

## IN MEMORIAM:

### PROFESSOR EMERITUS CORNELIUS STEELINK (1922-2016)

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I am deeply sad to announce to the Humic Substances Community that Professor Emeritus Cornelius Steelink passed away in Los Angeles on November 12, 2016, at the age of 94, following heart surgery. Cornelius - "Corny" - Steelink was Professor Emeritus in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at the University of Arizona, and a lifelong advocate for civil and individual rights.



Born October 1, 1922, in Los Angeles, Steelink was the son of immigrants, his mother was Russian and his father was Dutch, and both were ardent activists in the labor movement of the early 1920s. Cornelius was a conscientious objector during World War II, and was sent to a service camp in the California Mountains that was run by the American Friends Service Committee, where he built roads, fought forest fires and filled in for men who were drafted in the war. In 1948, he met Jean Wiley on a civil rights picket line in Los Angeles, and they married a year later. In 1959, he was one of the founders of the Arizona Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Two years after Cornelius wife's death, in 2001, Steelink married Joanne Whittington, by whom he is survived, together with his two daughters, granddaughter, husbands and stepchildren.

Cornelius received a B.S. in chemistry, at Cal Tech, in 1944; an M.S. in chemistry at U.S.C. in 1950; and a Ph.D. in chemistry at U.C.L.A., in 1956. In 1957 Cornelius became an assistant professor of chemistry at the University of Arizona in Tucson where he made all his successful academic career teaching and conducting research into innovative uses

of natural products from 1957-1989, during which he also served as Chair of the Faculty. Cornelius retired in 1993 and he was Professor Emeritus at the University of Arizona from 1989 until his death. Among other research work, He conducted innovative and instrumental research in the field of chemistry and physical chemistry of humic substances, which have inspired generation of scientists in this field. In particular, he pioneered the use of electron spin (paramagnetic) resonance (ESR or EPR) spectroscopy to investigate the presence, characterization and reactivity of organic free radicals in humic substances. I had the honor to meet him personally in his office and university in the early 1980s and coauthor with him a book chapter on "Application of ESR spectroscopy to the study of humic substances" published in 1989. Besides being an illuminated scientist and inspiring teacher, Corny had a great sense of humor and was always generous and very perceptive of people's rights, always acting as a peaceful protester.

See more at:

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/tucson/obituary.aspx?pid=183491619#sthash.x0nAZlsg.dpuf>

*Nicola Senesi*  
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