

Massachusetts Roots: *How did a Working-Class Boy from Swampscott Become a Civil Engineer Whose Work Reached Around the World?*

For John J. Scheuren, Jr., the answer began long before Greenland, Antarctica, or international consulting assignments.

Born in Boston in 1909 and raised in Swampscott, Scheuren learned the value of work early. At eight years old, he earned money pulling dandelions on the golf course at Swampscott Country Club. Years later, as a working-class student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), he continued working to pay his way through.

He hoped that by carefully saving his earnings he could spend his senior year as what students of that day called a "gentleman," free from the demands of part-time work and able to devote himself fully to his studies. The bank failures of 1929 ended that dream. Years of careful saving disappeared overnight. Like so many Americans of his generation, he learned early that character means calm and perseverance in the face of disappointment.

He graduated from MIT in 1931 and began a career as a civil engineer that would span more than six decades. His work eventually carried him to engineering projects throughout the United States and around the world, from Greenland and Antarctica to the Caribbean, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and beyond.

Yet Massachusetts never stopped being home.

Between assignments, Scheuren returned to Cohasset and Hingham, where family, community, and New England values that had shaped him on the North Shore remained the foundation of his life.

Long before John J. Scheuren became an Arctic engineer, an Antarctic engineer, or an international consultant, he was a Massachusetts engineer.

The honors that followed reflected the breadth of his career. He became a Fellow of the American Society of Civil Engineers, a member of The Explorers Club, an Emeritus Member of the Arctic Institute of North America, a member of the Marine Technology Society and the International Permafrost Association, and a recipient of the U.S. Army Patriotic Civilian Award. In Antarctica, the Scheuren Stream (a seasonal meltwater stream that flows from the Wilson Piedmont Glacier) bears his name in recognition of his contributions to polar engineering.

Today, it is not his professional honors that are being preserved.

In *Talking Through My Hard Hat: Chronicle of a 20th-Century Civil Engineer*, readers encounter the man behind the accomplishment, a thoughtful observer, a problem solver, a husband and father, and an engineer whose curiosity and commitment to public service carried him from the streets

of Swampscott to some of the most remote places on Earth. Dictated late in life and his voice faithfully preserved by his family, the life chronicle allows new generations to hear his own voice and experience the twentieth century through the eyes of someone who helped build it.

We all carry our first home with us. The places where we grow up help shape our character, our formative experiences, and our fundamental identity. For John J. Scheuren, that place was Massachusetts. The lessons he learned on Boston's North and South Shores, through family, hard work, education, and personal responsibility became the foundation for his global career.

Through *Talking Through My Hard Hat*, readers discover that the remarkable journey from Swampscott to Greenland, Antarctica, and beyond was more than the story of an accomplished engineer. It was the story of a Massachusetts boy whose early experiences shaped a lifetime of far-reaching excellence in engineering, exploration, and leadership.