

The Start of the D F I

Looking back at the beginnings of the DFI

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Attending the DFI Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh last Fall triggered me to think back on how the DFI got started, or, rather, to reminiscence on the individuals launching the DFI in the early 1970s. My own involvement started in the Fall of 1973 after I gave a presentation to the Canadian Geotechnical Society's Annual Conference on the Swedish Pile Commission and on the efforts under way to form a group in Canada similar to the Swedish (the Canadian Steering Committee consisted of Mike Bozozuk, Lech Brzezinski, Jack Clark, Bengt Fellenius, and Francois Tavenas). Hal Hunt was in attendance and he asked me to join a group of people thinking of doing the same thing in the US.

Hal never let a good thought wilt for lack of attention. Thus, a few months later (Spring of 1974) at a PileTalk Seminar in Saddle Brook, New Jersey, the idea of forming a "Pile Institute" was put forward and the attendees were asked to comment. To discuss the many responses received, most very positive response to the idea, a meeting of interested persons was held on October 27, 1974, at a Pile Talk meeting in St. Louis. The meeting resulted in the formation a few weeks later of a Steering Committee consisting of the following.

Robert G. Compton, Koehring MK-T
Joseph DeSalvo, Joseph Ward & Associates
Thomas D. Dismuke, Bethlehem Steel Co.
John J. Dougherty, Jr., Associated Pipe & Fitting Corp.
Bengt H. Fellenius, Terratech Ltd.
Richard H. Goettle III, Richard H. Goettle Inc.
Hal W. Hunt, Associated Pipe & Fitting Corp.
William E. Kruse, Falco Contracting Co.
Harry Lindahl, US Steel
Norman L. Liver, Lee Turzillo Construction Co.
William F. Loftus, William F. Loftus Associates
Al McKinnon
Stiles Stevens, Joseph S. Ward Associates

The Steering Committee held several meetings during the following year and a half. For me, being a North European newcomer to the North American democratic and social system, it was an immensely interesting educational involvement. Bylaws and organization of the Deep Foundations Institute took form, no, evolved, during sometimes very vocal exchanges of views. The common thread was that the organization should be one where the individuals coming from all the groups active in the deep foundation the industry, and that persons with very diverse background and differing interests should have a forum for exchanging knowledge and views. Equally important was the aspect that the organization should provide the means for the members to get to know each other individually to foster understanding and mutual respect.

The Deep Foundation Institute was officially formed in January 1976, with Jack Dougherty as President and Hal Hunt as inofficial Secretary, and 66 member signing up as charter members. The Canadians let go of their own plans and joined the DFI. Later, thanks to primarily Bill Loftus efforts, the DFI became an organization with global engagements. Many individuals have put in much effort toward moving the DFI forward. If I tried to mention them all, I would have to make a long, long list and run out of space. However, I must single out Bob Compton, who served as President in 1979-1980 and who also made a decisive contribution to the organization as Executive Director from 1986 through 1993.

It has been 23 years and the DFI membership has grown. The membership receives and gives out information in conferences, continuing education courses, and publications. I think that it has developed into a group close to what the Steering Committee aspired. More can be done, though, and I am looking forward to what the next couple of years will show. Since the start, the DFI has been an organization of individuals working together. If the old and new members continue in the spirit of the formative years, the DFI's continued presence will be felt and appreciated in the deep foundation industry.



Photo of a few members of the Steering Committee at a meeting in 1974: seated at the table are from left to right: Stiles Stevens, Robert Compton, William Kruse, Joseph DeSalvo, Bengt Fellenius, and Jack Dougherty