



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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TARP mastermind Bing Chee Chin recognized for major engineering contributions



Acclaimed engineer Bing Chee Chin was honored for his 36 years of work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers by the MWRD Board of Commissioners. Despite retiring in 1998, the influence of his work is still felt today for his efforts to develop major infrastructure projects that protected the region from flooding and improved local water quality.

A critical member of the engineering team that launched the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago's (MWRD's) famed Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP) and other major infrastructure improvements was recently honored by the MWRD Board of Commissioners.

On the observance of his 80th birthday, Bing Chee Chin received a resolution from Vice President Barbara McGowan and Chairman of Finance Frank Avila, who also studied engineering with Chin at the University of Illinois.

"We wish Bing a happy birthday and thank him for his valuable engineering contributions to the water environment of our region," said Commissioner Avila. "Bing is such an influential engineer that his picture can still be found on the wall at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Great Lakes and Ohio River Division Office Gallery of Distinguished Employees."

Mr. Chin, who was accompanied by his son-in-law Jeffrey Moy and granddaughter Ashley Moy, representing a third generation of engineers in the family, spent 36 years with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), working his way to become chief of the USACE Chicago District's Programs Management Office. While there, Mr. Chin was



Bing Chee Chin (second from left), with his granddaughter Ashley Moy, was presented a resolution for his engineering accomplishments by Chairman of Finance Frank Avila and Vice President Barbara McGowan.

instrumental in developing long-term engineering and construction programs and working with Congress to appropriate funds to implement these vital projects.

"The lasting impression of Bing's work can be viewed across our region and in the work we do today at the MWRD to protect our waterways and our streets and basements from flooding," said Vice President McGowan.

Chin was born January 1, 1938 in Kung Yick City, Tai Shan District, Kwang-Tung Province (Guangdong), China, having spent his first eight years of childhood helping his grandmothers around their simple homes that had dirt floors and lacked electricity and running water. Forced to leave his home country because of World War II, Chin immigrated to the U.S. with his father and cousin aboard a military vessel in 1947. Following the 17-day journey to the U.S., his family settled in Chicago where he attended LeMoyné Elementary School and Lake View High School.

Chin worked two part-time jobs in between his studies, overcoming battles with motion sickness on public transportation as he completed his assignments during the only time he had for homework. He was accepted into the University of Illinois at Navy Pier and later (*continued*)

TARP mastermind Bing Chee Chin recognized *(continued)*

transferred to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to study engineering. After graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering, Chin began working at the USACE Chicago District's Peoria Project Office, Operations Division. In 1967, he was promoted to USACE Program Development Office and named chief of the Program Development Office in 1973, just as the TARP program was emerging during a pivotal time at the MWRD.

As development spread through the Chicago area in the early 20th century, paved surfaces directed increasing amounts of stormwater runoff into the combined sewer system. By the 1960s, Chicago area sewers were overflowing to the river more than 100 days a year and flooding had become a persistent issue. In 1967, officials of the MWRD, the state of Illinois, Cook County and the city of Chicago formed the Flood Control Coordinating Committee to find a solution to the region's flooding and water pollution problems. The committee considered 50 alternatives and selected TARP as the most cost-effective approach to providing maximum benefits with minimal negative impacts. The most obvious solution, replacing combined sewers with separate storm and sanitary pipes, was determined to be too costly, disruptive to communities, and unable to provide flood relief.

The MWRD and the USACE officially adopted TARP as the area's plan to comply with federal and state water quality standards in 1972. TARP's elaborate tunnel system and massive reservoirs today provide an outlet for floodwaters to reduce street and basement flooding, protect Lake Michigan and improve the water in local rivers and streams to a quality once never imagined. The MWRD and USACE recently completed Stage I of the McCook Reservoir, which holds 3.5 billion gallons of water. Stage I of McCook is estimated to provide \$114 million per year in flood reduction benefits to 3.1 million people living in Chicago and 36 suburban communities.

For his efforts, Chin was selected as an Outstanding Professional Federal Employee in 1976 and inducted into the Army Corps of Engineers Hall of Fame. Married for 57 years to his wife Sue, the Chins raised son Michael and daughters Doreen, Charlene, and Marlene and have welcomed many grandchildren into their lives.

"We thank Bing for his commitment to our water resources and the knowledge he shared with us for so many years to create a resilient Chicago area," said MWRD Board President Mariyana Spyropoulos.

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Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwr.org) is an award winning, special purpose government agency responsible for used water treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.