



OBLIGATION OF AN ENGINEER¹

I am an engineer. In my profession I take deep pride. To it I owe solemn obligations.* Since the Stone Age, human progress has been spurred by the engineering genius. Engineers have made usable Nature's vast resources of material and energy for mankind's benefit. Engineers have vitalized and turned to practical use the principles of science and the means of technology. **Were it not for this heritage of accumulated experience, my efforts would be feeble.**

As an engineer, I pledge to practice integrity and fair dealing, tolerance and respect; and to uphold devotion to the standards and the dignity of my profession, conscious always that my skill carries with it the obligation to serve humanity by making the best use of Earth's precious wealth.

As an engineer, I shall participate in none but honest enterprises. When needed, my skill and knowledge shall be given without reservation for the public good. In the performance of duty and in fidelity to my profession, I shall give the utmost.

* New members read aloud only the bold parts.

¹ From: *Information Kit*, Order of the Engineer, Inc.

EXPLANATION & HISTORY²

To witness the progress of young engineers is a gratifying and rewarding experience—especially to the experienced professional—strong in pride of a profession recognized by the public as contributing to the welfare of man.

Progression from the academic world to the world of engineering practice is a transition from learning to a reality that requires a clear vision and understanding of what we as engineers have done, and must continue to do, for humanity and the quality of life everywhere. As engineers we also owe a debt to our profession.

To meet the needs of the future, we took to you, the engineers of the future, and place our faith in you not only to rescue the environment, but also to help bring about a unity that can only bode well for the entire spectrum of the profession and the public. As engineers you have a responsibility to become registered, join, and assist in this endeavor.

Thomas Carlyle, the Scottish essayist, defined a society as the vital articulation of many individuals into a new individual. Decades ago, our engineering counter-parts in Canada had this same feeling. They found a need for the introduction of a spirit of community and cohesiveness among engineers. The Canadians believed that a good way

to go about achieving this would be to instill in engineers a consciousness of belonging to one another, to themselves as individuals, and to those they serve.

The result of this need for community resulted in the Canadian "Ritual of the Calling of an Engineer." The words of the ritual were written by the British author Rudyard Kipling. Kipling had much depth of feeling for engineers, the builders of things intended to benefit mankind. The ritual also includes the placing of a ring on the small finger of the working hand.

The ring is an excellent symbol of continuity and community. It is worn for all to see and, in effect, says, "Here is an engineer possessed of a publicly avowed dedication to the profession and those it serves."

Maxims similar to those of Kipling took hold in Ohio and correspondence began between members of the Canadian Calling and the then officers of the Ohio Society of Professional Engineers—notably Lloyd Chacey, Homer T. Borton, and Brooks Earnest—with a view toward extending the Canadian ceremony to the United States. Due to legal restrictions, this was not possible. However, at the invitation of the Canadian wardens, Homer Borton and Brooks Earnest received their first rings in Canada.

During 1966, a group of U. S. engineers began to pursue the establishment of what was then known in Ohio as "The Order of the Engineer." While this group deliberated, seniors at the Fenn College of Engineering at Cleveland State University, counseled by Dean Burl Bush, designed and held the first ring ceremony and reception on June 4, 1970. About 170 engineering seniors and faculty members participated in the ceremony, during which each participant signed a creed and received a stainless steel ring placed on the small finger of the working hand. A second ceremony was held in Akron, Ohio in February 1971, which included seniors at the University of Akron and practicing engineers.

Since then, The Order of the Engineer has grown to include tens of thousands of members inducted at Links (local chapters) established in nearly every State in the union. Although patterned after the Canadian concept, The Order of the Engineer has differences that are distinctively associated with the United States of America. We ask you to accept and interpret, most seriously and with pride, the meaning and purpose of the ceremony to which you are about to subscribe: to uphold the standards and dignity of the engineering profession.

