

Obituary

Prof. Sherif Wissa Agaiby (1962 – 2019)

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After a brief but valiant fight with cancer, Prof. Sherif Wissa Agaiby passed away gracefully in London on the 20th of August 2019 at age 57. He was at peace, surrounded by his loved ones: Amani, his loving devoted wife of 33 years and his children Shehab and Shireen. He is dearly missed every day by his parents Wissa and Faiza, his sister Samar, her husband Sherif, his nieces Noor and Farah, his extended family and close friends.

Growing up in Egypt and Bahrain, Sherif was a unique, outstanding and well-rounded young man, always hungry for knowledge in all fields, a hunger satisfied through his avid reading habits, while at the same time loving life and enjoying sports including tennis, squash and cricket. He culminated his High School education with the highest honours, achieving the highest overall grades for his year in Bahrain. Dr. Agaiby continued to excel and graduated with highest honours from Cairo University, Egypt, earning his BSc and MSc degrees in Civil Engineering in 1983 and 1987, respectively. He subsequently moved to Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, to study for a Ph.D., which he was awarded in 1991. After completing his doctoral studies in the US, he returned to Cairo University where he was heavily involved in teaching and research for more than 20 years, rising through the ranks to a full professorship. During this period (1983-2004), Dr. Agaiby taught and conducted research in most fields of Geotechnical Engineering and supervised many research students who now hold leading positions in industry and academia worldwide.

Since joining Dar Al-Handasah Consultants (Shair and Partners) in 1991, initially on a part-time basis alongside his university post, shifting in 2004 to a full-time appointment, he has accumulated substantial practical engineering experience spanning nearly three decades. In 2004, he was appointed Director of Geotechnical and Heavy Civil Engineering Department and was responsible for high scale geotechnical, marine and pavement projects in the Middle East, Gulf region and Africa. He has played a leading role in delivering some of the largest and most notable civil engineering projects, overseeing the planning, analysis, design, and construction follow-up. In 2012, Dr. Agaiby enrolled in the Oxford Strategic Leadership Programme at Said Business School of Oxford University to harness his leadership qualities and capabilities. His outstanding academic background enabled him to apply state-of-the-art research in order to find innovative and creative solutions to complex practical engineering problems. He was also very generous with disseminating his knowledge and experience and was a highly-respected mentor to a large number of young and mid-career practicing engineers over the years.

Apart from his consulting and academic work, Dr. Agaiby was involved in many national and international scientific activities, including Chair of the Professional Image Committee of the International Society for Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering (ISSMGE); Board Member of the Council of Foundation for Education and Training on Tunneling and Underground Space Use (ITA-CET); member of the Egyptian Code of Practice committees on Geotechnical Engineering and Foundations on Rock as well as on Site Investigation and the Design and Construction of Tunnels and Underground Structures. He was also on the editorial board of the Journal of Environmental Geotechnics and Geotechnical Engineering of the Institution of Civil

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Engineers (UK); editorial board member of the ISSMGE International Journal of Geoenvironmental Case Histories; and board member of the International Road Federation (IRF); member of Chi Epsilon, National Civil Engineering Honor Society (USA).

Dr. Agaiby was more than just an acclaimed engineer and academic with immense and wide-ranging contributions to engineering practice and research. He was also very active in societal and philanthropic work, largely through his involvement in the Rotary Club in Egypt and the Middle East for many years during which he was president of the Rotary Club of Giza Metropolitan, recognized as a Paul Harris fellow, was Inter Country Committee (ICC) National Coordinator for Egypt and chaired several key committees subsequently. He had a magical way of making every person who knew him feel special, no matter how young or old, how rich or poor, and always worked in silence to help everyone in need.

Despite his professional gravitas, Dr. Agaiby was a fun-loving man - passionate about fishing, he set several new records on fishing trips in the Mediterranean and overseas. He was an avid philatelist, he enjoyed exploring different cultures, especially trying exotic cuisines as a member of Chaîne des Rôtisseurs; visiting museums; attending musicals. He was a voracious reader and read about virtually everything.

Whilst his contributions to engineering will endure for many years to come, Dr. Agaiby would have liked to say his true legacy is the loving family he shepherded. He had a gift for keeping his family close-knit by using celebrations and vacations as a guide to unite them. To the many that he inspired, Dr. Agaiby will always be remembered as a force for good, a warm and altruistic friend, a positive and supportive leader, a generous man and a truly outstanding global citizen. A gentleman in the truest sense of the word, he lives on in the fond memories of all those he touched.