

2000 GENERAL TOOLS AWARD - Eric DeLony

Mr Hay's remarks below are from his prepared text as transmitted to the Secretary:

“The Society for Industrial Archeology General Tools Award for Distinguished Service to Industrial Archeology was established in 1992 to "give formal recognition to an individual who has given sustained, distinguished service to the cause of industrial archeology.”

“The Award was established by Gerry Weinstein, Chairman of General Tools Manufacturing Company, and is funded through an endowment created by the Abraham and Lillian Rosenberg Foundation.

[As an aside, I was on the SIA board when Gerry came to us and said "I've learned a lot and have enormously enjoyed my connection with industrial archeology. I'd like to do something that recognizes people who have made significant contributions to the field. I don't want to duplicate the Norton Prize. I like to think of this more as a lifetime achievement award for IA.”

Those of you who heard Gerry's presentation "Twenty Years Behind Ground Glass" in the paper session just before this business meeting got some sense of his love for IA.

Gerry's spirit and enthusiasm for the field has inspired the deliberations of the Award Committees over the past eight years -- all while Gerry himself has taken extraordinary pains to not influence decision making in any way.]

“Criteria for selection are:

- The Award recipient must have given noteworthy, beyond-the-call-of duty service, over an extended period of time, to the cause of industrial archeology.
- The type of service for which the recipient is recognized is unspecified, but must be other than academic publication, regardless of how much or how little academic publication that individual has produced.
- It is desirable, but not necessary that the recipient be (or have been) an SIA member.
- The award shall be made only to living individuals. Teams, groups, agencies, firms, or any other collective entities are not eligible.

“The Award can be given annually, but need not be. It consists of this trophy [made with a General Tools plumb-bob], a citation in the journal IA, and a check for one thousand dollars.

“The call for next year's Award nominations begins at this meeting, will be reiterated in the Newsletter, and will close in March, 2001. Written nominations may be submitted by any

SIA member in good standing. Individuals may not nominate themselves. Nominations should be no more than two or three pages.

“Nominations are reviewed by a three member Committee. Membership rotates, as with other SIA committees – the President appoints one new Committee member each year, the Chair rotates off after making the Award and completing some reports, and eventually the new person cycles up to be Chair.

“This year’s Committee included Vance Packard (last year's recipient of the General Tools Award), David Simmons, and Duncan Hay. David will be next year's Chair.

“David couldn't come to Duluth because his son is graduating from high school this afternoon. In his absence, and on his behalf, let me encourage all of you to submit nominations for next year's General Tools Award and for the ones in succeeding years. Although Committee members are allowed to prepare nominations, we’ve always considered it bad form. The Award is truly intended to come from the membership at large.

[One of the things that has characterized the General Tools Award, from an insider’s perspective, has been the strength on the nominations. Not only has the Award gone to strong individuals who have made important contributions to the field, but the nominations by their friends, colleagues, and admirers have been remarkably well written and persuasively argued.]

[There have been instances when potential nominators have said: "I think so-and-so deserves the General Tools Award, but I only know about a portion of their career. I know that their early work or later work was important, but I don't know the details." That's okay, talk to the Committee members – they may be able to put you in touch with someone who knows about another segment of your candidate’s contributions to the field.]

“The Award is not restricted to residents of the U.S. or Canada. If you think about it for a minute, there are a number of folks on the other side of the Atlantic who have had a profound influence on Industrial Archeology. [I can’t name names up here, but if they don’t come to you now, see me afterwards when I’m no longer Chair.]

“Previous recipients of the General Tools Award are Emory Kemp, Robert Vogel, Margot Gayle, Ed Rutsch, Pat Malone, Helena Wright, and Vance Packard. A distinguished lot by any measure. All but Helena were at the Society's founding meeting at Cooper Union in April, 1972. This year's recipient of the Society for Industrial Archeology's General Tools Award for Distinguished Service to Industrial Archeology is Eric DeLony, Chief of the Historic American Engineering Record.

“Eric did not attend the SIA's original meeting in 1972, but he was already practicing in the field of IA at a time when this Society's founders were still debating whether Archeology should be spelled with one "a" or two. He had been hired as a student architect in 1968 to

work on the second phase of the New England Textile Mills Survey – a joint project of the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of History and Technology (now called the National Museum of American History) and the Historic American Buildings Survey.

“In the summer of 1969, after graduating with a degree in architecture from Ohio State, Eric worked as a delineator on the Mohawk-Hudson Area Survey – the first project of the newly created Historic American Engineering Record. Robert Vogel headed up the Mohawk Hudson Survey and, in addition to Eric, the team included a number of individuals who would go on to become SIA stalwarts and pioneers in the field of American IA – Chuck Parrott, Jack Waite, Rick Allen. As the first official HAER project, the Mohawk Hudson Survey challenged its team members to devise recording techniques for a variety of manufacturing and engineering structures that were significantly different than the techniques developed at HABS during the previous thirty-six years.

