

**HUGH B. SUTHERLAND O.B.E. (1920–2011)**  
Including information from *Scotsman*, 31 Dec., 2011  
and <http://universitystory.gla.ac.uk>.



Canadian friends of Hugh Sutherland, particularly in Ottawa and Winnipeg, will be sad to hear of Hugh's death in Glasgow, Scotland in December 2011 in his 91<sup>st</sup> year. He is survived by his daughter Moira and son Hugh.

Hugh Brown Sutherland started the hard way. He studied at night-school and eventually qualified as an engineer through examinations of the Institution of Civil Engineers in London. He worked as a civil engineer with Oscar Faber and Partners in London assessing bomb damage. After the war, he developed an interest in the emerging discipline of soil mechanics and helped develop the first university soils laboratory in Britain. He then went to Harvard University in 1946 to study and conduct research under Professors K. Terzaghi and A. Casagrande on potential effects of a nuclear explosion on the Panama Canal. During this time at Harvard, he met Lionel Peckover of the Division of Building Research (DBR), NRCC in Ottawa, who invited him to meet Dr. R.F. Legget, the Director of DBR. Dr. Legget invited him to the First National Soil Mechanics Conference (1947) in Ottawa, along with L.F. Cooling and Geoff Meyerhof who came from the U.K. to participate.

This began a long and productive relationship between Hugh Sutherland and the soil mechanics group at DBR, starting with the stability of slopes and varved clays at Steep Rock Iron Mines. Later he worked for DBR on vibration problems from trolley buses in Winnipeg. He demonstrated that damage to houses was due to the nature of the Winnipeg clay and not to traffic vibrations. He delighted in telling about taking seismic equipment to the home of a woman who had complained to the local authority. As the human body is most sensitive to vibrations in the prone position, he lay on her bed to conduct the test. And when the woman's husband arrived home asking him: "What the hell are you doing?" he replied: "Believe it or not, I'm just waiting for the next trolley bus." He also did valuable early work on the unstable riverbanks in Winnipeg. This led to the award of Honorary Citizenship of Winnipeg.

After becoming Head of Civil Engineering in Glasgow, he continued collaborating with his friends in Canada through frequent exchanges of visits and lecture tours. For some years, several Canadian postgraduate students worked jointly with him and DBR on clay properties and slope stability. In addition to his university duties, Hugh was a consultant on foundations, tunnels, nuclear power stations, dams, airports, etc. in the U.K., Japan, Germany, Italy, and India, among others.

Hugh Sutherland received awards from universities in Poland and Japan, and an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Glasgow, where he was also Professor Emeritus. He was Vice-President of the Institution of Civil Engineers, from which he received the George Stephenson Medal, and was a Council Member of both the Institution of Structural Engineers and the Royal Academy of Engineering. In 2003, Hugh was appointed Officer of the British Empire (O.B.E.), from Queen Elizabeth II for "Services to Education and Engineering".