

Tributes to Dr. John W. McKee (1926-2009) of California and Dr. C. Clifton ('Cliff') Chancey (1955-2013) of Iowa, USA

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ABSTRACT

In this technical note, the author pays glowing tribute to two distinguished scientists who play some tangible and intangible roles in the berth and sustenance of African Journal of Computing & ICT, which was established in 2008 and it's now in its 11th year. One of these scholars is Dr. John William McKee (1926-2009) who received his Ph.D. degree in 1955 from the California Institute of Technology and taught for over 50 years at the Medical School of the University of California, Los Angeles, USA. He retired as the Chief Scientist of McDonald Douglas, the well-known aerospace manufacturing corporation. The second scholar is Dr. Charles Clifton Chancey (1955-2013), fondly called 'Cliff', who received his Ph.D. degree in 1985 from Johns Hopkins University, USA. He was, until his death, a Professor and Head, Department of Physics, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa, USA, a post he occupied since 2001. While Dr. McKee contributed an invited paper to the maiden edition of this journal, Dr. Chancey indirectly influenced the birth of this journal by offering this author an opportunity in 2001 to serve as a pioneer Editor (Mathematics and Computer Science) and member of the Editorial Board of American Journal of Undergraduate Research, of which he is still a member till date. Dr. Chancey served as the (pioneer) Editor-in-Chief of the journal until his demise. This writer first came in contact with the two scientists during the 2001 Annual Meeting and Research Forum of Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Honor Society, Research Triangle Park, Raleigh, North Carolina, USA.

Keywords: Dr. John. W. McKee, Dr. C. Clifton ('Cliff') Chancey, University of California, University of Northern Iowa, American Journal of Undergraduate Research, Sigma Xi-The Scientific Research Honor Society

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I. INTRODUCTION

This piece is written in memory of two distinguished scientists who played some significant direct and indirect roles in the establishment and sustenance of *African*

Journal of Computing & ICT, ISSN 2006-1781. The scholars are Dr. John William McKee (1926-2009) and Dr. Charles Clifton ('Cliff') Chancey III (1955-2013). This writer first came in contact with the duo in November 2001 at different times during the Annual

Meeting and Research Forum of the Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Honour Society, Research Triangle Park, Raleigh, North Carolina, USA. The conference was held at the Sheraton Capital Centre, Raleigh. I was elected as an associate member of the society in 1991 and a full member in 1998/2000. The society itself was established in 1886.

I had the opportunity to attend the above conference by courtesy of an all-expenses paid sponsorship provided by Sigma Xi. This sponsorship covered my return flight tickets, accommodation for four nights, feeding and daily stipend, the latter of which was eventually not collected. As at the time that I received the invitation for sponsorship, I was a lecturer in mathematics at the Prep Year Math Program, Department of Mathematical Sciences, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Dhahran, Dammam Region, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I assumed duty in the university on teaching contract in late August 2001.

During the 2001 Sigma Xi conference, I made a poster presentation on a rather seemingly unusual theme with the title 'A Metaphysical Model of the General Communication System' [1], after the poster had earlier been formally accepted for presentation. In the poster presentation, this writer presented highlights of some of his research findings/conjectures on the harmonization of science, theology and philosophy. The report is part of an independent eclectic work, of several years, on cosmic issues, including thanatology/eschatology (study related to cessation of life) and oneirology (study of dream-like experiences) [2]. The presentation essentially involved the use of physical models to describe metaphysical phenomena. In my free period during the conference, I visited the Raleigh Public Library for sightseeing and consultation of references.

In addition, I delivered an invited paper on science and engineering policy development in Nigeria. [3] The latter invitation was based on my efforts in Nigeria some months earlier as the Initiator and Chairman of the Steering Committee of the Nigerian Working Group of Sigma Xi.

