Chandra S. Brahma, CA P ’62

If success is measured not only by what a person achieves but by what one passes on to others, Chandra S. Brahma can truly be called successful. He has worked tirelessly to develop an understanding among professionals in community affairs, to attract women and minority youths to engineering, to promote high standards in engineering practices, and to advance international good will.

A native of Calcutta, India, who earned his B.E. in 1962 at Calcutta University, Dr. Brahma has spent the past three decades in the United States. He earned graduate degrees in civil engineering, his M.S. in 1965 at Michigan State University and his Ph.D. at Ohio State University. Since 1980 he has been the head of the geotechnical engineering program at California State University, Fresno, where he is an immensely popular figure with both the students and members of the larger community. Not content with being “just” a teacher, he has sought to enrich the quality of life for people the world over, by working with the police department and the Clovis Rotary Club on projects aimed at, respectively, ending violence by inner-city children and eradicating polio worldwide, his successful efforts in the latter having been widely recognized.

In his first semester at the university, he embarked on a crusade to excite students about the beauty and importance to society of engineering and the applied sciences. A love of young people enables him to touch the minds and hearts of students and strangers alike. His mentoring extends to nonengineering students and is characterized by a genuine sense of caring, a concern for his students’ progress, and a desire to help them in all aspects of their lives. He particularly stresses that their studies impart an intellectual bent or philosophical clarity in other areas.

Believing that the new educational “cold war” directly threatens the American dream and that poor educations invariably prevent people from maximizing their potential, Dr. Brahma has given long hours in the public interest to a variety of groups. Working with three of his school district committees, he has collaborated to initiate policies and participated in economic and community development activities. He has acted as a professional engineering consultant for local, national, and international organizations and served on professional committees, including the consultant selection board for the Council of Fresno County Government, the police advisory committee, and the committee on job analysis for the state board of registration. As chair of the ASCE committee on minority programs, he developed and promoted a summer institute program; a video, Dream Your Own Dreams; and a coloring book, Would You Like to Be an Engineer? for high-school, intermediate, and elementary students.

Last May the NBC affiliate in Fresno presented him with its 1997 portrait of success award and broadcast a weeklong tribute to his professional, public, and community achievements. He also earned the distinctions of being named the first ASCE outstanding civil engineer and the first CSPE outstanding professional engineer in the California Central Valley, as well as having a road in Bakersfield, CA, named Brahma Street in his honor.

But the greatest honor may be yet to come. If there is an increase in the number of new engineers from the Fresno area, then the credit may belong to the man who, by first inspiring and encouraging them during their formative years, proved to them that one person who cares can touch lives the world over.