends.

As the presentation got underway, early December sunlight streamed through the high windows of the parlor and shifted quickly across the room, as winter sun does, keeping time as the presentation progressed. Kathleen Lusk Brooke led the talk with co-author Frank Davidson, who interjected comments and elicited chuckles and nods from the attentive audience. Kathleen, dressed in vibrant red and black for the occasion, has a smile that rivals the sun and a manner that explains why she's Founder and Managing Director of the Center for the Study of Success. Lusk Brooke and Davidson, who in 1957 was the American co-founder of The Channel Tunnel Study Group and is now a retired MIT Professor of Macro-Engineering, collaborated in the research and writing of *Building the World*, an encyclopedia of forty-one great feats of macro-engineering around the world that date to Solomon's Temple in Israel to the recent "Big Dig" in Boston.

"Environmental concerns and mutual benefit are two of the many reasons countries and companies are willing to collaborate in building large facilities," said Lusk Brooke. The projects documented in *Building the World* "capture the imagination" commented Davidson, who recalled the time he was in Paris and the first men landed on the moon. "The streets were empty," he said. "Everyone was glued to their televisions."

Such is the case with any amazing feat of engineering, science and technology. Grand projects, whether they are physical entities piercing the skyline or widespread policies incorporated to major effect, are cause for excitement, concluded Davidson, and furthermore offer opportunities for cooperation between nations that can lead to peace. Bringing this point to light—that large-scale engineering projects may be used to foster international cooperation and peace amongst nations—was one of the authors' "small" motives in writing *Building the World*.

Davidson's advice for getting a macro-engineering project successfully underway: get a prominent banker to back you up; plan, plan, plan, and plan some more; but before you plan yourself into obsolescence, take off your shoes and get comfy with a copy of *Building the World: An Encyclopedia of the Great Engineering Projects in History*. Published by Greenwood Press; \$199.95. For more information, please visit [buildingtheworld.com](http://buildingtheworld.com).