

2014 Vernon B. Spalding Leadership Award

Melvin "Ernie" Orchard, PE
Founder & Past President, OHM Advisors



When Ernie Orchard became president of the consulting firm Orchard, Papke, Hiltz & McCliment, Inc. in 1972, he immediately engaged with ACEC/MI. Energetic in his support of ACEC, Ernie later held leadership roles at the state and national levels. In the mid-70's, he helped to organize the first Political Action Committee in Michigan's Chapter of ACEC and the first Legislative Day in Lansing to bring attention to issues impacting the design profession.

A past president of ACEC/MI, Ernie served on national Membership and Transportation Committees for ACEC and became Michigan's National Director of ACEC in 1981, a position which he held for five years. He was a member of the Engineering Society of Detroit, Southern Michigan Water and Sewer Utilities Association, American Water Works Association, and the American Public Works Association. He was also the Ypsilanti Township representative for the Technical Advisory and Federal Aid to the Urbanized Systems Subcommittee of the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Urban Area Transportation Committee, now known as the Washtenaw Area Transportation Study. In 1991, Ernie received the President's Award for his many years of service to ACEC/MI, and he was also elected a Fellow of ACEC in recognition of his many contributions to the engineering profession. He was inducted into the Michigan Technological University Civil and Environmental Engineering Academy in 1994.

Before retiring in 1993, Ernie grew his original 20-person engineering firm into a consulting team of more than 100 people. He not only expanded services in support of the advisory needs of clients, but established a culture of service to communities that exists today. His greatest source of pride is that he was able to pass along the importance of being good stewards of the profession to his staff. He cites the firm's retention of its original five clients today as a major accomplishment; attributable to an enduring reputation for quality work and a focus on giving back locally. Ernie served meals at the Baldwin Center in Pontiac, delivered Meals on Wheels to residents of Farmington Hills, and was active with the Boys and Girls Club of Auburn Hills. The firm is still involved with many of these organizations as well as with more than 100 local charities. A 1949 graduate of Michigan Technological University, Ernie is active with the school as a member of the President's Club and helps to raise money for the MTU Civil Engineering Department. In addition, the Ernie Orchard Scholarship Fund provides monetary support for students of his other alma mater, Calumet High School.

Ernie began his career as the District Sanitary Engineer for the Wayne County Health Department, and continued with the Redford Township Sewer and Water Department, Johnson & Anderson and Willow Woods Development Company. He operated his own consulting engineering firm, Orchard Engineering.