



## MEET EDWIN McDOUGLE

# Ensuring quality for PCI members

Sarah Fister Gale



Edwin McDougle knew who he wanted to be when he was a child, and he never strayed from that path.

Growing up in eastern Tennessee, he decided at an early age that he wanted to be an engineer, just like his father. In 1964, after attending high school in Knoxville, Tenn., he applied to the University of Tennessee in his hometown to study civil engineering. McDougle's father had died a few years before and he didn't have the resources to pay his tuition on his own, so he enrolled in the co-op engineering program. The work/study academic track allowed McDougle to attend school for one quarter then work in his field for the next.

"It took an extra year, but I had one and a half years of work experience before I even graduated, and I got paid," he says.

McDougale had been assigned to work for a very small structural engineering and design firm in Nashville, Tenn., called Ross H. Bryan, where he was first introduced to precast concrete.

"Mr. Bryan was a pioneer in prestressed, precast concrete designs," McDougale says. In fact, the firm created the official Plant Certification Program for PCI and was the exclusive auditing agency for PCI-member plants in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

McDougale eventually earned his civil engineering degree and immediately returned to school to pursue a graduate degree in civil engineering; however, a year into his graduate studies, he joined the Air Force and became a pilot during the Vietnam War. When his active duty was over in 1972, he returned to Ross H. Bryan, where he continued to work until he retired in 2011.

"I walked in there in 1965, and I walked out 46 years later," he says.

For McDougale, staying with Bryan for his entire career was partly due to his enjoyment of working with a great team and a talented mentor and partly just good timing. He says that when many of his peers were making moves to start their own companies in the mid-1970s, Bryan retired and sold the firm to McDougale, the late PCI Titan T. Henry Clark, and two others, making him a principal of the company.

"It was a unique opportunity to own part of a successful, well-managed engineering firm," he says.

McDougale went on to perform more than 1000 audits for more than 200 PCI member plants; as well as design and manage dozens of projects, including the construction of several buildings at his alma mater, the University of Tennessee, including dormitories and classrooms, and the renovation of the university hospital and stadium. "Those are the projects that have meant the most to me," he says.

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From the beginning of his career, McDougale has been an active member of PCI. Bryan insisted that all of his engineers join the organization, and by the mid-1970s, McDougale had become one of its most active members. He participated on dozens of committees and chaired several, including the Quality Assurance Council and the Safety Committee. He is also a life member of PCI, was named a PCI Fellow in 1997, sat on the board of directors from 2013 to 2014, and was named a PCI Titan in 2015.

Despite being retired, McDougale continues to teach PCI Quality Control Schools and remains active on numerous PCI committees. "PCI is such a positive force in our industry," he says of his commitment to the organization. "There is so much knowledge and experience in this group, and everyone is willing to share what they know."

He says he is especially impressed with how willing its members are to work together toward common goals and to help each other out.

"There is an attitude among the people at PCI," he says. "They aren't out to get a bigger piece of the pie. They want to try to make the pie bigger so everyone can get a bigger piece."

He says he hopes that the next generation of members takes advantage of the opportunities they can find in PCI. "It's so important to be an active member," he says. "It takes hard work and dedication, but it's the best way to develop your skills and to promote the industry." ■