



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING

Memorial Tribute to

VAN HURDLE

Professor Emeritus
Department of Civil & Mineral Engineering

October 23, 2020

Be it resolved –

THAT the Council of the Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering record with deep regret the death on June 1st, 2020 of Professor Van Hurdle.

Professor Hurdle was born on December 27, 1935, in Pocatello, Idaho, but grew up in the smaller nearby town of Blackfoot. After finishing high school he majored in physics at Berkeley for one year then switched to civil engineering.

After graduation from Berkeley he worked as a surveyor for the California Division of Highways (now Caltrans) for a few months, principally on the scenic Highway 1 in the Big Sur area, then spent two years in the US Army Corps of Engineers, where he was stationed in Germany with the 79th Engineer Battalion (Construction). While in the 79th, he supervised various construction projects, the largest of which was a helicopter parking pad near Hanau, Germany, and took part in the cleanup after an extremely damaging earthquake in Agadir, Morocco. After his required military service was over, he worked again for the California Division of Highways' San Luis Obispo district, then earned a Masters degree in civil engineering at the University of California's Institute of Transportation and Traffic Engineering. After completing his degree, he again worked for the California Division of Highways' San Luis Obispo district.

In San Francisco, Professor Hurdle spent several years designing highways, then after obtaining his license as a Professional Engineer, became involved in "freeway operations". During this time, he conducted a study of the operation of a segment of Interstate Highway 580 in Oakland, California, that led to a truck ban, making it the only Interstate Highway in the US where trucks were not allowed – and was in charge of conducting the first "Functional Classification" study of the San Francisco Bay Area. He was also chairman of the San Francisco district's "Safety Review Committee", which reviewed all plans for state highway projects as well as the finished projects for safety hazards and spent a good deal of time observing rush hour operation of the area's freeways.

At the end of 1968 Professor Hurdle returned to Berkeley's Department of Civil Engineering to work on a PhD program - a program that included only two Civil Engineering courses in two years of course work, the rest being in Statistics and Operations Research. Until starting work on his dissertation, he worked half time for the California Division of Highways, reviewing all state highway projects in the Bay Area for traffic handling capacity, a job that involved a considerable amount of redesign of signalized intersections.

His dissertation, done under the supervision of Gordon Newell, dealt with bus scheduling, though he maintained an interest in traffic engineering, the area to which he returned for most of his later research work. After finishing his PhD in 1971 he worked as a research engineer at UC Berkeley's Institute of Transportation and Traffic Engineering, doing mainly teaching, but continuing his research into public transit planning.

In 1975, Professor Hurdle moved to Toronto with his family, taking a teaching position at the University of Toronto's Department of Civil Engineering. During his years there, he taught undergraduate courses in Transportation Operations, Traffic Engineering Surveying, Probability Theory and Mathematics (2nd year), as well as graduate courses in Highway Design, Queuing Theory and Stochastic Aspects of Transportation. He was also involved in teaching at his Department's Gull Lake Camp and was in charge of the camp for several years.

At the University of Toronto Professor Hurdle's research efforts were almost entirely devoted to highway traffic issues, with the exception of a small amount of work on public transit planning, and a single paper on highway design, a leftover from his days as a working engineer, where developing new methods of analysis was not considered research but just part of the job. Starting in the early 1970's and for many years he was an Associate Editor of "Transportation Science", the transportation journal of the Operations Society of America. He also devoted a great deal of time to the Transportation Research Board Committee on Highway Capacity and Level of Service, the committee responsible for preparing and publishing the "Highway Capacity Manual".

In 2001 Professor Hurdle retired from the University of Toronto, though he taught Traffic Engineering to fourth year students one additional time after formal retirement. He thoroughly enjoyed his years of retirement, spending time in California and the West and in Europe.

Be it further resolved –

THAT this tribute to Professor Van Hurdle be inscribed in the minutes of this Council meeting, and that copies be sent to his family as an expression of the respect and gratitude of the members of this Council.