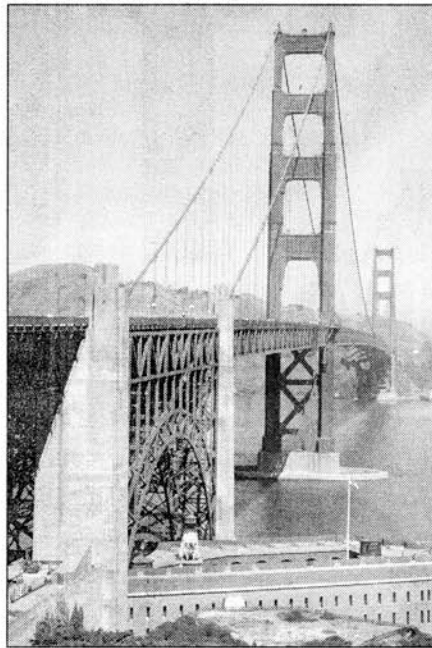
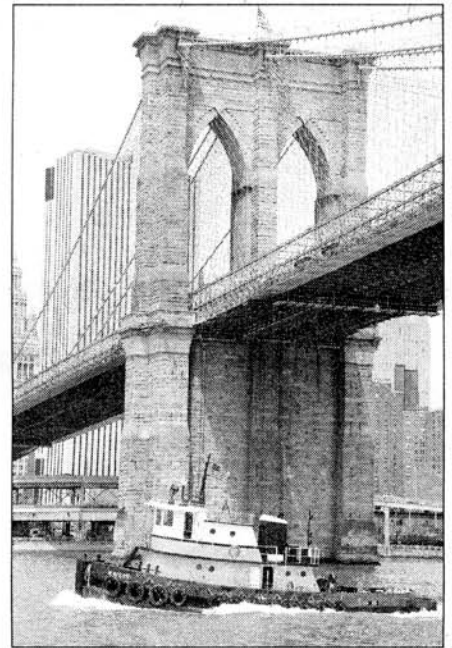




Tower



Golden Gate



Brooklyn

## After suffering with Q, city deserves artful bridge

**P**RIDE may be a sin, but it's the lifeblood of cities.

New Haven built the ill-fated New Haven Coliseum as a point of pride, only to have it become a symbol of awkward misfit. New Haveners, and everyone traveling between Boston and New York, will soon see a new effort at building pride.

As we know, the greatly over-used and always awkward Pearl Harbor Memorial Bridge has reached the end of its reasonable life expectancy for both capacity and the ability to be repaired. A new bridge, to be built in two sections, has been designed.

Engineered by Parsons Brinckerhoff, it is to be erected over the several years after about six excruciating years of building its approaches. The entire endeavor is intended to allow the free flow of traffic even when it encounters those automobiles headed to and from Hartford. But it has an added element.

The design picks up on the notoriety gained by Boston's Zakim-Bunker Hill Bridge, the famous cable-stayed bridge over the Charles River. New Haven's version of structural celebration is called "extradosed cable-stayed" and is said to be the first-ever in America. But, its genesis has a very long tradition.

The Charles Bridge in Prague, the Chain Bridge in Budapest, the Tower Bridge in London and one of the most famous bridges in America, the Brooklyn Bridge, were built to facilitate commerce and civic growth.

They were seen also as points of arrival — for visitors on the threshold of the cities they served, but also as a



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clear statement that their cities had "arrived."

These bridges were the synthesis of cutting edge technology and aesthetic expression, combining robust architecture with muscular structural engineering to celebrate the bustling health of the cities they served.

In contrast to these signature bridges, the vast majority of bridges have pretty banal design criteria. The construction of the U.S. interstate highway system may be the single largest bridge building effort in history. The rationale for creation of the system was not to facilitate the mid-20th century vision of a suburban utopia, which was its obvious byproduct. No one anticipated how dramatically it would cut off coastal cities such as New Haven from any sense of the watercourses that caused their founding in the first place.

The federal highway system was sold to a Cold War-fixated America as a huge cross-continental superstructure for moving the military from sea to shining sea on short notice — a deterrent to a potential invasion.

Given this genesis, it is not surprising that the vast majority of the elements of this highway system have the charm and aesthetic ingenuity of a military installation. So it is with Pearl Harbor Memorial Bridge, better known as the Q bridge.

Ironically, the precedent and inspiration for the U.S. highway system was Germany's pre-World War II Autobahn — a road system that still celebrates speed in transport over celebration of arrival.

The un-beloved Q bridge is a classic example of the Autobahn's kinesthetic origins of uninterrupted velocity. Its goal was simply to handle 40,000 cars a day.

Unfortunately, it now needs to accommodate 120,000 cars a day. The bizarrely oriented on- and offramps and a jammed-in connection to Interstate 91 turn ironic origins into a perverse present day reality.

The biggest, but largely unspoken, rationalization for the design of the new Interstate 95 bridge over the harbor is that it is, as Mary Poppins put it, the "spoonful of sugar that helps the medicine go down." Can you imagine how it would feel if, after 15 or more years of never-ending disruption, frustration and bewilderment, we ended up with nothing more than our existing Q bridge doubled via cloning?

Instead, Connecticut opted to build a transformational event, where an artless concrete ribbon, rudely supported with giant piers, is swept away in favor of an elegantly thin, sleek concrete and wire sculpture — distilled, refined and yet expressive.

It is dubious that anyone will wistfully think of leaving their heart in New Haven as they gaze at its version of the Golden Gate Bridge, but at least the stoically marching twinned towers and their harp-string-tight wiring may make us feel special. As anyone who has had a kid playing T-ball knows, that is often an end in itself.

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