

News

In Memoriam

Dr. Victor Milligan

(November 11, 1929 - March 4, 2009)

The international geotechnical engineering community is deeply saddened that Dr. Victor Milligan, P.Eng., FCAE, FRAE, FEIC, passed away suddenly on March 4, 2009 in his 80th year, while he and his wife Donna were on vacation in Mopti, Mali, West Africa. Dr. Milligan was a world renowned geotechnical engineer, a key founding member of the international consulting firm Golder Associates, and a past Vice-President for North America of the ISSMGE.

Victor Milligan was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland on November 11, 1929. He graduated from Queen's University, Belfast in 1951 with a B.Sc. in Civil Engineering, and obtained a M.Sc. in Soil Mechanics at Queen's in 1952. He then worked as a research fellow at Purdue University in Indiana, United States, on a King George VI Fellowship.

Dr. Milligan emigrated to Canada in 1956 and worked for Geocon Ltd., where he quickly rose to the position of Chief Engineer. In 1960, in partnership with Dr. Hugh Golder, he formed Golder Associates where he held posts of President and Chairman. Dr. Milligan was the driving force of the firm as it grew from a single office of five employees to 160 offices with over 7,000 employees worldwide. Long before his retirement from the company in 1994, Golder Associates had fully secured a worldwide reputation for excellence in geotechnical engineering - an achievement that Dr. Milligan looked upon with considerable pride. Golder Associates owes an immense debt to Dr. Milligan for instilling values that are the foundation of the company's culture. In his "retirement" in 1994 to individual practice, he continued to act as Senior Consultant to Golder Associates and served on many Technical Review Panels and Consulting Boards for international clients with world class projects.



Dr. Milligan was recognized internationally as an expert in geotechnical engineering, especially in the fields of dams, embankments and soft ground tunnels. He worked on in excess of 150 dam projects throughout the world including one of the highest rockfill dams in Europe. In addition, he worked on 15 major tunneling projects in North America, South America, Australia and Singapore. He published over 50 technical papers, many of which were invited, keynote and award winning lectures.

Dr. Milligan received numerous awards, honours and accolades in recognition of his many significant accomplishments and contributions to engineering. He received two Honourary Doctorates - from Queen's University in Belfast and Waterloo University in Canada. He was also recognized by many learned societies achieving Fellow status in the Canadian Academy of Engineering; the Engineering Institute of Canada; the Royal Academy of Engineering in the U.K., where only 70 such persons are allowed from overseas; and, Honourary Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers - the only person from Canada to be so recognized.

Dr. Milligan was one of the founders and the initial Editor of the *Canadian Geotechnical Journal*, President of the Consulting Engineers of Ontario and Vice-President for North America of the International Society for Soil Mechanics and Foundation Engineers. He was the recipient of several prestigious medals and awards, including the Thirty-Eighth Karl Terzaghi Lecturer in 2002; the Sir John Kennedy Medal, the Julian Smith Medal and the K.Y. Lo Medal - all top awards of the Engineering Institute of Canada; the R.F. Legget Award from the Canadian Geotechnical Society - its highest award; and, the Beaubien Award from the Consulting Engineers of Canada.

Dr. Milligan was a gifted middle-distance runner when he was younger. He first gained acclaim as the first schoolboy from Northern Ireland to win the British Public Schools Mile championship. While injury prevented him from competing in the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, he captained the Northern Ireland team at the 1954 British Empire Games in Vancouver. There he finished fourth in the fabled "Miracle Mile" just yards behind Sir Roger Bannister of England and John Landy of Australia.

The introduction of Dr. Milligan at the 2002 Karl Terzaghi Lecture provides good insight to his character. The introduction included the following citation:

"Victor was also the driving force behind the company's ownership model. He wanted to build a superior company, and to do this he firmly believed that if the employees were owners, this would be reflected in their attitude towards their clients and product quality... Victor Milligan has only one standard. Whatever he does, it must be the best".

Dr. Milligan will be greatly missed by his wife Donna, his sons Jeffrey and Michael, daughter-in-law Bobbi, grandson Alexander, great-niece Karen, his family in Northern Ireland, and by his many friends and colleagues in Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, Greece, Singapore, Australia, and elsewhere. That his circle of friends and family is so extensive and devoted is a testament to his integrity, loyalty, sense of humour and sharp wit, passion, and extraordinary zest for life.