

Jop (Joseph) Peter Van Overveen
December 3, 1916 - March 3, 2008

The Rail Transportation Division sadly notes the passing of a long-time member. Joseph, commonly referred to as "Jop" or "Joppy" (pronounced Yop) by friends and relatives, was known by his colleagues in the rail industry as "Joe." Joe was born in Amsterdam, Holland and as a child developed a love for trains. He also lived in South Africa for a short time while his father was working in the diamond industry. His father appeared on an NBC's Chet Huntley Newsreel in the 1950's regarding his cutting of the "Burton Diamond" worn by Elizabeth Taylor. The diamond was cut on a wheel designed by Joseph.

In his early 20's Joe was drafted into the US Army, during World War II, and became a naturalized US Citizen in September 1940. Joe and his wife Irene were married in 1943. He was discharged as a 1st Lieutenant in 1946, and they moved to Northern California in 1949. They laid down roots in Lafayette in 1950, where they lived for over 57 years. Joe earned a Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering from studies in Haarlem, Holland, and a Master's Degree in Railway Mechanical Engineering from Purdue University. He had gained much engineering experience in the Army, at a food packaging company in New York, and at a gear/transmission factory in Massachusetts. Working for Shand & Jurs in Berkeley, Joe developed 5 engineering patents related to petroleum storage equipment.

He was hired in the 1960's, by Parsons, Brinckerhoff-Tudor-Bechtel for the initial development of the Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BARTD), which led to the position of Senior Mechanical Engineer with BARTD.

Many innovative mechanical features of the transit system were designed by Joe. He retired from BARTD at the age of 80, after working over 30 years for the district. Joe often marveled that after playing with model trains as a child, he was very lucky to play with "big" trains as an adult.

He was very active in many civic and professional groups and was instrumental in the City of Lafayette becoming incorporated. Joe regularly attended Lafayette City Council meetings where he was known for his "lectern moments". He was an environmentalist long before it was fashionable, fore-fronting the removal of a commercial helicopter-landing pad that had impacted his quiet suburb in the 1960's. He was Director of the Lafayette Community Center 1958-1974, Chairman of the Board 1960-1964, Lafayette City Recreation Commissioner 1975-1982, and active member in the Lafayette Historical Society, Lafayette Forward, the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, and LaFrantics. For his efforts, Joseph was voted Lafayette Citizen of the Year in 1962. Joe obviously loved his city and he loved his adopted country.

He was a member of the National and California Society of Professional Engineers since 1959, a Life Fellow of The American Society of Mechanical Engineers and member emeritus of the ASME History and Heritage Committee. Joe attended many of the ASME Rail Transportation Division technical conferences, presenting papers and entering into discussions on other papers. He had a wealth of experience and knowledge which he shared with the rail industry. Joe will be missed by the rail industry engineering community.