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Editorial

Pan American Congress of Applied Mechanics (PACAM VIII)

The eighth Pan American Congress of Applied Mechanics (PACAM VIII) was held at the Congress Palace in Havana, Cuba in January 2004. The congress proceedings, comprising 153 short papers, were published as the Volume 10 of "Applied Mechanics in the Americas."

During, and shortly after the congress, based on the four-page versions and the oral presentations, some 30 best papers were selected by the session chairs and the scientific committee of the congress. The authors of these papers were invited to submit full-length papers to be published in this special issue of IJSS, although some declined that invitation due to other plans. The resulting issue contains 18 papers, all of which were peer reviewed.

The Pan American Congresses of Mechanics are the only meetings sponsored by the American Academy of Mechanics; they are always held in a Latin America venue. Previous congresses took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (1989), Valparaiso, Chile (1991), São Paulo, Brazil (1993), Buenos Aires, Argentina (1995), San Juan, Puerto Rico (1997), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (1999), and Temuco, Chile (2002). The next Pan American Congress (PACAM IX) will take place in Merida, Mexico in January 2006. The aims of these congresses are (i) to expose mature engineers and scientists as well as advanced graduate students to new research findings, techniques and problems, and (ii) to provide opportunities for interactions through formal lectures and informal conversations. All PACAMs served these goals. Originally, the congresses were intended to bring together researchers, practicing engineers, and graduate students from South, Central and North America. However, the participants from all over the world are welcome to attend these meetings.

The editorial committee would like to thank all the authors for their contributions, all the reviewers who assisted us in the review process to assure the technical level of published papers, and finally Professor Charles Steele, the Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Solids and Structures*, who was the driving force behind all these congresses and who agreed to dedicate this special issue to PACAM VIII.

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