A TRIBUTE TO MR ALY M. SHADY P.ENG.
1942-2012

It is with immense sadness and deep grief that the world water fraternity pays homage to one of its most distinguished colleagues and an exemplary water professional, Mr. Aly M. Shady P.Eng., observing his untimely demise on Thursday December 27, 2012, in Ottawa, Canada, where he resided for the past 35 years. Aly was a dear friend, colleague, mentor, teacher and confidant to hundreds in every corner of the globe.

Aly Shady was born in the Nile Delta of Egypt, where he received his early schooling, and then obtained his BSc from the University of Cairo. After brief stints working in soil and water management in Egypt and Italy, Aly moved to Montreal, Canada, where he enrolled in post graduate studies at McGill University. On completion of his MSc, he joined the McGill Department of Agricultural Engineering as a Research Engineer, undertaking studies in land drainage, and managing, designing and implementing large scale subsurface drainage projects in Quebec and Ontario. His work was of a pioneering nature, leading to the development of subsurface drainage design criteria for Eastern Canada, which have now become the standards of practice. Through his energy and dynamism, he came into frequent contact with the leading drainage experts in Canada, the US and Europe. Those relationships endured forever, as Aly was frequently called upon for his technical advice.

It was during Aly's sojourn in Montreal that he met and married his late wife, Margaret, a graduate of the McGill school of nursing. Their union produced two daughters, Jeannie and Anissa.

Aly joined the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in 1979, first creating and eventually leading the Agency's Irrigation Sector. He was subsequently appointed Senior Water Advisor to CIDA. During his tenacious, bold, imaginative and dedicated career in CIDA, Aly developed, managed, and provided technical leadership and guidance to more than 185 irrigation, water and agriculture projects in more than 38 countries. The total value of this project portfolio under Aly's exemplary and persevering leadership exceeded $1.7 billion.

Perhaps Aly Shady's most enduring legacy of his work in CIDA was that he devoted considerable time and energy to building Canadian irrigation, water and agriculture expertise,
talent and technologies for undertaking international work. He raised enormously the profile of the Canadian private sector and consulting firms. He facilitated the Canadian public sector to share their knowledge and expertise with counterpart Ministries in developing countries. He encouraged all Canadian universities to train the next generation of professionals both in Canada and overseas. He was particularly agile in finding ways in which developing country younger professionals could come to Canada for advanced training. He recognized that such two way interactions were the foundation for harmonious bilateral relationships, cultural appreciation, and longer term developmental opportunities.

Aly Shady's work in CIDA and his frequent contact with colleagues around the world led him to go way beyond his civil service career. He was intrigued that professional societies had an innate ability to unite professionals, outside of their paid employment, to serve the greater good and make a broader impact on society, in order to improve human kind. He therefore offered his services to a range of water NGOs, such as ICID, IWRA, CANCID and CWRA. He was an active member of CANCID and CWRA, participating in their annual meetings and conferences, and representing CANCID on various ICID working groups. Through these affiliations he felt that the world's water professionals ought to go further and faster, in order to tackle the water challenges that will confront future generations. This led him to forge alliances and partnerships with like minded experts, in order to create the World Water Council (WWC), the Arab Water Council (AWC), the now legendary International Drainage Workshops, and the International Program for Technology Research in Irrigation and Drainage (IPTRID). He served as Vice President of the WWC for many years. These organizations owe their success to Mr. Aly Shady, P.Eng., who spared no effort in helping to write their constitutions, raise the funds for their inaugural meetings, and building their infrastructure and global support base. His contributions will be indelibly etched in all of these initiatives and water NGOs.

Aly Shady's leadership skills and talents were recognized by all who came into his presence. It is therefore no surprise that he was elected President of ICID in 1996, and President of IWRA in 2004. During his term as President of ICID, he led various broad basing initiatives to bring young professionals, students, university researchers, and farmer and NGO representatives into the organization. Through his warm personality and good offices, he enlisted more countries to join the ICID fraternity. He traveled to every ICID member country to seek their support for IPTRID and to initiate transboundary river basin cooperation. His efforts in Nile Basin collaboration and Aral Sea Basin cooperation, are not only legendary, but also models of successful internal and external partnerships. In some ways, one can say that Aly Shady's life goal was to see people reach across boundaries and divides, holding hands, to share knowledge and information, to build joint projects, and to collaborate for the betterment of all peoples, no matter their colour or creed. Aly was the singular driving force behind the organization and hosting of ICID's 53rd International Executive Congress (IEC) in Montreal in July 2002. He raised the bar at that Congress and set the standards for future IECs. Aly continued to serve ICID as President Honoraire, in many roles, including Chairing the Task Forces that contributed to the World Water Forums, and other tasks assigned by successive Presidents.

Aly Shady was perhaps the most passionate, persuasive, and personable water dignitary to have traversed so many pathways. He was an articulate and brilliant speaker, who used the most
powerful arguments to convey his messages about water, irrigation, agriculture, food security, and poverty alleviation. A more passionate spokesperson on these topics is rare. Aly Shady was a person of logic, reason, principle, and above all of utmost professionalism. He was never swayed by the flavour of the day, by short sightedness, or by individual gain. He took the longer, broader view that it is the poor, the disenfranchised, the disadvantaged, the hungry, the water scarce, and the malnourished that we must serve. He frequently emphasized that it is these individuals who will ultimately judge the appropriateness of our actions.

In recognition of his many contributions, Aly received copious awards, including: Gold Medal of the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario, Gold Medal of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, Gold Medal of the WWC, Fellow of IWRA, Fellow of the Canadian Society of Agricultural Engineering, Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal, Distinguished Alumnus Award of Macdonald College of McGill University, Lifetime Achievement Award of CANDID, and Star of CIDA award.

Through his CIDA and ICID activities, Aly Shady came into frequent contact with farmers, rural peasants, irrigators, water managers, village leaders and elders, research and extension specialists, college teachers, university professors, diplomats, government technocrats, decision makers, ministers, politicians and leaders of government. In all of these situations, he remained humble, dignified, and personable. He ate, walked, worked and lived among the poor and downtrodden in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Central and South America, Central Asia, the Caribbean and Eastern Europe. He was at all times a man of the people. Aly Shady spoke and understood many languages; he appreciated all cultures and religions; and he valued people irrespective of their origin. He was comfortable in any setting, laughing and singing and dancing among friends and strangers, anywhere in the world. Aly Shady was truly a citizen of the world.

The world is today poorer without Aly Shady. His sudden demise is way too early. He was a visionary extraordinaire, with boundless energy and enthusiasm. No mountain was too high to climb, no challenge was too difficult to overcome. He had an amazing propensity for conveying the heaviest of workloads. Yet, he remained a most charming, warm and hospitable person.

Aly Shady has made his mark. His contributions are legendary, astounding and numerous. He led an exemplary life, he was a trail blazer and trend setter, and he set the pace for the world water community. We now walk in his shadow, and follow in his footsteps. It is only fitting that we find our own ways to thank and honour such an illustrious figure who blessed us richly by his presence, wisdom, guidance and counsel.

To his daughters and family, we offer our most profound condolences, at this time of such deep pain, grief and loss. We thank the Almighty for the life and witness of Aly Shady, and we pray that he will be granted rest eternal. Our dear friend, colleague, mentor, teacher and confidant Aly Shady will henceforth walk among the great in Elysian Fields. May his spirit live forever in each of us, and guide us in our undertakings.