



“Water”

*I was born to water
on an Island in the sea.
The surf outside the window
each night put me to sleep.
Waves against the shore
rumbled to cobbles
on the stormy coast.
The tide murmured as it passed
the red nun in the channel.
The offshore boulders
sang to the surf.
All these sounds and sights of water
are a symphony to me —
a voice that still reminds me
I’m adrift without the sea.
- Conrad Neumann*



Conrad Neumann was a gentleman scholar and true renaissance man; an oceanographer, teacher, artist, and poet. A. Conrad Neumann died Monday, January 28, 2019, in Durham, N.C., of complications following a stroke. He is survived by his wife Jane, his sister Jane, daughter Jennifer, sons Cris and Jonathan, and six grandchildren.

Conrad was born on Martha’s Vineyard, MA in 1933, where he lived in Chilmark and attended the Menemsha School and Tisbury High School. After two years of high school on the Island, he transferred to Bayside High in New York so he could attend Queens College and later Brooklyn College, where he graduated with a bachelor of science in geology in 1955. He obtained a master’s degree in oceanography from Texas A&M in 1958.

After obtaining his master’s degree, he worked for three years at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and shipped out on the Atlantis I to the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean, and the North and South Atlantic. He enrolled at Lehigh University for a Ph.D. in geology in 1963, and went on to do marine geological research at the University of Miami until 1970.

From 1970 to 1972 he served at the National Science Foundation in Washington D.C., after which he moved to the University of North Carolina where he taught oceanography and researched deep-sea deposits, coral reefs, sea-level, and climate change. He used the research submersible Alvin on 33 dives, some as deep as two miles.

Conrad’s pioneering work in the Bahamas and Bermuda on the ecological behavior of coral reefs under changing sea levels coined the oft-used phrase “catch up, keep up, give up.” He was also instrumental in recognizing the catastrophic events at the close of the last interglacial, recorded by reefs, dunes and bioerosional notches, christening it the climatic “madhouse” between the greenhouse and icehouse. His trailblazing work set the foundations for many of today’s discussions on rapid climate change. Conrad retired in 2003, and with Jane, divided their time between their home in Durham, and summers on Martha’s Vineyard.

In addition to his research, Conrad was renowned for his poetry and instructional drawings (original poem and Carbonate Environments course syllabus, above). He had a gift for taking complex systems and simplifying them into intricate and mesmerizing sketches that fostered a deeper understanding and passion for science in his students. His talents, humor, and affable charm will be deeply missed.