

Dr. Za-Chieh Moh Celebrates 80th Birthday

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Dr. Za-Chieh Moh, born in 1931, had his undergraduate education at National Taiwan University in 1953, and then moved to the United States to join Iowa State University where he received his Master's degree in 1955. The opportunity then arose for him to go to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to carry out doctoral studies under Prof. T.W. Lambe. Dr. Moh graduated with the Sc.D. degree from MIT in 1961, and since has maintained a continuing relationship with Prof. Lambe and other eminent geotechnical engineers worldwide.

After practicing as a consulting engineer and as an academic in the United States, Dr. Za-Chieh Moh joined the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) in 1965 and was given the special task of establishing a field of study in Soil Mechanics and Foundation Engineering at this regional post-graduate institution to complement the existing fields of hydraulics, structures, environmental and transportation engineering. This he was able to accomplish within a year. The period that followed constituted the formative years for geotechnical engineering in Asia; through the AIT, Dr. Za-Chieh Moh played a key role in the training of post-graduate geotechnical engineers to serve the major development projects in most of the countries in Asia.

From the outset, Dr. Moh stressed to AIT the importance of close cooperation and exchange of information with universities and institutions abroad. Over the years, several leading geotechnical engineering professors have joined AIT, and AIT is now well known in geotechnical engineering circles all over the world.

The research conducted by Dr. Za-Chieh has always been directed toward an understanding of engineering problem; much of this has been concerned with the local behaviour of soils, in-situ and large-scale testing, the performance of earth structures, and the stabilization of soil for foundations, highways, airfields and earth dams. He has also conducted extensive research and had much practical experience with problems related to soft clays and residual soils. Dr. Za-Chieh Moh is not only a strong and gifted leader, but also a capable administrator as well. At the Asian Institute of Technology, Dr. Za-Chieh Moh's capability was well-recognized and he was appointed to the position of Vice-President and Provost. It was a time when AIT had only one Vice-President.

In early 1976, Dr. Za-Chieh Moh moved to consulting practice, and soon established the Moh and Associates (MAA) as a leading geotechnical consultant in Southeast Asia, including Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Hong Kong, China and Taiwan. Dr. Moh's creation of this consulting organization was an achievement remarkable for its farsightedness. Some of the

important projects carried out by him include: geotechnical and seismic study of the Kaohsiung Cross Harbour Tunnel; geotechnical study for the reclamation of an abandoned river channel for development in Taipei; design and instrumentation of a 30-m retaining structure; and instrumentation for deep excavations and geotechnical studies for mass rapid transit systems. The past thirty four years, since he moved to consulting practice from AIT, we have seen no reduction in his activity nor in his contributions to the profession.

Dr. Za-Chieh Moh founded the Southeast Asian Geotechnical Society (SEAGS) in 1967 and was its founder President until 1973. The year 1967 was a time when lifelong friendships were being forged with members of geotechnical societies and institutions in many parts of the world. Soon, the Asian Information Center for Geotechnical Engineering (AGE) was established at AIT. Both, through SEAGS and AGE, Dr. Za-Chieh Moh made tremendous contributions to the development of the profession of geotechnical engineering, not only in Asia, but engendering close cooperation among other geographic regions in the entire geotechnical community. In the international field, Dr. Moh made notable contributions when he served as the Vice-President for Asia of the International Society for Soil Mechanics and Foundation Engineering (ISSMFE) in 1973 to 1977. Additionally, he has served as a panelist, a general reporter and session chairman in many international and regional conferences. To be able to contribute significantly in geotechnics demands the virtues of good sense and sound judgement, both possessed abundantly by Dr. Moh. In consequence, he has been called upon to serve on a very large number of technical committees of ISSMFE and its national societies.

Dr. Za-Chieh Moh has received several awards and honours. He is listed in the International Scholars Directory, American Men and Women of Science, the Directory of Selected Scholars and Researchers in Southeast Asia, and in 5,000 Personalities of the World. Recently, he received the award of "Men of the Year" from the China Road Federation and the "Gold Medal Award for Academic Achievement" from the Chinese Institute of Civil and Hydraulic Engineering.

Dr. Moh initiated the formation of the Association of Geotechnical Societies in Southeast Asia (AGSSEA) and was officially founded in 2007 with SEAGS, Vietnam and Hong Kong as its founder members. Dr. Moh was elected Hon. Founder Chairman. In 2009 Singapore and Thailand joined AGSSEA and in August 2010 Chinese Taipei Geotechnical Society (CTGS) was admitted to ISSMFE and is joining AGSSEA. The AGSSEA thus provided the necessary platform for SEAGS and societies of Vietnam, Hong Kong Singapore, Thailand and Taipei to work together and create more interactions and collaborations amongst them.

More amazingly Dr. Moh is continuing to work for the accreditation of the universities and mobilization of the engineers in the world. I believe the reason he has done so much for this region is because he has a strong belief that all the engineers here, as long as we work hard and have confidence in ourselves, we can go and work wherever we want to go.

Dr. Za-Chieh Moh's contribution to the advancement of the field of soil mechanics and foundation engineering, particularly in Asia as well as the world in general, is worthy of praise. Dr. Moh belongs to that rare cohort of men who combine intense enthusiasm with good intelligence and an infinite capacity for hard work. Dr. Moh is a legend. He is highly respected not only because of his achievements but of his Integrity, Humility, and Caring for other people. He is one of the finest people we could have met. He is a great Scholar, He is a great Teacher. He is a great Engineer. He is a Mentor to many throughout the world.

SEAGS and AGSSEA congratulate Dr Moh on the Occasion of his 80th Birthday and wish him MANY HAPPY RETURNS!

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On behalf of all members of SEAGS and AGSSEA

Dr. Ooi Teik Aun &
President SEAGS

Prof Yong Kwet Yew
President AGSSEA

September 21, 2010



Dr. Za-Chieh Moh and Family at 80th Birthday Celebration Sept. 2010



Dr. Za-Chieh Moh, AIT ALUMNI and Closed Friends at 80th Birthday Celebration Sept. 2010