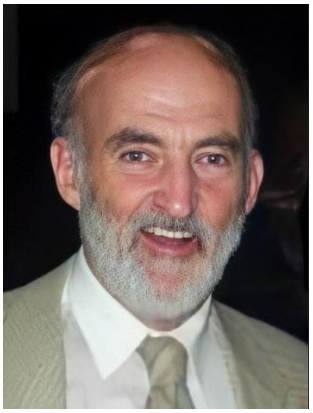
JOHN ALAN FRANKLIN (1940-2012)

By Maurice Dusseault, 2012



Dr. John A. Franklin, an important figure in the world of rock engineering, passed away on 6 July 2012.

John Franklin served as an officer in the Royal Engineers (1958-1963), before completing his BSc in Civil Engineering, an MSc in Engineering Geology, and a PhD in Rock Mechanics at the Royal School of Mines (Imperial College, London). During his stay at Imperial College, he developed testing methods that form the basis for much of present-day rock classification.

He then worked as a consulting rock mechanics engineer in the USA, Mexico, and the UK, before moving to Canada in 1975 and founded Franklin Geotechnical Ltd. In 1982, he joined the Univ. of Waterloo as a part-time research professor in the Department of Earth Sciences, where he taught engineering geology, technical writing, tunneling and underground works. He authored and co-authored over 100 research articles and wrote two college-level textbooks.

Dr. Franklin served as the President of the International Society for Rock Mechanics from 1987 to 1991. He also worked as a member of ISRM Commissions on Rock Mass Classification and on Swelling Rock; as President of the ISRM Commission on Testing Methods; and developed programs to assist the newly emerging countries of Eastern Europe. As an executive member of CARMA (the ISRM in Canada), John proposed and then helped organize the ISRM Congress in Montreal in 1987. He also contributed significantly to the Canadian Mine Monitoring Manual and a similar manual on Blast Fragmentation for the ISRM.

John Franklin was involved in many fascinating projects such as the foundations of the CN Tower in Toronto, the Sudbury Science North Centre (seated across a major fault), the 2100 meter deep Neutrino Observatory (SNOLAB) in Sudbury, a feasibility study for a tunnel between New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island; and a rock breakwater in Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of South America. He was well known internationally for his contributions to design engineering, rock testing methods, monitoring, rock fragmentation, and joint fabric analysis through imagery. He had a profound understanding of the intersection between geosciences and rock engineering, an understanding that pervaded his professional career.

John was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 1991 but continued to contribute and enrich the lives of everyone around him with his irrepressible elfish humour. He died in 2012 after an

unusually long and determined fight against the disease that eventually defeated his physical body but never his spirit. His wife Dr. Kerstine Franklin helped John greatly during his last years. She said “despite John’s disease, he was determined to live life to the fullest.” In his last years, he and Kersty were co-proprietors of a bed-and-breakfast inn in Hockley Valley, Ontario.

The single-minded dedication that John brought to rock mechanics and rock engineering reminds us that the world is built on the ideals of a few leading visionaries. John was such a visionary. He remained intellectually active long after his physical disability restricted his movements and travel opportunities. In 2011, he travelled for the last time to the ISRM quadrennial Congress in Beijing. He was saying goodbye, though he would never have admitted it. If the International Society for Rock Mechanics has become an important professional organization, it is partly because of John Franklin.