

JOHN DAVID BROWN (1933-2016)



Dr. John Brown died in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia on October 7, 2016 at the age of 83.

John was born in Charlottetown, PEI and spent his childhood in the Maritimes. His post-secondary education included a BSc (and Malcolm Honour award) from Dalhousie in 1952, a BEng (CE) from Nova Scotia Technical College in 1957, and an MSc as an Athlone Fellow at Imperial College, London in 1960. After three years working for Geocon Ltd, he returned to Dalhousie and received a PhD in 1967. He was awarded a NATO Post Doctorate Fellowship in 1967, and moved to Oslo with his young family to work for two years with Laurits Bjerrum at the Norwegian Geotechnical Institute.

John returned to the Technical University of Nova Scotia in 1969 as an Associate Professor until 1980. In 1974, he joined the then two-year old company Jacques Whitford and Associates Ltd. where he remained as a senior consultant and principal until his retirement. John was regarded as a key part of the technical backbone of the company, and a major contributor to its success and growth.

John published widely with co-authors that included Skempton, Bishop, and Meyerhof. In 1991 he became a Fellow of the Engineering Institute of Canada, and in 2007 was awarded the prestigious F.H. Sexton Gold Medal by Engineers Nova Scotia for his lifetime contributions to engineering.

John played important roles on a number of landmark projects that included pioneering geotechnical studies in 1962 for what became later the Oilsands Mine of Syncrude Canada Ltd.. He was also closely involved with geotechnical work associated with the Venture and Hibernia oil and gas developments offshore Atlantic Canada, and the Confederation Bridge, including personally overseeing the drilling and sampling work from dedicated geotechnical drillships.

John was highly respected by colleagues for his profound knowledge base and his measured approach to problems. There is perhaps no greater measure of a man than the words of his colleagues:

“...some of the greatest life learnings I gained from John were to treat everyone with respect, think twice before responding, and use fewer and concise words whether in a geotechnical borehole log, or in general correspondence.”

"He had the ability to take a complex subject or set of conditions and boil them down into a manageable solution by understanding the governing behavior."

"...calm and unassuming demeanour, coupled with the way he could break down complicated geotech issues in a very basic understandable fashion, even for a [layperson]. Nothing was ever insurmountable and nothing ever seemed to bother him. A wonderful man."

" He was a true professional always willing to help and unselfish with his own time..... He was a teacher, a mentor and a good friend. I never had a conversation with him that at some point he didn't smile. A truly great gentleman."

John is survived by his wife Margie and his children Heather, Katherine, Susannë and Douglas. Through their involvement with the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL), John and Margie provided a long-term foster home for Derek Smith as company for Douglas.

Short months before his death, John wrote *"I have been fortunate to have had many wonderful experiences that gave me pleasure both at the time and in the remembering."*