This September, CHES honoured one of its healthcare industry’s greats with the posthumous awarding of its Hans Burgers Award for Outstanding Contribution to Healthcare Engineering to Per E. Paasche.

The award was given out during the 2014 CHES National Conference in Saint John, New Brunswick, in recognition of Paasche’s far-reaching work within the NB healthcare industry and CHES itself.

“Per was a strong believer in CHES and its objectives. He worked hard to ensure its growth and sustainability, not only as a believer but as an active and vocal supporter,” says Phil Langford with the CHES Maritime Chapter, adding, “There wasn’t anything he wouldn’t do when asked to improve the image of the organization.”

A member of CHES since 1983, Paasche helped establish the Maritime CHES Chapter alongside George Seeley. Over the years that followed, he was instrumental in shaping its growth, serving as its national secretary from 2006 to 2010, chair of its communications committee, and an active player in the development of the association’s website.

“I met Per when I joined the CHES Maritime Chapter and was impressed by his involvement in the organization,” recalls Langford. “Our friendship continued to grow as we both served on the National Board of Directors and various CSA Health Care Technical committees. His concern over ensuring that the correct issues were being addressed regarding the facility management components of healthcare -- particularly the electrical component -- was unmatched.”

During his time with CHES, Paasche negotiated member access to CSA standards on healthcare. He also represented CHES and the New Brunswick Department of Health on numerous CSA committees, including as a member of the Strategic Steering Committee on Health Care Technologies, chair of the CSA’s Technical Committee on Application of Electricity in Health Care, a member of the Health Care Facilities Sterilization Committee, and a member of the Infection Control During Construction and Renovation Committee, to name just a few.

“Per has had a profound impact on CHES and healthcare overall,” says Ralph Mayfield with the CHES Maritime Chapter. “The chapter executive truly feels that Per Paasche deserves this award for his outstanding service to both CHES and the healthcare industry.”

Per’s legacy within the industry began in 1977 when he became a professional engineering after obtaining a bachelor of science degree from Dalhousie University and a master’s degree in engineering from Nova Scotia Technical College. From there, he applied his expertise and wisdom to work within numerous New Brunswick hospitals under the province’s Department of Health banner. His career has also paired him with the University of New Brunswick, the Institute of Biomedical Engineering, and with hospital commissioning initiatives across the province up until his retirement in 2008.

“Per contributed by providing technical support and insight into virtually every hospital construction project in New Brunswick during his time at the University of New Brunswick and through his time representing the
New Brunswick Department of Health,” says Gordon Burrill, former CHES president. “He helped connect the construction world with the changing technological and standards world, and was a tireless fighter for any technical subject he believed to be true. He fought to uphold the value of educated and respectful debate at the standards table, both nationally and at the provincial level.”

Reflecting on his career on a whole, Langford notes: “Per’s working career and his knowledge in his field of expertise and work ethic was exemplary. Many of those hospital projects have benefited from Per’s involvement, and he set the bar high by being involved in many organizations related to the field of healthcare.”

Outside of the jobsite, Paasche dedicated his energy and passion to his family. He is survived by his wife Nancy, children Ingrid and John Anthony, and grandchildren Jake, Jesse, Jensen, and Halden.

Those who worked with Paasche will attest to his affinity for camping, his volunteer work with provincial swimming teams, and his ability for building strong, lasting relationships. “Per was the type of person who would call you at any hour when he just wanted to know how you and your family were. He would also call if he felt a second opinion was needed for a particular policy or technical problem that he was working on,” says Langford. “He was a caring individual and dedicated to those he called his friend.”

Speaking to Paasche’s legacy, Peter Whitemen adds: “In the time I have known Per, I have come to appreciate his dedication and his drive to improve healthcare and electrical safety. His work and presence with CHES will be greatly missed.”

Nancy Paasche accepts the Hans Burger Award on behalf of Per at 2014 CHES Awards Gala

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