

RAYMOND (RAY) BENSON (1935-2020)

By Len Murray and Bryan Watts



It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of a former President of Klohn Leonoff (now Klohn Crippen Berger), Raymond Benson, on October 12, 2020 at the age of 84 from pancreatic cancer.

Raymond Philip Benson was born in rural Saskatchewan on December 1, 1935, the seventh of ten children. He obtained his BSc in civil engineering from the University of Alberta in 1960. He joined the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) where he worked on the Gardiner Dam, not far from where he had spent his early childhood. Following his stint at the PFRA, Ray spent several years with International Power and Engineering Consultants Ltd., a subsidiary of the newly minted BC Hydro and Power Authority. There he worked as a field engineer, on site investigations for and monitoring of the construction of the W.A.C. Bennett Dam on the Peace River in British Columbia, before deciding to complete a MSc (1966) and a PhD (1970) at the University of Illinois in the United States. In 1976, after working with Acres Limited in Ontario, he joined Klohn Leonoff in Vancouver, where he would rise to the top post and become the company's third President, following Charles Ripley and Earle Klohn.

Ray continued to work on hydroelectric projects, but his interest and expertise in tunnels and underground plants, such as powerhouses, became the hallmark of his career. Ray is best known for resolving tunnelling problems in a variety of soft ground and rock, pressure tunnels and high-pressure penstocks and underground powerhouses in over 20 countries. His signature project is the giant hydro power development at Churchill Falls, Labrador. His keynote paper on "Design of Unlined and Lined Pressure Tunnels" has been referenced globally since its publication (reprinted in *Tunnelling and Underground Space Technology*, in 1989).

Ray received numerous awards: ASTM Hogentogler Award, 1971; Association of Professional Engineers of BC Meritorious Achievement Award, 1987; Fellow, Engineering Institute of Canada, 1991, EIC's John B. Stirling Medal, 2007; Fellow, Canadian Academy of Engineering, 1993; CGS's Robert F. Legget Medal, 2002 and Fellow, Canadian Society for Civil Engineers, 2005. In 2016, he received the Canadian Lifetime Achievement Award from the Tunnelling Association of Canada.

Ray served as President of the Engineering Institute of Canada, 1993-1994 and Chairman of its Honours and Awards Committee; Chair of Southern Ontario and Vancouver sections and Chair for the Ontario and British Columbia regions of the Canadian Geotechnical Society; Chair of the 1983 Pan American Geotechnical Conference organizing committee; President of the Tunnelling Association of Canada, 1984-1989; Chair of the Investment Committee of the Canadian Foundation for Geotechnique; and on the Advisory Boards of both Kwantlen College and BC Institute of Technology, both in Greater Vancouver.

In considering his own career, Ray had no doubt whatsoever:

“I have chosen absolutely the right career for myself. I never have had a moment’s thought that I am in the wrong career—ever. I just love civil engineering. I love consulting engineering. I am one of the blessed people, actually.”

Ray Benson is survived by his wife Anthea, sons Phil, Chris and Adam and daughter Mia, and five grandchildren. He is remembered fondly by his colleagues at Klohn Crippen Berger, and throughout the profession, not only for his exemplary technical and business leadership, but also for his calmness, consideration for others and his enthusiasm for his profession. He was a great engineer and a gentleman of the old school where only optimism would do.