

OBITUARY, MILTON ASSIS KANJI (1937-2021)

It is with great sadness that we write this message on behalf of ISRM, in honour of our dear friend Prof. Milton Kanji who passed away on 12 February 2021. One more life among many millions taken by Covid-19. He was involved in intense geotechnical activities, just before his hospitalization at the end of December 2020.



In the words of Prof. Faïçal Massad, his close friend at the Polytechnical School of São Paulo University, Kanji wanted to be a musician but his father did not allow this, claiming that he should choose a "real and safe profession" for his livelihood and that of his future family. This led him to study Geology. Despite this, he never abandoned music and in 1966 founded with his brother and two colleagues the "Quartet Musikantiga of São Paulo" (<https://youtu.be/79FV0xT9FOY>), a non-profit activity for cultural purposes. Later he gave full support for his three children (two boys and one girl), who studied music in Amsterdam and today are professional musicians in São Paulo.



Kanji graduated in Geology in 1960 at the Institute of Geosciences of the University of São Paulo. Afterwards, he started work at Geotecnica, an engineering company working with the design and construction of the large Brazilian dams. Following this he went to the USA where he got his MSc at the University of Illinois in 1969, under the advice of Don Deere and Frank Patton. He maintained a close relationship with both of them until they passed away. His dissertation on "Shear Strength of Soil-Rock Contacts" was a pioneer work contributing to the future developing in rock mechanics. At that time, he started his collaboration with ISRM. He participated in the Working Group coordinated by Nick Barton to produce in 1972 the "Suggested Method for the Quantitative Description of Discontinuities in Rock Masses" of ISRM which is presently being revised and updated.

After his return to Brazil, he got his PhD in 1973, under the guidance of Prof. Victor Leinz at the Institute of Geosciences of São Paulo University. During that period, he came back to the academic activities he had started in 1964 at the Institute of Geosciences, and later at the Polytechnical School of the same São Paulo University, where he stayed until he retired. Still in the words of Prof. Faïçal Massad, his motto was *"the theory without the practice is sterile and the practice without the theory is blind"*. Good advice for young and old – in each generation.

Kanji was an efficient Professor and much appreciated by his students, with whom he used to do a lot of geotechnical research. He and his students published many articles on the geotechnical practice and theory applied to dams, mining, slopes, tunnels and many other geotechnical works. He helped very

much to develop the discipline of engineering-geology in Brazil. He also had a large participation in many hydroelectric, slope stability analysis and mining projects in Latin American countries and other continents.

Added to his first participation in ISRM in 1972, Kanji continued to be active in the ISRM and in 1974, he was elected Vice President for South America. At that time, he gave a large contribution to



ISRM opening in the continent the ways for the countries to join as associates to ISRM. His work as VP for South America and later on the work of VP Dinis da Gama in the 80's were instrumental for the dissemination of rock mechanics and ISRM in the continent.

In 1978 he participated in the organizing committee of the ISRM International Symposium on Rock Mechanics related to Dam Foundations. His links to ISRM continued to be very strong and just some few years ago he participated as Chairman of the Commission on Soft Rock Mechanics and Engineering. The production of his commission was published as a book in 2019 where he is a co-Editor. Very deservedly, he was appointed a Fellow of the Society in 2013 and in December 2017 he gave an excellent ISRM Online Lecture on "Dam Foundations affected by Geological Aspects". This was one of the topics of his expertise, together with the behaviour of soft rocks and debris flows, this latter being one of his passions.



Kanji was a frequent participant in ISRM Symposia, where he will be sorely missed. In the words of many that had the opportunity to enjoy his friendship and professional contact he was a gentleman, always in a good mood and often telling funny jokes. We will remember his kindness, his joyful attitude towards life and his immense knowledge.

For his close friends and ISRM colleagues he left an empty space in our Society. The thoughts of our community will be with his dear wife Lily who used to accompany him in many of the ISRM events, and with his three children and close family.

*Eda Freitas de Quadros, ISRM Past President
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