

Frank Rausche Receives Presidential Award for Distinguished Service

With a career spanning nearly 50 years, this industry veteran is showing little signs of slowing down

By Lisa Kopochinski

Frank Rausche, P.E., Ph.D., has probably done everything there is to do in pile driving since entering the industry in 1966. He's been a research associate, assistant professor of engineering, foundation and consulting engineer, principal, developer and author of numerous papers and research reports.

As president of GRL Engineers in Cleveland, Ohio, it's only fitting that this PDCA member – who has been with the association from its start – has been presented with the Presidential Award for Distinguished Service.

As one of PDCA's highest awards, it honors and pays tribute to an individual who has made ongoing, long-term and significant contributions to the association and the pile driving industry through effective leadership, support and participation.

"It's difficult to describe the full extent of Frank's support for PDCA, which extends back to the very beginning of the organization," said now-PDCA immediate past-president Mike Justason, who selected Rausche for the award. "His involvement in committees and his participation in events has made him one of the pillars of the organization. In recent years, the PDCA leadership has benefited from Frank's wisdom and experience on the board of directors, where Frank has helped guide us to where we are today."

Rausche says he's humbled by the acknowledgment.

"It is quite rewarding to be honored by a group of people whom I admire for their work, vision and creativity," he said. "Also considering who has been honored before me makes me want to do more for PDCA in the future to live up to this honor."

Rausche's resume is truly impressive. His first foray into the industry was in his native Germany as a structural engineer for Hermann Koop, where he designed steel and concrete structures including structural slabs and trusses for buildings and residences. Forty-nine years ago, he moved



Photo by Mark Skalny Photography

to Cleveland, where he has lived ever since.

"I started in 1966 in Ohio where the typical pile driven was a rather thin-walled pipe pile of – at most – 14 inches diameter, which were then filled with concrete," he said. "Timber piles were also frequently driven. Typical working loads ranged from 30 to maybe 150 tons. Today, piles, hammers and loads are easily four times larger on land."

He adds that when he started, piles were frequently driven much too hard and were damaged below grade.

"Today, it's rare that important pile driving projects do not require that the installation is electronically monitored with a Pile Driving Analyzer®; also, bearing capacity assessment is done with dynamic load testing and sometimes with both static and dynamic testing. In this way it has become possible to optimize the foundations to the benefit of the owner and the industry."

It is this same dedication to the industry that Rausche devotes to PDCA.

"I have frequently attended and presented at DICEP events and conferences and assisted with the Professors' Driven

Pile Institute since its beginning," he said.

"Throughout that time, I have learned a variety of things from others. It's stimulating to think about where we are going and how we can improve the things that we are doing."

Today, Rausche is semi-retired from both Pile Dynamics and GRL Engineers, although you'd never know this by his office hours.

"I still spend 50 percent of my working time here, which means a regular work week," he laughed. "I have the luxury to work on a variety of problems, which are not necessarily the daily bread and butter producers. In my specific field of endeavor – the QA and QC of deep foundations – I am particularly concerned with improving our load testing and dynamic analysis methods by making them more reliable and easier to use."

At this pace, it's highly unlikely this industry veteran will be fully retiring anytime soon.

"I'm going to phase out over the next few years, hopefully later rather than sooner," he said. "I'm always here to answer questions." ▼