² From: *Information Kit*, Order of the Engineer, Inc.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS³

- Q. What is the Order of the Engineer?**
 A. The Order is the roster of engineers in the United States who have participated in an Engineers' Ring Ceremony and who have accepted in public the "Obligation of an Engineer".
- Q. What is the objective of the Order of the Engineer?**
 A. To uphold the standards and dignity of the engineering profession, to advance engineering technology thereby, and to ever realize that engineering's primary purpose involves the pursuit of its learned art in the spirit of a public purpose.
- Q. What is the purpose of the Order and its "Obligation"?**
 A. The purpose is to stimulate formal public recognition by engineers in the United States of two basic principles. These principles are that (1) the primary purpose of engineering is service to the public, and (2) all members of the engineering profession share a common bond.
- Q. What is the "Obligation of an Engineer"?**
 A. The Obligation is the formal statement of an engineer's responsibilities to the public and to the profession; the Obligation is publicly accepted by an engineer during induction at a Ring Ceremony. The Obligation is similar to the National Society of Professional Engineers' Engineer's Creed, the Engineers' Council for Professional Development's Canon, and the Canadian Ritual of the Calling of an Engineer.
- Q. What is an Engineers' Ring Ceremony?**
 A. The Ring Ceremony is the public induction of candidates into the Order of the Engineer, during which the engineer candidates formally accept the Obligation of an Engineer and receive a stainless steel ring to be worn as a symbol on the fifth finger of the working hand.
- Q. What is an Engineer's Ring?**
 A. The Engineer's Ring in the United States is a stainless steel ring, worn on the fifth finger of the working hand by engineers who have accepted the Obligation of an Engineer in a Ring Ceremony. In Canada, the Engineer's Ring is a wrought iron ring accepted by engineers inducted into the Ritual of the Calling of an Engineer in a secret ceremony.
- Q. Who can participate in an Engineer's Ring Ceremony?**
 A. Any engineer is eligible to participate if he or she has graduated from an ABET- (or ECPD-) accredited engineering program or holds a license as a Professional Engineer. Other candidates may be considered eligible because of equivalent credentials, subject to the approval of the National Board of Governors.
- Q. What students are eligible to wear the Engineer's Ring and belong to the Order?**
 A. Only those students who have received or are about to receive a degree in engineering from a program accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc. (ABET).

- Q. What are the membership activities of the Order of the Engineer after induction through a Ring Ceremony?**
 A. There are no dues and no meetings of the Order of the Engineer. Inductees are encouraged to wear the ring and to display their signed Obligation certificate as visible reminders of the publicly accepted Obligation as a contract with themselves.
- Q. What is the connection between the Order of the Engineer and other American engineering organizations?**
 A. There is no formal connection between the Order of the Engineer and other organizations; it is independent. However, the Order recognizes ABET's accreditation of engineering programs as a primary measurement of educational credentials for an engineer in the United States. In addition, Links of the Order have been chartered to various local components of Tau Beta Pi, NSPE, and other engineering societies.
- Q. Is the Ring Ceremony program aimed at engineering students or at practicing engineers?**
 A. Both. The impact of the formal program is likely to be greatest if inductees are engineering students about to enter the profession. However, until there is a preponderance of practicing engineers in the U. S. who have participated, as there is now in Canada, there will be a place for Ring Ceremonies at engineering functions. The reminder of the common purpose of all engineers is a message that cannot be too often repeated.
- Q. May seniors receive the ring before the graduation ceremony?**
 A. Yes.
- Q. How is the Order of the Engineer governed?**
 A. The Order is governed at the national level by a National Board of Governors, composed of as many as 21 engineers who serve three-year terms. The officers are a chairman, a vice-chairman, and a secretary-treasurer. The National Board establishes policy, directs the national office, and charters local "links" governed by local boards of governors. Such "Links" are granted the right to conduct Ring Ceremonies.
- Q. What is a Link?**
 A. A Link of the Order of the Engineer is a local section based primarily at a college of engineering, but may also be based at a section of a state society of professional engineers. Each Link has its own officers and board of governors and is chartered by the National Board of Governors to hold Engineer's Ring Ceremonies.
- Q. Who should be contacted for further information about the Order of the Engineer?**
 A. Contact: Engineering Student Affairs
 College of Engineering
 The University of Alabama in Huntsville
 157 Engineering Building
 Huntsville, Alabama 35899
 (256) 824-6877
 uahesa@eng.uah.edu

³ From: *Information Kit*, Order of the Engineer, Inc. and The University of Texas at Austin, Order of the Engineer.