

## The 6<sup>th</sup> Kirkham Conference

Welcome to Skukuza in the Kruger National Park of South Africa for the 6<sup>th</sup> Kirkham Conference. Finally, after a two-year delay due to Covid-19, researchers are again able to meet up for this conference on “Soil Physics in Agricultural Production: Water Resources and Waste Management”. I know you will enjoy the stimulation of the presentations and the many conversations with other participants in the stunning environment of Kruger National Park.

Who was Don Kirkham, and why are there Kirkham Conferences?

Don Kirkham (1908-1998), inspired and supported by his wife Betty, was an exceptional man. He influenced, more than anybody else, developments in the field of soil physics.



*Don & Betty Kirkham*

Students, friends, colleagues, family, and the Soil Science Society of America decided to commemorate this unique couple in a lasting way. Shortly after Don's death in 1998, they established the Don and Betty Kirkham Soil Physics Award and the Kirkham Conference Programs within the Soil Science Society of America, as a permanent tribute.

From the beginning, the late Don Nielsen, from the University of California in Davis, and a student of Don Kirkham, has been a key driver and funder behind the realization of the quadrennial Conferences. The late Rienk van der Ploeg, an erstwhile professor of soil physics at the University of Hannover, Germany, and also a former student of Don's, had a major influence through establishment of the Lena and Maria van der Ploeg Fund in memory of his late sister, Lena, and in honour of his wife, Maria. His permanent endowment to recognize scholarship in soil physics is used to support the Kirkham Conferences.

The Kirkham Conferences are topical meetings to encourage scientists to make organized, in-depth explorations of disciplinary and interdisciplinary subjects of soil physics in ways seldom possible at national or international meetings.

The first Kirkham Conference was held in Ames, Iowa in 2000. Don was a Professor of Soil Physics at the University of Iowa, in Ames. Then in 2004 the second Kirkham Conference was held in Logan Utah, followed by Davis, California in 2008. In 2012 it move offshore to Palmerston North, New Zealand, and then in 2016 to Sede Boqer in Israel. The 2020 Kirkham Conference was slated to be held at Skukuza, South Africa in 2020. However, Covid-19 intervened. A year later, to maintain the “Kirkham momentum” a virtual conference was held (<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/595965299>). Now, two years after the original scheduling, the 2020 Kirkham Conference, can finally take place.

Welcome, and I am sure you will enjoy the many "... in-depth explorations of disciplinary and interdisciplinary subjects of soil physics" that will take place in Skukuza. The Kirkham tradition continues ...

On behalf of Committee S774 (Kirkham Conferences) of the Soil Science Society of America, I wish to thank Simon Lorentz and his local team for their superb organisation of this meeting. And I also wish to thank Susan Chapman, Director of Member Services of the Tri-Societies, for her work in making this conference a success.

Best regards

Brent Clothier

Chair, Committee S774,

Soil Science Society of America