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International Conference on Case Histories in  
Geotechnical Engineering

(2013) - Seventh International Conference on  
Case Histories in Geotechnical Engineering

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01 May 2013, 10:20 am - 10:30 am

## Ralph B. Peck – the One-Page Summary

Nancy Peck Young  
Albuquerque, NM

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### Recommended Citation

Young, Nancy Peck, "Ralph B. Peck – the One-Page Summary" (2013). *International Conference on Case Histories in Geotechnical Engineering*. 2.

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## **RALPH B. PECK – THE ONE-PAGE SUMMARY**

**Nancy Peck Young**  
Albuquerque, NM

### **ABSTRACT**

Ralph B. Peck's last big project was the Rion-Antirion Bridge in Greece. It was one of his many long projects and was completed in 2004. It received ASCE's OPAL (Outstanding Projects and Leaders) Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement Award for 2005. Dad, my husband Allen and I went to see it upon its completion, one of Dad's last really big trips.

Shortly after the end of the project Dad began to receive calls asking him to work on another large venture. Dad politely answered that he was retired, but the gentlemen persisted in calling him, hoping to get him to accept the job. I was with Dad in his office one morning when the phone rang and it was the same caller with the same request. Dad handed me the phone and I listened to his plea and then asked the caller if he knew Dad was 92 years old. There was a stunned silence on the other end of the line. Then the gentleman stammered that he thought Dad was in his 70's and had no idea that Dad was that old, especially since he had been working recently. He then said that Dad certainly deserved to be retired and hung up. Dad commented that it sounded like an interesting job but that he preferred to be able to complete his jobs and this job would last longer than he would.

RBP was the kind of engineer that could pour oil on troubled waters and achieve a compromise that previously had seemed impossible. He could come up with solutions to problems that often before had had seemed insolvable. He would take these problems back to the classroom; the location that he always felt was the most important place to be. This was the area where he was able to guide young minds to solve problems using his information and their logic to finish the equation.

Dad loved his work – he loved everything about his work. He liked the challenge of the various projects and enjoyed the people he worked with. He liked nothing more than hiking out in some wilderness where there was going to be a bridge, dam, or a series of dams and figuring out how and sometimes where these projects would take place. He liked discussing the projects with his colleagues and coming up with solutions that fit that particular problem. He liked traveling to various places around the globe and working with the people whose lives would be enriched by his projects. But best of all, Dad liked to use these case studies as learning experiences for his students.

Ralph Peck received many awards in his life, some of them extremely prestigious such as the Medal of Science in 1975. However his favorite award was the ASCE OPAL Award for Outstanding Lifetime Achievement in Education. Above all, Dad wanted to be remembered as an educator. His over 1000 jobs in forty-four states and twenty-eight countries on five continents were the basis for the classes he taught at the University of Illinois for 35 years. He was always pleased to be answering questions from students both in and out of the classroom. His volumes of papers were written to continue the understanding of his various projects so others could take his findings and build on them. He was particularly pleased to have his papers placed at the Norwegian Geotechnical Institute in the Ralph B. Peck Library next to the Karl Terzaghi Library so future generations could see how soil mechanics and foundations was born and grew and would be accessible to all who were interested in studying them.

Dad would be honored to know that this conference was dedicated to him. His educational process is continued in the case histories presented here by many of his students and the students of his students. He would have been pleased.