Dr. John W. McKee and Dr. C. Clifton Chancey were two of the distinguished conference participants who appreciated my talks at the conference, especially the poster presentation. My relationship with the duo however extended beyond the conference. Interestingly, the two scholars were born in the month of September, which coincides with Volume 11, Number 3, September 2018

edition of this journal. Hence, these tributes are also in celebration of their 92nd and 63rd post-humous birthdays, respectively. May their souls rest in perfect peace.

II. DR. JOHN W. MCKEE (1926-2009)

This section is exclusively devoted to Dr. McKee, and it describes this writer's detailed association with him during his life time. Highlights of his contribution to the development of *African Journal of Computing & ICT* are presented as well as his biodata.

This writer's relationship with Dr. McKee, although extended beyond the 2001 conference, was based solely on email correspondences. As a result of these correspondences, he expressed delight that I visit him at his home in Santa Barbara, California when next I come to America. He offered to accommodate me in his home and looked forward to introducing his family to me. He sent his home address to me, promising to pick me up once I arrive at the Santa Barbara airport. Unfortunately, when I travelled to America in 2005, I couldn't visit him at home due to time limitation and circumstances, neither was there any other opportunity to visit him at another time. I succeeded in touring some American states by road starting from Maryland on the eastern side, via the famous Greyhound buses. However, I could not get as far as California on the western side of USA, even though I visited states like Ohio, New York, Chicago and Iowa. Interesting places visited by me included the Statue of Liberty (via a boat ride), World Trade Centre (the spot where there was disaster on 11th September, 2001), University of Maryland, College Park and the Maryland Community Library.

In 2006, Dr. McKee sent autographed complimentary copies of his newly published book, entitled 'New Horizons in Science' [4] to me. The 86-page book presents a novel examination of the past with a projection into the future vis-a-vis the viewpoints and challenges in science and technology. A detailed review of this book will appear in a later edition of this journal.

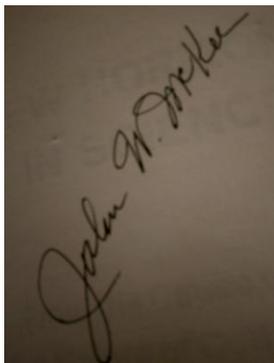


Figure 1: Signature of Dr. McKee on an autographed copy of his book which was received in 2006

Around the time of receiving the above complimentary copies, this writer, in his capacity as Editor-in-Chief, requested Dr. McKee to submit an invited paper, on any topic of interest, to the maiden edition of *African Journal of Computing and ICT*. He gladly obliged and contributed a very relevant and beautiful masterpiece on the modality for Nigeria to make its mark in the comity of nations via electronic technology. The paper appeared in Volume 1, Number 1 of this journal in 2008 [5]. In the paper, Dr. McKee canvassed for strategic and optimal utilization of the economic power of engineering, science and technology for sustained economic revitalization, using the American success story as reference. He recommended what he called ‘five action plans’, namely:

- (i) Investment in education;
- (ii) Establishment of centers for technology Management;
- (iii) Setting up of small business incubators;
- (iv) Review of state and federal government regulation;
- (v) Establishment of electronics enterprise institute.

Dr. John William McKee was born on 25th September, 1926 in Muscatine, Iowa. In 1944, he graduated from high school and subsequently joined the U.S. Navy during the Second World War until 1946. In 1947, he married Helen Mosher McKee (1927-2015). He received a B.S. in Physics and Electrical Engineering in 1949 from Iowa State University, and was awarded a Ph.D. in Physics and Biology at the California Institute of Technology (CALTECH) in 1955. In between his B.S. and Ph.D. programmes, Dr. McKee taught physics and worked at the Ames Laboratory of the United States Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). This laboratory is operated by Iowa State University for U.S. Department of Energy. He was also a Pre-doctoral Fellow of the National Research

Council. After his doctoral degree programme, Dr. McKee taught at the Medical School of University of California, Los Angeles. He also worked for General Electric Company, HDR Sciences, the Boeing Company and Los Alamos National Laboratory. He retired as the Chief Scientist of McDonald Douglas, the well-known aerospace manufacturing corporation. He held a private pilot’s license and authored the book ‘New Horizons in Science (From the Meaning of Spin o the Nature of Consciousness)’. One of the tributes paid to Dr. McKee can be found in [6].

