



## MEET PHIL IVERSON

# Evolution of an industry

Sarah Fister Gale



**P**hil Iverson has had a long and successful career in the precast concrete industry, though he is quick to point out that he had a lot of support getting there. “I was very lucky,” he says.

Iverson grew up in the shadow of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore in Bear Lake, Mich., building homes alongside his father and brother. “We didn’t have a lot of money, but it was a wonderful life,” he says. In 1973, he went to Michigan State University in East Lansing, where he considered becoming a teacher, but his aptitude for math and science led him to pursue a degree in civil engineering.

After graduating, he spent a few years working as a project engineer, burying intake and discharge pipelines in the bottom of Lake Michigan, until his brother-in-law helped him get a job at Material Service Corp. in Chicago, Ill. “They touched every construction material that came into Chicago,” Iverson says. He landed a position in sales in the precast concrete division and never looked back.

Iverson began calling on architects and construction companies across the city and landed several big projects right from the start. “At first I thought I must be really good at this,” he says, but he soon realized that having a powerful company name on his business cards helped get him in the door. “Everyone knew Material Service, so they welcomed me.”

He was later promoted to manager of estimating and engineering, where he led a department responsible for engineering and drafting all in-house precast concrete projects.

When J. W. Peters Inc. acquired the precast concrete division of Material Service in the late 1980s, Iverson decided to take his career in a new direction, joining PCI as its technical director. “It was an interesting time for precast concrete,” Iverson says.

When he took the job, the industry—and PCI—was still immature and finding its way. Over his 15-year tenure, though,

he saw them both evolve. Architects and builders across the nation began to see the quality and value in using precast concrete in a variety of projects, and PCI members helped develop building codes and innovative new products, including staggered truss systems and total-precast concrete solutions, which changed the way our country’s infrastructure was built.

“The industry saw so many huge accomplishments in those years,” he says. He attributes much of that growth to many of PCI’s original members, including Les Martin and Norm Scott. “They were the real titans of the industry,” he says. “They were the innovators and inventors who made this industry legitimate.”

In the early 2000s, Iverson left PCI to open a sales office for Spancrete in the Chicago area. In that role he spent a lot of time promoting the fire safety aspects of building with precast concrete and helped many villages upgrade their codes for safer construction.

Then when the recession hit in 2008, Iverson joined Tindall Corp.’s Georgia Division, and later went to the company’s San Antonio, Tex., office, where he continues to promote the safety, performance, and quality of precast concrete designs to his customers and through his participation with PCI.

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He says he hopes future industry members will find the same kind of camaraderie and inspiration in participating in the institute that he discovered nearly 40 years ago. “It is easy to get caught up in what you are doing and assume that’s all there is, but PCI is an opportunity to get to know people across the industry,” he says. “It’s a place to learn about new ideas and get a different perspective.”