

ALV OWEN DYREGROV (1933-2020)

By Gil Robinson and Ken Skafffeld



Alv (Al) Dyregrov was a geotechnical engineer who spent most of his 56-year career (1957-2013) as a consultant based in Winnipeg, MB. He was one of the first geotechnical engineers to graduate from the University of Manitoba and practice in Winnipeg. He was actively involved with forming the local chapter of the Canadian Geotechnical Society, along with Andy Baracos and Mervyn Mindess, and was always a strong supporter of the CGS and the University of Manitoba.

Al was born in Winnipeg on December 2, 1933. He grew up in the West End of Winnipeg, where he enjoyed hockey, playing cards with friends and building the family cabin with his father at Brereton Lake. He went on to study engineering at the University of Manitoba, graduating with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering in 1955, followed by a master's degree specializing in soils and foundations in 1957, under the guidance of Andy Baracos.

His professional career began in Montreal as an engineer with the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority on the final stages of the Seaway construction – work that Al was very proud to have participated in. Al's next stop was with the Federal Department of Public Works in Banff, on construction of highways in the western Canadian national parks. He returned to Winnipeg in 1960 where he joined UMA Engineering (now AECOM), responsible for geotechnical studies, primarily on wastewater and water treatment facilities and bridges, eventually becoming Director of Engineering for the Manitoba region.

In 1971, Al opened an office in Winnipeg for Hardy Associates Ltd. (now WOOD PLC), returning to his roots as a geotechnical engineer. In 1984, Neil Burgess and Al formed Dyregrov and Burgess, a Winnipeg-based consulting firm specializing in the design and construction of deep foundations. In 1989, Al ventured off on his own as Dyregrov Consultants and in 2010 Gil Robinson joined the company, which still operates as Dyregrov Robinson Inc.

The projects for which Al provided geotechnical input during the last 45 years were extensive and included municipal projects, health care facilities, bridges and a multitude of buildings and other types of structures. Many of the major structures built in downtown Winnipeg since 1971 have relied on his expertise, including the Trizec Development, Portage Place, the Bell MTS

Centre, the Manitoba Hydro downtown office, the TD Tower at 201 Portage Avenue, the Forks Development and the Provencher Paired Bridges Project. Outside of Winnipeg, the projects include the Churchill Townsite Development and Spaceport project, the Inco Thompson Open Pit Mine and the Brandon Simplot Fertilizer Plant and Simplot Potato Processing Plant in Portage la Prairie, amongst projects in many other locations. Al's understanding of local foundation conditions and his input for the safe and economical design and construction of deep foundations was a unique skill set and one respected by structural designers, architects, contractors and owners alike.

Al was licensed as an engineer in Saskatchewan, Ontario and Manitoba since 1960. He was a founding member of the Consulting Engineers of Manitoba, serving as President in 1986/87. In 1989, he was recognized for his service to local and national geotechnical communities by the Canadian Geotechnical Society and, in 1999, he was very honoured to be named a Fellow of the Engineering Institute of Canada. Al was a long-time member of the American Society of Civil Engineers and in 1997 was named an Honorary Life Member.

Outside of his professional life, Al's family was a big part of his life and he was an enthusiastic alpine skier and a member and executive of the Mount Agassiz Ski Club. In 1999, he and his wife, Reenie, were recognized for their contributions to alpine skiing by the Manitoba Alpine Ski Division.

Al was a mentor to many young engineers over the years and was always willing to share his experience and technical resources. After his passing on September 21, 2020, the common theme after people read his obituary was that Al was a great professional and mentor, and a gentleman.