III. DR. C. CLIFTON (‘CLIFF’) CHANCEY (1955-2013)

Unlike Dr John W. McKee, this writer’s interaction with Dr Chancey after the November 2001 Sigma Xi conference was relatively more frequent and consistent. This is due to my membership of the Editorial Board of *American Journal of Undergraduate Research*, which began immediately after the conference. The genesis of this is stated below.

In the course of our one-on-one discussion at the Sigma Xi conference, Dr. Chancey expressed deep interest in my presentations and requested for sample copies of my publications. Fortunately, I had with me a few publications, and so I brought them from my hotel room and gave him. By the next day, he was palpably excited and expressed keen interest in the publications. One of the papers was on dynamical systems [7], and it presented a necessary condition for qualitative stability of an ordinary differential systems. Another was on coding theory wherein a design of a coding system was presented [8].

Dr. Chancey thereafter invited me to join the Editorial Board of the *American Journal of Undergraduate Research* which was about to take off. I promptly gave my consent and he later sent to me, in my work place in Saudi Arabia, a formal letter of appointment as a pioneer Editor (Mathematics and Computer Science) for the journal, in his capacity as the Editor-in-Chief. I thus became the first African, indeed the first foreign editor, of the journal. The journal was published at the University of Northern Iowa for about ten years from inception, but is now published at the State University of New York, Oswego.

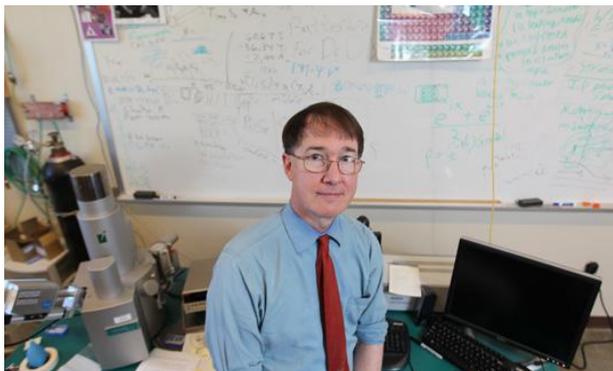


Figure 2: Photograph of Dr. Charles Clifton ('Cliff') Chancey III at work

My appointment to the editorial board of the journal was reminiscent of my appointment around 1988, during my undergraduate days, to the Editorial Board of the National Association of Mathematics Students of Nigeria (NAMSUN), Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife, Nigeria branch. The (executive council of the association) proposed to establish a journal under the able mentorship of our staff adviser Dr. (later Prof.) R. O. Ayeni (1948-2012), but the journal was eventually not published. Dr. Ayeni received a Ph.D. degree in Applied Mathematics in 1979 from Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. My nomination and approval to be a member of the board was done during a congress of the association. Not long after, I submitted a paper on my research on solar energy, as at the time [9]. My amateur research at that time dwelt on solar thermal process, including the design, construction and performance evaluation of solar pond, solar cooker, solar dryer, solar heater and solar oven. I was encouraged in the independent research by my membership of the Solar Energy Society of Nigeria (SESUN), of which my former teacher in another department of same university, Eng. (Prof.) Nelson I. Ngoka was the Publicity Secretary. I participated in the 1987 annual conference of the society.

The first edition of the *American Journal of Undergraduate Research* was eventually published in 2002, by which time I had returned to Nigeria. While in Nigeria, based on our discussion, Dr Chancey sent another letter wherein I was appointed as an Editorial Assistant for the journal. However, due to some inexplicable reasons, I couldn't take up the offer.

