

CARROLL OLIVER (CHUCK) BRAWNER (1929-2019)

By Doug VanDine, Fred Matich and Nigel Skermer



C.O. (Chuck) Brawner was born in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in 1929, grew up in the Okanagan valley of British Columbia and graduated in civil engineering from the University of Manitoba in 1953. Upon graduation he started working as a Soils Engineer and then later as Senior Materials Engineer with the BC Department of Highway, and worked there until 1963. In 1957 and 1958, Chuck took a leave of absence to obtain a Masters of Engineering degree in soil mechanics, supervised by Geoff Meyerhof, from the Nova Scotia Technical College (now part of Dalhousie University).

After meeting Hugh Golder in the early 1960s, in 1963, Chuck opened Golder Associates' Vancouver office under the name Golder Brawner Associates. A successful consulting project associated with a BC mine in 1966 introduced him to rock mechanics. After that project he took another short leave of absence to study rock mechanics with some of the experts in the field in Canada, the US, England, Germany and Portugal. With Golder Brawner, Chuck applied, with great success, his combined knowledge and experience in both soil and rock mechanics to the stability of open pit and underground mines. In 1968, he was appointed to Syncrude Canada's first Geotechnical Review Board.

In 1978, Chuck left full-time consulting and was appointed a Professor of Geomechanics in the Department of Mining Engineering at the University of British Columbia. There, until 1995, he introduced a generation of civil, geological and mining engineering students to both the theoretical and practical sides of geotechnical engineering related to mining. In 1995, he retired from UBC and returned to full-time consulting in his specialized geotechnical field.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Chuck edited a number of state-of-the-art volumes on geotechnical engineering related to mining, and one volume on muskeg. In early 2004, he published a memoir entitled "Engineer...Around the World in 50 Years" (published by BiTech Publishers) that documented both his experiences, and the experience he gained from his many Canadian and international consulting projects. In a book review, Nordie Morgenstern wrote the following, which also well describes Chuck's character:

"All who read this informative and entertaining volume will benefit from an appreciation of Chuck Brawner's broad contributions, ranging from technical innovation to sound business

practice. Those of us who have had the pleasure of working with him are delighted to celebrate his achievements; those who have been mentored and taught by him will be refreshed by this volume, and others will be inspired by the challenge of Geotechnical Engineering recounted here.” (Geotechnical News, December 2003)

During his career, Chuck received awards from organizations such as the Society for Mining, Metallurgy, and Exploration, the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame, the Association of Professional Engineers of British Columbia, and the Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta, and was awarded for his teaching at the UBC. He was a Distinguished Lecturer of the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy in 1988, and was awarded fellowships from the CIM, the Engineering Institute of Canada and the Canadian Academy of Engineering. In 1999, Chuck was awarded the Canadian Geotechnical Society’s most prestigious honour, the R.F. Legget Award (now medal). In 2014, Chuck received an honorary doctorate from Dalhousie University.

Chuck is survived by his wife, Isabella, two sons and two daughters, seven grandchildren and three great grandchildren.