

## Stanley George Elliott 9 January 1927 - 22 October 2016 [By Ron Rakusen]

Stanley George Elliott was born at Navan, County Meath.

In 1948 Stanley graduated Trinity College Dublin with a double degree in Arts and Engineering. He joined a London-based engineering consultancy, Scott & Wilson and after an initial period in the firm's London soil mechanics laboratory was transferred to Nyasaland, now Malawi, where he was engaged until 1956 on road, airfield and water supply schemes.

It was during this time that Stanley met Eunice, his wife-to-be. During the war she had served in the WRAF in England and India, and after a year in Allied-occupied Germany in 1949 she was posted to Nyasaland as secretary to the Director of Civil Aviation. Stanley and Eunice started their family in Nyasaland with two daughters, Lesley and Susan, born there and Barbara born shortly after they left.

Scott Wilson (now Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick & Partners,) encouraged their young engineers to develop their skills, and in 1956 Stanley won the *Charles Storer Storrow Memorial scholarship* to study at Harvard under Terzaghi, the "father of soil mechanics". He obtained his Master of Science in 1957, graduating top of his class and winning the *Austin B Mason prize* for "meritorious work". Shortly after Stanley left Harvard, the family moved to Hong Kong.

In early 1958 he worked initially on the development of Kai Tak airport and assisted John Henry, the Senior Partner in Hong Kong, searching for potential projects in Asia. This soon led to the firm's appointment for two major projects in Brunei. The first was for the investigation, design and supervision of 35 miles of new rural roads in the Temburong District. The

second was the new Brunei International Airport. In hilly, jungle-covered terrain the firm had to achieve a 3,660m runway, airport lighting systems and navigational aids, the passenger terminal and a 30m high control tower. Stanley was responsible for the site studies and construction supervision.

On 1st January 1966 Stanley Elliott, known universally as SGE, was made a Partner of the firm. Based in Hong Kong, he played an important role in the design, construction and management of many major projects. One of these was the Plover Cover water supply scheme. Hong Kong had become increasingly dependent on China for its water, and needed an independent water supply. Plover Cove involved creating a large reservoir in a coastal inlet with a main dam of 1.25 miles. Supervision of the underwater construction was crucial to ensure the stability of the dam and it was completed in mid-1966 after the seawater had been pumped out and replaced by 37,000 million gallons of fresh water. SGE was also involved with the Cross-Harbour Tunnel, which began construction in 1967 and was opened by Princess Alexandra in 1972. At that time it was the longest underwater road tunnel in Asia, carrying over 25,000 vehicles per day, a revolution for Hong Kong residents.

As the Hong Kong population grew, more infrastructure and services were required. Stanley secured many of the resulting public and private projects for Scott Wilson. Under his guidance the firm was responsible for projects including the design of two new towns at Tsuen Wan and Tuen Mun, catering for populations of 750,000 and 500,000 respectively and requiring 1200 hectares of reclamation; the Tuen Mun Road linking the two towns

with a 15.5km [*\* 17km JPMcC*] dual three-lane carriageway, completed in two stages (1972 to 1978) [*\* 1972 to 1982 JPMcC*]; projects for the Hong Kong Geotechnical Control Office to improve steep hillsides after landslides had killed more than 150 people; and the first of many Ground Investigation contracts for the Mass Transit Railway covering the length of Nathan Road to Central District including under the harbour (1973-1974).

Scott Wilson was also active in the private sector with studies for a fifth berth at Kwai Chung container terminal; a feasibility report for an oil terminal and petrochemical complex; offloading facilities for Dow Chemicals; the redevelopment of Taikoo dockyard and the construction of a sea wall at San Miguel brewery.

Under Stanley's guidance, the firm grew to meet the challenge. In 1972 it celebrated its twentieth year in Hong Kong, which coincided with Stanley serving as President of the Hong Kong Engineering Society. The growing workload meant that another office was opened in Tsuen Wan for the teams working on the new towns and roads while the main Star House office continued to deal with the private sector and other projects. In the early 1980s SWK International was established with the aim of creating an organisation to hold the various Scott Wilson partnerships around the world together. Stanley was one of the seven initial directors of SWK International.

SGE's most easterly project was the major upgrading of the Highlands Highway project in Papua New Guinea. Construction work on this £30 million, 137 km highway commenced in mid-1980 and Stanley and Eunice were invited to the



opening ceremony in December 1984.

As China began to open up to foreign businesses in the mid-1980s, Stanley and his fellow partners sought ways to work in China without impacting on their good relations with the Hong Kong government and the firm's private sector clients. Stanley was in the right place at the right time when John Hoffman, a fellow Alumnus of Harvard (1976/77) approached him in 1986. John's contacts in the State Council explained to him that China was experiencing long delays in unloading incoming international cargoes in its main coastal ports because there were no Commercial Bonded Warehouses. They asked John if he could help.

As a result, Stanley agreed that SWKP would join the team and later Royal Nedlloyd also became involved. By 1986 Nedlloyd had taken the lead and by 1987 the Tianjin Port Authority had accepted the feasibility study. Construction for the first stage of the 150,000 sq. m. warehouse and other facilities was completed in 1989. So began the start of a serious move by SWKP

into China. Many projects followed on from this small beginning and eventually a very large and successful team operated not only from Hong Kong but from several significant offices in China.

Stanley enjoyed hockey and squash, and represented his club, the KCC, in hockey matches overseas. He played golf and provided the trophy for the annual staff golfing day. He was President of the St Patrick's Society in 1975. Most of all he was a family man and loved his family, Eunice, Lesley, Susan and Barbara.

Stanley George Elliott died on 22nd October 2016. His family remembers him with love and pride, and friends and colleagues as a brilliant engineer, leader and mentor. He dedicated his life to a broad range of engineering projects which were integral to Hong Kong's development.

*\* Minor corrections by JP McCafferty.*