Back in Nigeria, I publicized the journal in some departments of the University of Ibadan and other Nigerian universities, including Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso. Eventually, I communicated to the Editor-in-Chief a paper submitted by an undergraduate student of the Department of Computer Science, University of Ibadan [10], after the paper had been reviewed. Subsequently, I communicated other papers, from within and outside Nigeria, for example [11], to the journal, following successful review reports. In general, papers by Nigeria-based authors have been published in the journal on such academic fields as Computer Science, Botany, Mathematics and Electronics/Electrical Engineering. A Nigerian undergraduate student of the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso, whose paper was published in the journal in 2003 [12], has since obtained his doctoral degree in Electronics/Electrical Engineering abroad. He is now a faculty of a university in USA and a member of the editorial board of *American Journal of Undergraduate Research*. A Nigerian student of a university in North Central Nigeria worked on an extension of [11] for his M.Sc. degree project under my supervision. Apart from the papers that I reviewed and/or communicated to the journal, I also wrote two editorials at different times [13, 14].

When I visited the USA in March/April 2005, Dr. Chancey generously hosted me in his department. It is to his credit that he provided office accommodation for me in the Physics Building, during which I completed the final draft of a paper, which has since been published [15]. Both Dr. Chancey, in his individual capacity, and his department/university were duly acknowledged in the publication. Dr. Chancey voluntarily paid for my hotel accommodation and feeding in Cedar Falls, Iowa, in addition to showing me places of interest in the town and the resulting lunch/dinner expenses. While leaving the USA, he and a few of his students took me on a shopping to the university's bookshop and supermarket and showered material gifts on me. I will forever remain grateful for his outstanding hospitality. It is important to also mention that he earlier encouraged me towards the successful completion of my Ph.D. in Computer Science degree programme in Nigeria [16]. This was a follow-up to earlier project report submitted in 2002 for conversion from M.Phil/Ph.D. to Ph.D. degree programme [17].

Dr. C. Clifton ('Cliff') Chancey was born on 3rd September, 1955 in Cincinnati, Ohio. He received a B.S. degree (1977) from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, as

well as M.S. (1980) and Ph.D. (1985) degrees from The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, USA, all in Physics. Between 1985 and 1988, he was a postdoctoral fellow at the Oxford University, England. He thereafter held academic positions at Amherst College and Purdue University-Calumet. In 1996, he was a Senior Visiting Fellow at Oxford University, England. Between 2001 and his transition in 2013, Dr. Chancey was a professor and head of the Department of Physics, University of Northern Iowa (UNI), Cedar Falls, Iowa, USA. Apart from being a member of Sigma XI since 1990, he was also member of the Mathematical Association of America, Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics, American Physical Society, Iowa Academy of Science, American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Association of Physics Teachers, Council on Undergraduate Research and Biophysical Society. He was a theoretical physicist whose research interests included biophysical modelling and neuroscience, condensed matter physics and geophysical modelling. He was Editor of the *Northwest Indiana Journal of Undergraduate Research* while at Purdue University-Calumet, and became Editor-in-Chief of *American Journal of Undergraduate Research (AJUR)* at UNI. At the time of Dr. Chancey's demise, AJUR was in its 11th year of publication. Also at UNI, he was instrumental to the establishment of the Professional Science Master (PSM) degree programme and he was a member of the Board of Directors of the National PSM Association. In addition, he served Sigma Xi as the Director for Comprehensive Colleges and Universities, among others. There is no doubt that Dr Chancey, especially via AJUR, indirectly influenced the establishment of *African Journal of Computing & ICT* in June 2008.

IV THE AUTHOR'S PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES WITH THE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

In this section, the author's experiences with the American educational system as a student in the high school and the University is presented.

4.1 EXPERIENCE AT THE HIGH SCHOOL

I was privileged to have attended one of the first two truly comprehensive high schools to be established in Nigeria. The school, Comprehensive High School, Ayetoro (COMPRO), via Abeokuta, Ogun State, was founded in 1963 through a partnership of the then Western Nigeria Regional Government with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Ford Foundation [18]. The other school was established a year

earlier in Port-Harcourt in the present Rivers State through the facilitation of the then Eastern Nigeria Government.