“Eric became HAER's first permanent employee in 1971. That summer he worked with Vogel, Chester Leibs, Jack Waite, and Jack Boucher on HAER's first airborne campaign – the helicopter reconnaissance survey of the 400 mile long Erie Railroad right-of-way.

[Look at a photo of that crew in the latest issue of CRM, the National Park Service's magazine on Cultural Resource Management. Judging from their headgear, it looks like Eric and Chester had spent too much time watching Rocky & Bullwinkle or reading Snoopy & the Red Baron cartoons.]

“HAER's first decade was a period of remarkable creativity and production – a time when architects, photographers, historians, and engineers worked together to create new means of recording, interpreting, and presenting historic industrial sites and processes. Eric was in the thick of that enterprise along with Vogel, Emory Kemp, Larry Lankton, and, in the next wave, Richard Anderson, and a fair number of the people who are sitting in this room today.

“During that time, Eric and his colleagues initiated a number of important programs within HAER – Emergency Recording Teams, the SWAT teams of the federal IA world, ready to step in front of bulldozers and document endangered structures; theme studies of particular types of structures such as suspension bridges, cast and wrought-iron truss bridges, and long-span train sheds.

“Eric worked to broaden his architectural training by taking courses at Columbia University’s Historic Preservation Program and at the University of Bath and Ironbridge Institute under the aegis of a Fulbright fellowship. His studies in England brought him in contact with the likes of Angus Buchanan, Neil Cossens, and Barrie Trinder and inspired Eric's interest in international preservation of engineering landmarks that continues to this day.

“Based on his coursework and experience at HAER, Eric organized what may have been America's first field school in industrial archeology through the University of Vermont's Historic Preservation Program and ran it for seven years.

[Did I mention that Eric has a thing for old bridges? It may not be widely known but he really likes them.]

“Eric is probably best known for his interest in and passion for historic bridges. [Some would say it verges on monomaniacal obsession.] Emory Kemp credits him with launching what would become HAER's Historic Bridge Program in 1973. He initiated a series of statewide inventories of historic bridges and used them to identify significant structures that deserved further recording through HAER drawings, photographs, and written histories. Soon, Eric went beyond simply documenting aged spans to become an active advocate for their preservation. To that end, he formed alliances with influential members of the engineering community, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, State Historic Preservation Offices, and Highway Departments to demonstrate that there were alternatives to wholesale replacement of old bridges. Amazingly, he not only got the attention of the Federal Highway Administration, the foremost advocate of bridge replacement, he also got some of their money for inventory, documentation, and preservation work. In 1992, HAER's Historic Bridge Program received a Presidential Historic Preservation Award.

“For the past seventeen years Eric has organized and run an Historic Bridge Symposium in conjunction with the SIA annual conference. He has served on the History and Heritage Committee of the American Society of Civil Engineers and in 1993 collaborated with HAER photographers Jet Lowe and Jack Boucher in the preparation of *Landmark American Bridges*, a book jointly published by the ASCE and the Bullfinch Press.

“Eric was named Chief of the Historic American Engineering Record and has served in that capacity ever since.

“Within our own organization, Eric served two terms on the SIA's Board of Directors (1970-73; 1980-83). He was one of the founders of the Montgomery C. Meigs Original Chapter and served as its president for two terms during the 1980s.

[Another contribution that I discovered while re-reading the Report of the Mohawk-Hudson Survey, is that Eric drew the partial cut-away elevation of Troy's gasholder house that has served as the SIA's logo since this organization's inception. Thank heavens that HAER drawings are in the public domain. Thirty years of royalty payments to Eric for the use of that image would bankrupt the SIA.]

“In conclusion, I would like to quote from two of the nominations that the General Tools Award Committee received on Eric's behalf. Emory Kemp, the first recipient of the General Tools Award wrote:

With the zeal of a missionary, [Eric] has trained a legion of young professionals into the intricacies of site recording. . . . In the role of Ambassador, he has promoted, on an international basis, the Historic American Engineering Record and, in a larger sense, the field of industrial archeology in North America to historians, architects, engineers, and others interested in historic engineering works.

“To that we can add Robert Vogel’s words:

Taken altogether, Eric's career has been one of exceptional distinction and accomplishment. He has devoted his entire professional life and, for that matter, much of his personal, to the cause of industrial archeology, with an intensity of purpose that has raised his contributions far above and beyond the extent that might normally be looked for in even an unusually dedicated person.

“We on the committee concur. [We will leave it to Robert, Emory, and the others to induct Eric into the Order of the Plumb-Bob, teach him the secret handshake, and issue him a decoder ring.]

“We give you Eric DeLony, this year's recipient of the General Tools Award for Distinguished Service to Industrial Archeology.

Mr DeLony received the award to a standing ovation, and stated to the assembly that he always thought HAER and SIA were conceived at the same time, so that everyone in the SIA have in many ways guided what HAER has done. The society's continuing ties with and support of HAER is most appreciated, and it has been going on for 30 years. He stated his hopes that the association will continue to thrive.