

OBITUARY

Jachen Huder

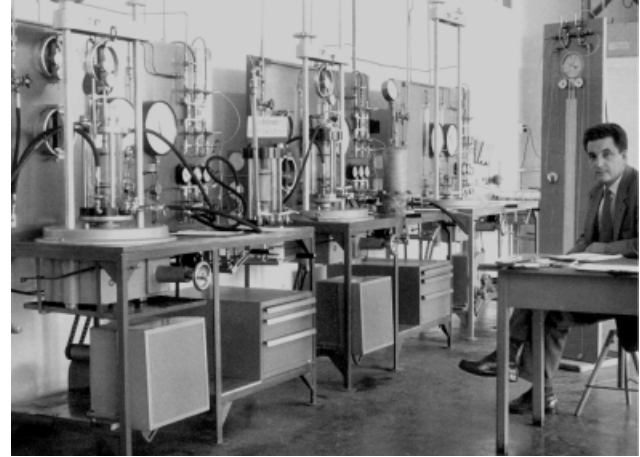
Sadly, Jachen Huder, Emeritus Professor at ETH Zurich, originally from Ardez, in Graubünden, died after a short illness on 10 December 2008. He was born on 16 August 1922, and came from the Rätoromanisch part of Switzerland.

Despite a military accident during the war that led to the loss of his right hand, he completed his diploma studies in civil engineering at ETH Zurich in 1949, thereafter working as a personal assistant to Professor Eugen Meyer-Peter, who was the director of the Versuchsanstalt für Wasser und Erdbau (VAWE). He was particularly proud of his opportunity to contribute to the building of many major earth and concrete dams in the Alps at this time, which eventually provided many practical examples for his later activities as a university professor.

He visited the former ETH Zurich doctoral researcher and current director, Laurits Bjerrum, at NGI (Norwegian Geotechnical Institute) from 1954 to 1956. There he widened his knowledge of soil mechanics and extended his network of international colleagues, including Professor Nilmar Janbu, who described him as a valued member of the international NGI family.

Returning to the VAWE in Zurich as an employee, he completed his doctoral thesis, *Die Bestimmung der Scherfestigkeit strukturempfindlicher Böden unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Seekreide* ('The determination of shear strength of sensitive soils, in particular of seekreide'—a fine-grained carbonate soil, deposited under lacustrine conditions).

Subsequently he taught and researched in Zurich until his retirement in 1989, broken only by a brief sabbatical in 1965 in the United States. He became a titular professor (professor ad hominem) in 1968 on account of his successful efforts in uniting the main areas of his responsibilities through excellent contributions as a teacher in reinventing Swiss soil mechanics and exposing the students to the benefits of his latest research, which had been enriched through his work as an expert for major projects. More latterly these included the extensive development of the



Professor Jachen Huder, 1922–2008 (photographed at NGI, 1954–1955)

enviable Swiss national road network, and the material response of soft and sensitive soils and rocks, including 'Bünderschiefer'. His textbook, co-written with his colleague Professor Hans Jürgen Lang, *Bodenmechanik und Grundbau*, was known colloquially as 'Lang & Huder' or 'Das rote Bibel', and remains today a highly-rated soil mechanics textbook in the German-speaking world.

He was further promoted to Associate (Extraordinary) Professor in 1971 and to Full (Ordinary) Professor in 1977, becoming president of the Swiss Society for Soil and Rock Mechanics (SGBF) from 1978 to 1984. During his retirement he was a regular visitor to the Institute for Geotechnical Engineering, sharing with this correspondent stories of past design and construction challenges, as well as the mysteries of the behaviour of frozen soils. He is sorely missed.

S. M. Springman