The pioneer teachers of COMPRO were drawn from lecturers of Harvard University, USA and other notable institutions. In fact, the pioneer principal of the school, Dr. John Sly, was an American. Students of the school were taught effective use of the psychomotor domain (skills), affective domain (attitudes) and cognitive domain (knowledge). In the hey days of the school, the academic departments included Technical Department, Science Department, Arts Department and Commercial Department, to which students were assigned, based on their individual academic performance within the first two years of admission.

In particular, the Technical Department comprised of the Electronics section, Auto-mechanics section, Metal-work section and Wood-work section. Among other notable achievements, students of the Electronics section carried out repair works on the school's electronic gadgets, including television sets, radios etc; those in the Auto-mechanics section repaired vehicles etc. The workshops of these sections had many high-tech equipment which will compete with those in many present-day engineering faculties of Nigerian Universities. As materials for projects in year one and two, for instance, students were given substantial pieces of metals to fabricate devices of their choice in the metal and wood workshops. This author fabricated a key holder in the metal workshop, and due to his love for the cricket game, he fabricated a cricket bat in the wood workshop.

As a rule, students who were graduating from the Technical Department were enrolled for the City & Guilds (C & G) of London Trade Test. Thus, a typical student of this department normally received the C & G certificate, in addition to the West African School Certificate (WASC). Students of the Science Department were exposed to modern microscopes in the laboratories. This author was assigned to this department in Form 3. Commercial students did practicals during the daily break by manning the school's supermarket i.e. they sold goods to students and the entire school community. Distribution of students to the respective departments was done at the beginning of the third year by a professionally qualified guidance counsellor, based on each student's area of comparative academic strength.

The school's staff quarters were so expansive that every willing staff was accommodated on campus. The

buildings in the quarters comprised of duplexes, bungalows (for senior staff and National Youth Corpsers), as well as one and two bedroom apartments.

4.2. EXPERIENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY

Apart from R. O. Ayeni mentioned in Section II, some other American-trained scholars who were my teachers and/or thesis supervisors at the undergraduate and/or graduate levels include the following.

Bola O. Balogun, a professor of mathematics was an excellent pure mathematics teacher. He received a first degree from the University College, London (1963), and then a Ph.D. degree from the University of California, Los Angeles (1975), after an earlier master's degree from the latter university. Interestingly, the scholar taught me the highest number of undergraduate courses, including Real Analysis, Group Theory, Linear (Abstract) Algebra, General Topology and Non-commutative Algebra.

Anthony Ayi Afuwape (1948 – 2016), a professor of mathematics was my teacher at both undergraduate and graduate level, in addition to being my M.Sc. thesis supervisor in the area of differential equations [19]. He initially graduated from the University of Ife/Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife (OAU) in 1971 with a first degree and subsequently received M.A from Duke University, Durham, North Carolina (1974) and M.Sc. degree from Rutgers University, New Jersey (1976). He later obtained a Ph.D. degree from University of Ibadan (1983).

Christopher Olutunde Imoru (1943-2007) was a professor of mathematics who received a M.Sc. degree (1969) and a Ph.D. degree (1972) from North-western University, Evanston, Illinois. He received his B.Sc. degree from OAU (1967), and was my teacher at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

With respect to my Ph.D. training programme in Computer Science, I had the privilege to have been supervised by Adenike O. Osofisan, a professor of computer science, who obtained a master's degree from Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, Georgia (1979). She later obtained a Ph.D. degree from OAU (1989) after an earlier bachelor's degree from the same university (1976). This scholar also benefited from the American training at the Comprehensive High School, Ayetoro (described in Section 4.1), where she underwent her Higher School Certificate programme (1968).

Last, but certainly not the least, among the scholars described in the current section is Martins O. Ogedengbe (1943-2013), a professor of civil engineering who taught me a course at the undergraduate level in the 1982/83 academic session. The course was 'Introduction to Civil Engineering'. This scholar had his education from the primary level to the higher school certificate level in Nigeria. In 1968, he received B.Sc. degree from University of Wisconsin, Madison, followed by an M.Sc degree (1970) and Ph.D. degree (1972) from Iowa State University.

