

Cline drawn to engineering by love of building

BY DEBRA BAKER BECK

A love for building things drew distinguished alumnus Roy Cline (BS '60) into engineering, and the opportunity to see projects grow from a mere idea on a drafting table or computer screen to completion has kept him going throughout his career.

He's built subways, wastewater treatment systems, power plants and a host of other projects. Every day brings new challenges, and that fact appeals to Cline.

"Rarely do you build the same thing over, in the same way," he says. "Every job is something different...You don't have much time to be bored."

The hours are long and hard, but Cline never objected to the effort it took to get to where he is today.

Cline has risen to remarkable heights in the construction industry. Today, he is president and chief executive officer of Kiewit Industrial Co., a major leadership role in the field. But the Greybull (Wyo.) High School graduate spent most of his career with Morrison Knudson Construction Corporation, rising from office engineer in 1968 to group president in 1989.

After graduating from UW in 1960, Cline took a job in San Diego as a junior engineer with the California Highway Department. He began training in design and layout of the freeway system in the San Diego County area. The interstate highway system provided many young engineers with opportunities in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and Cline joined the effort.

"At that time, the interstate system was very big and very attractive to most civil engineers," he says.

Those days in San Diego offered him many new experiences. Walking into a room full of 120 engineers at drafting tables his first day on the job left a profound impression on the young Cline.

"That was my first real experience as a poor country boy out of Wyoming in a big city," he says.

Cline stayed with the CHD until April 1961, when he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. After receiving his commission as a second lieutenant, he served as a civil engineering officer at bases in Ohio, the District of Columbia, California, Louisiana and Kansas before taking a one-year assignment (1966-67) at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam.

His work building military installations in that country was "quite an exciting adventure." It tested his improvisation skills, as he and his co-workers operated with limited materials and equipment.

"You couldn't run down to the corner hardware store and buy something if you needed it," Cline says.

While he enjoyed his construction effort in Vietnam, the experience helped put his own life in perspective.

"You sure got a great appreciation for living in America by being in that environment for awhile," Cline says.

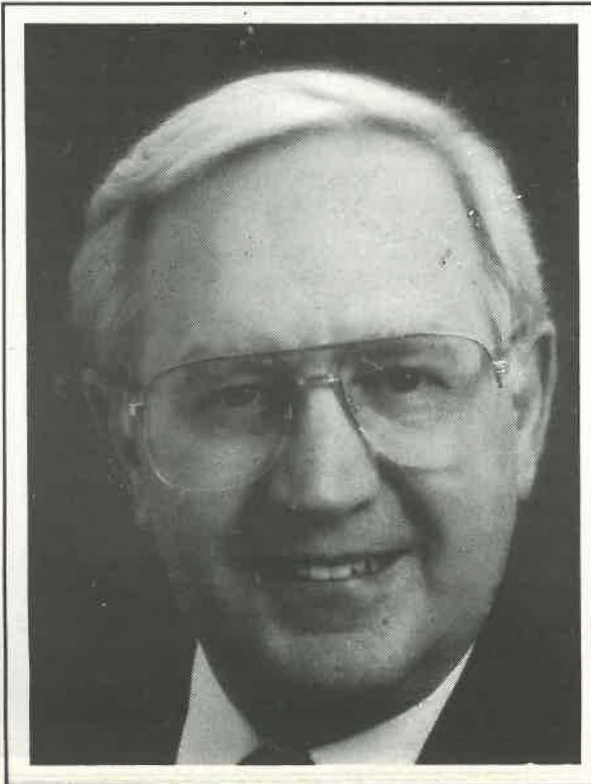
When he returned to the U.S. in January 1968, Cline joined Boise, Idaho, based Morrison Knudson because he saw it as an opportunity to do what he loved most.

"It was a very dynamic company, and it had a reputation for building difficult projects," Cline says. He signed on as an office engineer in Baytown, Texas, to work on a large steel mill for United States Steel.

The mill was billed as a 20-year program and Cline believed it was an opportunity to watch a major project grow over time. Fifteen months later, he was on his way to Connecticut.

"I learned that in the construction business, 'long-term' means 'more than a month,'" he says with a chuckle.

Moving around is an inevitable part of the business, and "it gets in your blood," according to Cline. His own "itchy feet"



ROY CLINE

took to assignments in Connecticut, Maryland, Indiana, Ohio and Idaho.

On those jobs, he progressed from project manager to area manager to upper-level positions. Beginning in 1980, Cline served as assistant group manager for North American operations, manager of division operations (also North American operations), manager of operations-power & industrial, vice president of the eastern division-power, executive vice president-power, president and CEO of the environmental group, and president of the construction group.

To most people, that resume would represent a very successful career. But Cline saw room for further growth. He moved to Kiewit in March 1992, because he saw an opportunity to move up one more level. As president of Kiewit Industrial Co., Cline heads a company that is preparing to develop power energy and industrial projects worldwide.

Indeed, Kiewit is expanding its focus to an exploding international market. While the domestic construction market has been flat or recessionary for the last few years, Cline predicts that the international market will experience growth similar to what the U.S. experienced in the 1950s and 1960s. It's only natural to follow that opportunity, he says.

Industry Changes

As with many professions, computerization has changed the face of engineering today. Cline says the computer enables engineers to plan in greater detail and design projects in ways that methods of previous decades did not allow.

The construction industry benefits from more efficient and bigger equipment that gives workers greater latitude to do quality work.

Still, people are the key.

"None of that has changed the fact that it takes people to do it," Cline says. "When you're out building things, it's the ingenuity and the energy of people that get it done." The commitment and long hours put forth by individuals in the engineering and construction industries have always impressed him.

Having What It Takes

After working many years in upper-level management positions, Cline has learned what it takes to be an effective leader.

"You have to have a strong sense of integrity and honesty," he says. "If you make a commitment, stick to it."

Gaining the trust and confidence of co-workers takes a lot of hard work, according to Cline. But the effort is rewarding.

"People work with you and for you if they have respect for you and your abilities," he says.

Cline also is a believer in teamwork.

"You have to be willing to get right in there with everyone else, make it a team effort," he says. "'We' is a lot better word than 'I'."

Cline adds that a good leader also must know the business, keep learning, listen and be open-minded.

A Word of Advice...

To the next generation of engineers, Cline stresses the importance of commitment.

"You have to put forth a very strong commitment to this business," he says. "You have to be willing to work a lot of hours. You've got to like to see things built and do things with your hands. And you must like working and communicating with people."

Engineering and construction are good fields for someone interested in a dynamic profession, according to Cline.

"If you want something that has a fairly constant change to it, this is probably a good business for you," he says.

Miscellany

As a UW student, Cline participated in Sigma Chi fraternity, intramural sports, ROTC and various engineering activities. He particularly enjoyed taking drafting courses and strength of material courses.

Today, Cline is a life member of the UW Alumni Association and a donor to UW programs.

He also recently joined the planning committee for UW's new School of Environment and Natural Resources (SENR).

"You get to where you need to give something back to your university and other institutions that help you get where you are," Cline says of his decision to get involved with the SENR. "This is one way that I can do something for the university."

Cline and his wife, Caryl, have three daughters: Kelly Cline of Park City, Utah; Kari Brown of Seattle; and Kristin Cline of Boise.

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