

## In Memoriam – Tommy Berman

Yuval Cohen 21.4.2013

It is hard for me to talk about Tommy in the past tense. It was a privilege to know him for so many years, to work with him and, more than anything, to learn from him. I first met Tommy about 40 years ago when I was a student on a course at the Kinneret Limnological Laboratory. Tommy taught us how to monitor the lake water quality. At IOLR we worked together for 18 years and got to know each other very well. Our relationship was much more than work relationships - we built up a friendship lasting to this day. We had numerous discussions over professional and technical matters, but in most cases they began or ended about dog affairs.

Tommy was a world-renowned leader in microbial ecology and limnology. I learned so much from him on these subjects, but I also enjoyed getting to know other aspects of his personality, especially his unique sense of humor. Tommy published many important scientific papers, but I cannot forget his joy and pride when one of his papers was accepted for publication in the JOURNAL OF IRREPRODUCIBLE RESULTS. The article attempted to provide an elegant answer, using scientific tools, to a weighty problem which had intrigued many people – HOW MANY MONSTERS CAN LOCH NESS SUSTAIN? Based on the hypothesis that the monsters are carnivorous, Tommy examined police records showing the number of missing persons in the lake area over the years, and their national background; assuming that all had been devoured by the Loch Ness Monster(s), he compared the calorific value of a local victim fed on FISH & CHIPS with that of an American tourist brought up on JUNK FOOD. With these results he calculated the probable number of monsters living in the lake. To this day, I quote some statements from this learned piece of research. Many others, from all corners of the globe, were captivated by the magical combination of a first-rate scientist and a poet with a subtle and sophisticated sense of humor that made up Tommy's personality. I remember that whenever I brought up the possibility of cooperation between our organization and a similar outfit somewhere in the world, Tommy's answer would always be "Yes, I have a friend there...". The list of his friends really was long, stretching from Europe to Japan, and from North America to Australia. Many of these friends were leading scientists, and thanks to his connections we in Israel were able to set up joint research with them. They brought new technologies and approaches for the study of Lake Kinneret, and helped Israel in other ways as well.

Lately, Tommy research focused on transparent particles which can form substrates for biofilm formation in water treatment systems. From basic research he branched out into applied research of great importance in the context of water desalination. His studies triggered new

ideas for efficient and environmentally-friendly filtration methods for desalination plants. On this subject, I also learned a lot from Tommy.

I loved Tommy, and his memory will always bring me a smile!

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