



Bent Aksel Christensen

August 20, 2014

- Bent Christensen, age 86, of Gainesville, Florida passed away at home of natural causes on Saturday, August 16, 2014. Born in Copenhagen, Denmark on March 22, 1928, he married Annikki Hannula in Helsinki, Finland in 1958. Annikki, the love of his life, he had met in Boston when they were both exchange students at M.I.T. Shortly after wedding, they immigrated to the United States. Initially residing in Minneapolis, Bent earned his PhD in Civil Engineering from the University of Minnesota in 1960 while Annikki gave birth to their eldest child, Ken. Bent and Annikki settled in Gainesville in 1963 when Bent accepted a faculty position at the University of Florida in the then fledgling Department of Civil Engineering. The birth of their daughter, Eva, followed and Gainesville became their permanent home. Bent enjoyed a long tenure as a Professor of Civil Engineering at UF from 1963 until his retirement in 1995, remaining active in his research as Professor Emeritus.

A leading researcher in the area of water flow and flood control, Bent's numerous contributions to reduce storm-related flood damage left a legacy in the state of Florida and throughout the world. Additional research efforts focused on wetlands preservation and restoration; Bent was a strong proponent for preserving the ecology and inherent beauty of Florida's coastal zones emphasizing responsible development to minimize environmental impact. With his expertise in the field of hydraulics and fluid mechanics, he was a member of many professional organizations including the American

Society of Civil Engineers and published countless academic articles in professional journals. In his role, Bent traveled to the world giving presentations at conferences in France, Germany, Korea, Turkey, Thailand and South Africa, culminating with a sabbatical at the University of Auckland in New Zealand. A notoriously demanding teacher during his 32 years at UF, Bent was committed to insuring his students not only graduated with solid engineering skills but also with high standards of professional integrity. Many students, years after establishing successful careers in Civil Engineering, would continue to visit Bent in his corner office, tucked away in the basement of UF's Weil Hall.

Considering his love for water, family time was invariably spent picnicking at Blue Springs or walking the beach at Matanzas Inlet. Summer vacation was an annual foray to Sanibel Island to enjoy the gulf breezes and gentle waves of the gulf. Bent always appreciated a good party as he and Annikki hosted annual 'Winter Solstice' parties complete with a traditional Scandinavian smorgasbord including smoked salmon and pickled herring. In later years, his interests included photography, reading and spending time with his family including his daughter-in-law, three grandsons, and their dachshund. Many a Sunday afternoon was spent in deep conversation over scientific treatises or current events.

Bent is survived by his wife of 56 years Annikki; son Ken, daughter-in-law Loraine, three grandsons Erik, Lukas, and Kurt, and his daughter Eva.

The family is very grateful to Dr. Ballou and his staff of Senior Healthcare Center at Springhill for their excellent medical care and kindness to their

father. They are also extremely appreciative of the many healthcare professionals providing the care and therapy allowing Bent to remain in his home.

A memorial service will be held in the University Lutheran Church on Saturday, August 23rd at 11am. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to University Lutheran Church, 1826 W University Ave, Gainesville, FL 32603.

Tribute Wall

JN

“ To the Christensen Family,

I cannot explain how Dr. Christensen changed my life for the better. Although I was not a Grad Student, I ended up taking 4 courses, along with an independent study session with Dr. Christensen in the early 90's. He was truly the smartest man I have ever met, and was the greatest influence on my life from any teacher. I have tried over the years to look him up, with no success.

I hope and pray his family understands how many lives this man touched in his life. I will always be grateful for the time I spent with him.

John E Nevin - August 08, 2018 at 02:29 PM

SK

“ The Christensen family,

I am very saddened to hear about the passing away of Dr. Christensen. I pray that the grace and comfort of God's love keep and strengthen the whole family. Dr. Christensen was my class professor and mentor for the Ph.D Program.

As a foreign student I would not have been able to achieve my goals without the counsel of Dr. Christensen. I am still using his advice today. Dr. Christensen was a wonderful human being. Rest in Peace Professor.

God Bless

Dr. Kone

Siaka Kone - November 13, 2014 at 12:33 PM

PS

“ The Christensen family;

Today I came across Dr. Christensen's passing and was saddened to know. I am sorry I missed the memorial service back in August. My condolences to the Christensen family. He was such a great professor and I am most appreciative that I had the opportunity to know him and be mentored by him.

I met Dr. Christensen while attending the University of Florida in early 1966 for a Bachelor of Civil Engineering degree(Dec 1967). His hydraulics course was a requirement and it was very difficult but he enlightened a desire in me to know more. I continued under his guidance to obtain a Master of Science in Engineering degree (Dec 1968) and took all the courses he offered and others the Doctor suggested like a prescription to get better.

He invited me to teach his undergraduate Hydraulics course and Lab which I did for a year and took it as an honor that he trusted me to do this since it was an important course to him. Teaching that course greatly improved my understanding in hydraulics and for this I am forever grateful to Dr. Christensen, it helped me immensely in my career in many ways. Years later I again attended the U of F L for Ph.D studies and again was mentored by Dr. Christensen.

He will be missed and I hold a special place in my memories for all the great things he taught me that I was able to pass on to others, that is ta great legacy to give to his students.

He will be missed, rest in peace Professor Christensen.

