

ANTHONY G. (TONY) STERMAC (1922–2002)



The many friends and colleagues of Tony Stermac will be sad to hear of his death from cancer in Toronto in April 2002. As well as having a distinguished professional career, Tony played a formative role in the early years of the Canadian Geotechnical Society. He served the Society as Chair of the Toronto Section of CGS, Chair of the Organizing Committee for the 18th Canadian Geotechnical Conference in Toronto in 1964, President of the Society in 1983 – 1984, editor of the Society's Newsletter in 1989, and Director General during 12 years of active growth from 1987 – 1998.

Tony Stermac was born in Croatia in 1922. After graduating from the University of Zagreb, he spent eleven years in university and consulting service in Zagreb. Following a Diploma from Imperial College, London, he moved to Canada in 1960. He joined the Department of Highways of Ontario, later known as the Ministry of Transportation, and served in increasingly senior positions, retiring as Director of the Transportation, Technology and Energy Branch in 1987.

His technical papers, published in the Canadian Geotechnical Journal and elsewhere, reflect his characteristic attention to detail and provide significant case histories and analyses that add to our knowledge of the stability of embankments on soft varved clays and of bridge foundations. He also deserves particular credit for initiating and directing research studies of the long-term behaviour of ground treated by electro-osmosis.

Tony Stermac was a member of the small group of colleagues in Toronto who started the Canadian Geotechnical Journal. He was an Associate Editor in the early years of the Journal, and Editor from 1971 – 1974. He served on the Committee for revisions to the National Building Code of Canada, a contribution that eventually turned into the Canadian Foundation Engineering Manual. He had considerable influence on the way the Canadian Geotechnical Society operates as a technically diversified technical society operating in more than 20 Canadian cities on behalf of both engineers and geoscientists. It provides a model that has influenced other Societies in Britain, the United States, Mexico and Japan, among others. Tony directed the Society's attention to providing professional development opportunities in the form of local, national and international conferences on a wide range of technical subjects that include soil mechanics, engineering geology, cold regions, geosynthetics, rock mechanics, hydrogeology and geoenvironmental engineering.

Tony Stermac received many professional honours and awards. Of special mention, were a Fellowship of the Engineering Institute of Canada in 1988, and the award of the Institute's John B. Stirling Medal in 1996. In 1999, to honour of his contributions, the Society renamed its Distinguished Service Plaque the A.G. Stermac Award for Service to the Canadian Geotechnical Society. He was proud of the recognition by his geotechnical colleagues represented by the R.F. Legget Award (the highest award of the CGS) in 1976. He loved his chosen profession and the opportunities he had to influence its development.

All of this provides an inadequate sense of the man himself. In his younger days he was a talented athlete and a fierce competitor in international water polo for Yugoslavia. Throughout his life he was gifted with great intellectual curiosity and was a lover of politics, music and art. All who worked with him know of his integrity and were influenced by his wisdom and foresight. He brought enthusiasm to all he did and was particularly thoughtful in his support of young people and also of his peers. He displayed untiring dedication to fostering the work of the Society until his death. He will be greatly missed.

The Society extends its sympathies to Tony's wife Darinka, their daughters Daria and Lana, and the extended family.