

Article from February 2003 issue of SDSM&T's "FOUNDATION Update":

Rahn Tours U.S. as Jahns Lecturer

Dr. Perry Rahn, professor emeritus of geology and geological engineering at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, spent 2002 sharing his knowledge and experience with students and counterparts as the Richard H. Jahns Distinguished Lecturer in Engineering Geology.

The annual award, established by the Association of Engineering Geologists (AEG) and the Engineering Geology Division of the Geological Society of America (GSA), provides funding for a distinguished engineering geologist to lecture at academic institutions in order to increase students' awareness about careers in engineering geology. The Jahns Lectureship honors Richard H. Jahns (1915-1983), an engineering geologist who had a distinguished career in academia, consulting, and government.

By the end of Rahn's yearlong commitment, he had presented 34 lectures at 19 colleges from the East Coast to the West Coast and everywhere in between. Rahn's two lectures, "Flood Hazards" and "Transmissivity Anisotropy," had a common theme showing the importance of geology to engineering works.

"Flood Hazards" reviewed flood evaluation techniques and current Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) programs. This lecture included examples of flooding in the United States and the usefulness of geomorphology and detailed field mapping in flood hazard evaluation. The lecture also incorporated discussion of alternatives to dams (such as flood plain management) in reducing flood hazards. In the second lecture, "Transmissivity Anisotropy," Rahn emphasized that geologic mapping and an understanding of geology are required to study ground water effectively.

As a Jahns Lecturer, Rahn shared his knowledge and experience with groups of students, engineers, and interested community members. In return, Rahn benefited by learning more about the scope of geology and geological engineering programs across the country. As a result, the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology has benefited as Rahn has shared his observations, newfound knowledge, and recommendations with SDSM&T's Geology and Geological Engineering Department.

Rahn reported that the number of students enrolled in SDSM&T's Geology and Geological Engineering Department is comparable to other colleges around the country. However, he noted that some schools have "tremendous resources in the form of physical facilities." He gave the example of the University of Nevada where the geology department is spread over three buildings.

Rahn made an important observation as he toured campuses across the country. He stated, "Visiting a new school can leave a positive or negative impression simply by seeing what is in the halls and offices surrounding the departments." Rahn was left with a favorable impression by

schools with well-lit display cases of minerals, faculty offices with open doors, and evidence of research being pursued by professors.

Rahn also commented, “To attract graduate students to SDSM&T...we have to exploit our location where geology is beautifully exposed.” He commented that at one lecture in Pittsburgh, “The audience was just drooling when I showed color slides of the Black Hills.”

Rahn enjoyed the year of traveling, lecturing, networking. He stated, “Meeting professional acquaintances first hand is important. I found that people at the host colleges and sectional AEG meetings were very cordial.”

Rahn concluded, “Engineering geologists are enthusiastic about their profession. They have an opportunity to get out in the field and make first-hand observations, and they can use their geologic skills to benefit engineered works.”

Perry H. Rahn was born in Allentown, Pennsylvania. He received bachelor's degrees in civil engineering and geology in 1959 from Lafayette College (Easton, Pennsylvania). After graduating, he was employed as an engineering geologist by the California Department of Water Resources in Oroville, California. In 1965, he received a doctoral degree in geology from The Pennsylvania State University. For the next three years, he was an assistant professor at the University of Connecticut. In 1968, he began teaching at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. He became a full professor in 1979 and remained at Tech until his retirement in 1997 when he attained the status of professor emeritus.

Rahn is a professional engineer and is a member of AEG, GSA, the American Institute of Professional Geologists, and the National Society of Professional Engineers. His research and publications deal with engineering geology, hydrogeology, and geomorphology. He is the author of the textbook *Engineering Geology, an Environmental Approach*.