Peter R. Sushinsky - October 21, 2014 at 06:21 AM

PL

“ *Rakkaat Annikki, Ken, Eva, Loraine ja pojat, otamme osaa suruunne.*

Olemme rukouksin teidän luonanne.

Päivi perheineen

Sirkka perheineen

Esko

Päivi Lappinen - September 04, 2014 at 11:45 AM

FM

“ *Ken, Lorraine, Erik, Lukas and Kurt,*

We were very sad to hear about the passing of your Father/Grandfather. His relationship with all of you will be forever in your heart. Hold tight to all of your fond memories. The memories will help you through this tough time.

You are in our thoughts and prayers.

The McAllister's - Tom, Frances, Kathryn, Lauren and Michael.

Frances McAllister - August 23, 2014 at 05:00 PM

KW

“ Annikki, Eva, Ken and family,
We are so very sorry for your loss. Bent was a dear friend for many years and we are very sad about his passing. For the last 20 years we had a chance to share many get togethers, dinners, parties, birthdays and Christmases. We have many fond memories of these events, even our dog Essi was invited. Well, sometimes I got the feeling that having Essi in the house was more important than us. He always had doggie cookies ready for Essi and I had to stand guard to make sure she would not get the whole bag. Besides bringing Essi, it was important that I'd bring Texas toast for the meal. Not just plain toast but the garlic one. As you know, Annikki does not like garlic and would not buy this for him but when Ward and I came for dinner, we were allowed to bring this forbidden delicacy. We will always remember those good times with Bent and will miss him dearly, as will Essi.

Kristiina and Ward Wilson - August 23, 2014 at 04:17 PM

RH

“ Dear Annakki,

My thoughts and love are with you during this most difficult time. You may remember in the 1970"s when Bent was very helpful to me in getting the flood control ordinance passed. He delighted in drawing a line on my interior house walls to indicate how high the water would come in extreme rains. Fortunately his joke was wrong, but I remember him fondly.

Take care,

Bob Hornberger

Robert "Bob" Hornberger - August 23, 2014 at 10:25 AM

NN

“ To Dr Christensen's Family

I am very saddened to hear of Christensen's passing. I was a former student of his back in 1984. He was a very much admired and respected as a professor and world scientist but most of us did not look forward to his rigorous hydraulics classes in the basement of Weil Hall. I will always reminder when a student in one of my hydraulics classes dared make a remark to Dr Christensen that his class was running overtime... Dr Christen turned around and looked at him and said " Ven you are in Christensen's class ... you go by Christensen's time" and just walked out of the classroom (but he still left two black boards filled with impeccably written notes and mile long equations for us to figure out). I will miss him very much. My thoughts and prayers go to his family.

Nour Nazef - August 23, 2014 at 09:53 AM

GB

“ *I am so saddened to hear of Dr. Christensen's passing. He was my professor and mentor in undergraduate and graduate school (88-95). His brilliant and elegant approach to education and engineering was my original inspiration to be a hydraulic engineer, and has informed me in my career every day since. My best work as an engineer has been but a poor reflection of his bright influence. I cannot overstate the debt of gratitude I owe to him for this. Apart from the career influence, I remember always enjoying his company: debating life, religion, politics, science, and whatever else piqued his interest. He always debated vigorously, but with good humor and a subtle, wry grin. I think he was amused by the naivete of the ardent young ideologue I was, but never disdainful or dismissive. He was a wonderful man, and I am sad to see him go. Thank you, Dr. Christensen, for giving me a horizon to sail for. I am forever in your debt.*

Gary Brown - August 22, 2014 at 01:31 AM

SL

“ Mrs. Christensen and family: Very sorry to hear of Dr. Christensen's passing. Dr. Christensen had a profound impact on my life through his teachings in Civil Engineering at the University of Florida and the mentoring and life-lessons he provided to his graduate students. We will miss him very much.

Steven Laux - August 21, 2014 at 08:14 PM

GB

“ Mrs. Christensen and family - we are sorry to hear of Dr. Christensen's passing. You have been wonderful neighbors these past 30 plus years. He certainly was a talented and gifted gentleman. It was nice to see the love and care given to Dr. Christensen these past years that allowed him to remain in his home. Our thoughts and prayers are with you at this time.

George and Barbara Brant

George and Barbara Brant - August 21, 2014 at 06:05 PM

JS

“ Ken, Lori, Erik, Lukas, and Kurt,

We were saddened to hear that your Dad/Grandpa had passed away. He was certainly a remarkable man that made a lasting impression in your lives and the lives of many others. Hold tight to all the great memories. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Love,

Judith Doug, Monica, and Kim

Judith & Doug Spritzky - August 21, 2014 at 02:25 PM

HS

“ Annikki,

My thoughts and my love are with you.

I have lovely memories of Bent and your beautiful, long marriage together.

*With all my love,
Helena*

Helena Sarkio - August 21, 2014 at 09:53 AM

MB

“ Eva and Family,

We are truly sorry for your loss. Your dad seemed like an amazing man and his legacy will no doubt live on through the many lives he touched through his teaching and research.

*In deepest sympathy and respect for a life well-lived,
Margaret Bowman-Pensel and Family*

Margaret Bowman - August 21, 2014 at 09:47 AM