

PROFESSOR GERALD A. LEONARDS

The Leonards Lecture was established at Purdue University in 2003 in honor of Professor Gerald A. Leonards, one of the giants of the geotechnical engineering profession.



Professor Gerald A. Leonards was born on April, 29, 1921 in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. He obtained his BSCE at McGill University in 1943 and received both MSCE and PhD from Purdue in 1948 and 1952, respectively. He was a full-time faculty member at Purdue from 1952 to 1991, when he was named Professor Emeritus.

Professor Leonards' research interests were very wide and he made pioneering contributions to knowledge on strength and compressibility of compacted clay soils, strength and consolidation of natural deposits, cracking of earth dams, frost action, analysis of buried conduits, pile foundations, stability of slopes and embankments on soft clays, stress-deformation and liquefaction of sand, and methodologies for investigating failures. He published extensively nationally and internationally. His 1962 book on "Foundation Engineering" quickly became a standard reference worldwide.

Throughout his career, Dr. Leonards' insight and expertise was sought on earthwork and foundation projects all over the world, a number of which involved the investigation of failures. He was appointed as the only non-European to sit on an official government commission in Italy to investigate ways to stabilize the Tower of Pisa.

Over his career Dr. Leonards received numerous awards from professional societies. In 1980 he was honored by the American Society of Civil Engineers by being asked to present the Terzaghi Lecture and also received the Terzaghi Award in 1989. In 1988 he was elected to the National Academy of Engineering.

From the students' perspective, "GAL" was a dedicated professor and researcher, who never missed an opportunity to learn more about his chosen field and to share his views on new developments. His influence continues to be felt through the lasting influence he had on his students and colleagues.

(Adapted from text by V.P. Drnevich for Geotech Hall of Fame Web Site)

The PGS was founded in May 2003 to enhance the strong bond and working relationship among alumni, faculty, students, and staff of the Geotechnical Engineering group at Purdue University for the benefit of all.

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