V. INFERENCE FROM THE CONTRIBUTION OF DR. MCKEE AND DR. CHANCEY TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA

In this section, some of the lessons garnered from the life and times of Dr. John W. McKee and Dr. C. Clifton ('Cliff') Chancey are examined vis-a-vis Nigeria's quest for social, political, economic and technological/industrial development. This is from the perspective of the individual contributions of these scholars, as well as the unique characteristics of the American system which moulded them.

There is no doubt whatsoever that any country that intends to leapfrog into non-trivial development must invest heavily in education. This fact can easily be learnt from developed nations such as USA, Japan, Britain etc. It is no gain saying the fact that Nigeria has not committed significant proportion of her wealth to education. Although there are scores of universities, research institutes and other higher institutions in the country, there is need for more effective coordination of the strategies, approaches and outputs from these institutions.

It is interesting to note that Dr. McKee wrote his (last) book at the age of 78. Nigerian scholars need to continually share their wealth of experience and mentor younger ones. One way of doing this through research is to catch them young by encouraging undergraduate students to undertake research that is qualitative and relevant to the society. The mentors can then guide them to prepare and submit resulting papers to such journals as *American Journal of Undergraduate Research*. This will be a breeding ground for higher qualitative research. In this connection, a mechanism for discovering talents early enough need to be put in place. Existing schools for gifted students, such as the Suleja Academy, Abuja, FCT, do not appear to be achieving the optimal output due to

challenges in effective implementation of government policies.

In addition, active short-range and long-range systemic planning is important for sustainable development, as can be seen from the American scientific culture. There is growth but not development in Nigeria because there is no genuine sustainable plan. Ad-hoc plans need to be the exception and not the rule. Efforts need to be intensified to eliminate bribery and corruption, or at least reduce it to globally acceptable standard. Also, merit need to be clearly emphasized with respect to workers' promotion and students' admission. That is, no one needs to know an influential person before he/she receives legitimate benefits.

Furthermore, a lot still needs to be learnt from the accommodating and result-focused spirit of the American system. This will assist in uprooting religious intolerance, ethnic jingoism, nepotism and other ills which stand on Nigeria's path to greatness.

Finally, America has a good network of roads for intra states and inter states travellers. Nigeria need to adopt this working system by constantly maintaining existing roads and ultimately building a seamless and reliable road network for social, economic and technological transformation.

V. CONCLUSION

This technical note has examined the life and times of Dr. John William McKee of Santa Barbara, California and Dr. C. Clifton Chancey of Iowa, USA, especially as it relates to the establishment of *African Journal of Computing & ICT*, ISSN 2006-1781. The two distinguished scientists made tangible moral and material contribution with respect to the existence and sustenance of the journal. Earlier tributes have been paid to them by several individuals and organizations including [20, 21, 22, 23]. Adieu Dr. McKee! Adieu Dr. Chancey, fondly called Cliff! .

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I use this opportunity to express my deepest thanks to my relatives and their friends who made it possible for me to be an active (financial) member of Sigma, The Scientific Research Honor Society, USA [23] in 1991, and who also provided partial substantial support for my 2005 visit to USA. I also wish to acknowledge all my formal and informal teachers (including my parents), whether

Nigerians or expatriates, right from nursery school to graduate level, for their various impartation and the resulting opportunities. These included the privilege to travel out of my home country Nigeria, at one time or the other, for greener pastures. It is worthy of note that my 2001 contract employment at the King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM), Saudi Arabia, provided an opportunity for me to register and become an active (financial) member of two other leading American scholarly international organizations. These are Institute of Electrical & Electronics Engineers Inc (IEEE) and American Mathematical Society (AMS), which membership has been sustained up to date. In general, all my benefactors, colleagues, friends, classmates and well-wishers from time immemorial are hereby acknowledged.

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