Dr. Victor Carlisle and Soil Subsidence in Florida

Dr. Victor W. Carlisle (1922–2006), Soils Professor at the University of Florida (UF), taught several summer soil courses during his career. One of these courses encompassed field trips covering Florida soils from the southern tip of the peninsula to the panhandle. Many soils were observed on these field trips. A stop was always made in the Belle Glade area in southern Florida to see organic soils.

When the organic soils, or Histosols, of the Everglades were drained for agricultural use in the early 1900s, subsidence was initiated and has continued to the present time. In 1924, a graduated concrete post was driven to the underlying bedrock at the University of Florida/IFAS Everglades Research and Education Center near Belle Glade. When it was installed, the soil surface was level with the top of the post, which is 9 feet in length. Dr. Carlisle, shown at the landmark post in 1971 and in 1996, always took his students to the post to demonstrate how oxidation of organic matter has resulted in soil subsidence. Since 1924 the soil has subsided more than seven feet. The once deep organic soils, Torry muck (euic, hyperthermic Typic Haplussaprists) are now moderately deep organic soils over limestone bedrock, probably Lauderhill muck (euic, hyperthermic Lithic Haplussaprists).

Dr. Carlisle was featured as the “Father of Pedology in Florida” in SSSA’s book *Soils of Florida*, as he was the coordinator of the Soil Characterization Laboratory at the UF, which sampled the soils above.

Contributed by Frank Watts, Pedologist, CPSC, AAA Soil Consultants, Hilliard, FL

Ken Johnson: Soil Scientist and Mentor

Kenneth Everett Johnson, known to many as Ken Johnson, passed away on July 23, 2014. The following is a personal contribution from SSSA member Kerry Arroues.

In the summer of 1970 Ken Johnson helped a young Soil Conservation Service student employee by introducing him to a couple of days of soil survey field work in the arid parts of Modoc and Lassen Counties in northeastern California. I was that young employee who Ken Johnson exposed to the incredible world of soils and the potential for a fulfilling career as a soil scientist in the National Cooperative Soil Survey Program. Many decades later, after a long soil science career working for the USDA–Soil Conservation Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, I understand the importance of being a mentor to future generations of soil scientists.

Shortly after graduating from high school, Ken first served his country in the US Army during the Korean War, where he developed his mechanical aptitude working on airplanes in the Civil Air Patrol. After military service, Ken graduated from Oregon State University in Corvallis, majoring in agriculture and soil science. Upon graduating from OSU, Ken started his career as a soil scientist with the USDA–Soil Conservation Service. Ken and his wife raised five children as he worked in Oregon and Alabama before settling down in Susanville and eventually in Redding, CA. Ken worked for both the Soil Conservation Service and the Forest Service as a soil scientist.

Working on old cars was one of his favorite past times. While out in the field he was able to find old car parts and, eventually, he had enough to complete his 1920 Model T Ford. He had a very unique ability to fix cars and was always willing to tinker with anything broken. He also loved to sing in his church choir and tell and retell endless jokes.

I am indebted to Ken Johnson for his influence on me long ago and the subsequent rewarding and fulfilling career that his guidance helped me find.

Contributed by Kerry Arroues, CPSS, retired USDA-NRCS Soil Scientist, Hanford, CA.