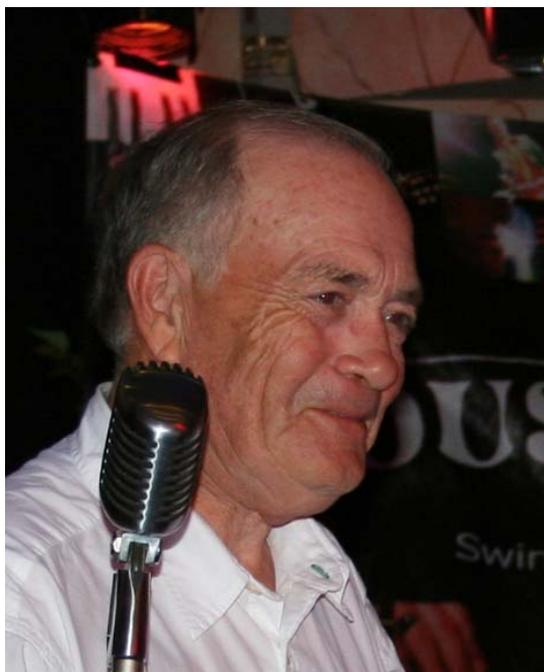


LIFE HISTORIES OF HONORARY IHSS MEMBERS

Russell Fabrique Christman
Pioneer of aquatic humic chemistry



Who would not know Russell Fabrique Christman in the humcis world? He is one of the pioneers of the aquatic humics field. He has given clear impulses to this field of fundamental environmental sciences and to aquatic technology.

Russ – as we all call him – got his B.S. in Chemistry at the University of Miami, Tulane University, University of Florida in 1958, followed by an M.S. and a Ph.D. at the University of Florida. He was NSF Post Doctoral Fellow at the Oregon State University and at Harvard University. After an appointment as Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Civil Engineering at the University of Washington in Seattle (1963 – 1966), he became Associate Professor (1966 – 1969) and Professor (1969 – 1972) at that university. From 1973 to 2001 he was Professor and from 1973 to 1989 Chairman at the Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He continues his classical academic career by still teaching Chemistry of Humic Substances, Chemistry of Organic Materials in the Aquatic Environment and Planetary Mechanisms for Distribution of Materials and Energy.

The great places of his appointments brought Russ in contact with Presidents, Deans and Directors. Some of them – as he confesses – had a major influence in his life, and the association with them taught him that the most important behaviour for good scientists is to treat all others with dignity. In this Russ has become a fine example, even though there would have been good chances to be misled by the numerous temptations of success: Russ' outstanding research is

reflected in 80 refereed papers, in six trend setting books and in numerous editorials, reviews and other publications. He belongs to the league of most invited speakers, reviewers and wanted chairmen. Out of his many national and international activities, only a few should be mentioned here:

Awards as Major Advisor for Best Doctoral Dissertation (1987), Outstanding Educator of America (1972), American Water Works Research Award (1987), Editor Environmental Science and Technology (1974 – 1987), Member of the National Drinking Water Advisory Council, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (1975 – 1976, 1979 – 1982).

Chairman: Gordon Research Conference, Environmental Sciences (1976); Dahlem Research Conference on Humic Substances and Their Role in the Environment (1985 – 1987).

Russ was visiting scholar at the Faculty of Sanitary Engineering, University of Hokkaido, Sapporo, Japan (1982), at the Norwegian Institute of Public Health, Division of Toxicology, Oslo, Norway (1989) and at the Department of Water Chemistry at the Universität Karlsruhe, Germany (1996).

Most of all these activities centred – as his research did – around Humic Matter in Aquatic Systems. Therefore, it was a logical consequence that the IHSS appointed Russ Christman as Honorary Member in 2001.

Those who have and had the privilege to know Russ beyond his science are fascinated by his deep and honest personality. Egil Gjessing, one of the Scandinavian humic giants and companion of Russ for several decades, once called him “a helper”. In private conversations, Russ even confesses that he believes in love as the strongest force in human life and society. This needs no further interpretation. Those close to him know how sincere he is on that: a shining example in our foggy and dull world!

Instead of drifting more into emotions I want to share a story with you which is so typical for Russ:

On one of several occasions when he visited good old Europe, we went to Wien (Vienna). We wanted not only to sample the charm of that city between Western Europe and the Balkans, we also were curious to learn about the matrix of the genius called Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, where he lived and composed most of his masterly music. Russ, a well gifted musician himself playing piano and the guitar, was fascinated. This even held until he left Europe from the busy and unromantic airport in Frankfurt. When he entered the plane, his typically soft and friendly smile was reflected in the eyes of the stewardess as she said: “Hallo Sir, where do you come from, you seem

to be very happy.” “Yes I am”, said Russ, “I was visiting Mozart.” Short thinking, then spontaneous reply: “Oh, so follow me please”. Russ was led to the business class and seated – as it should be for a friend of Mozart. What can we learn of that event? Well, there are numerous professors travelling all over the world. Most of them squeeze themselves into economy seats. A few of them also book economy for modest reasons, but then it happens that they are upgraded for they are not just a professor, they are special. Russ is one of them.

With all our good wishes for healthy and happy years, we thank him for all the good guidance and fine friendship so far.

Fritz Frimmel
