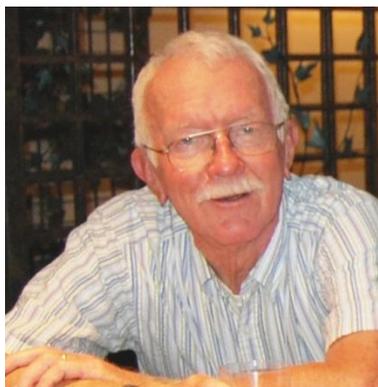


Walt Rockwood, former IRRI editor and first ARFUSA president, passes away

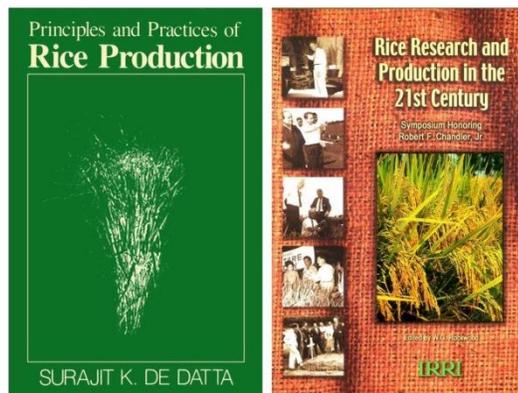


Walter G. Rockwood, 91, passed away in Lebanon, New Hampshire, on 24 October 2019. He was an editor for the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) for 15-plus years, 6 in Information Services at headquarters in the Philippines (1976-82) and then as a part-time consultant for the institute, based in Vermont, editing program reports and other key books throughout most of the 1990s into 2001.

Prior to his time at IRRI, armed with an agriculture degree from the University of Vermont (1950), he served as the Franklin County (Vermont) Extension Dairy Agent. He began his career in the international arena in the Foreign Service during 1963-68 by way of the U.S. Agency for International Development in Togo, Guinea, and Morocco. After earning a Master's Degree in agricultural communications at the University of Illinois in 1970, he spent 5 years at the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Nigeria. After 1 year in Iran working for the United Nations Development Programme, he came to IRRI. After his full-time stint at IRRI in 1982, he returned to Africa for a time to work in Côte D'Ivoire for the Food for Peace Program.

During his IRRI Pioneer Interview in June 2006, Walt pointed out that the major challenge when he arrived at the institute was to keep up with the need to get all the many publications out that the scientists were producing before the information got too old. "During the time that I was there, I edited around 30 books mostly emanating from cutting-edge workshops and symposia," he said.

"I was particularly proud of editing and arranging the production of IRRI's first co-published scientific book with a reputable publisher, [*Principles and Practices of Rice Production*](#), by S.K. De Datta." That book, published by John Wiley and Sons in 1981, was the beginning of a long tradition of IRRI editors working with Wiley and similar science publishers to get important information out to other scientists and to rice farmers themselves. His last book for IRRI in 2001 was [*Rice Research and Production in the 21st Century—the proceedings of the symposium honoring Robert F. Chandler, Jr.*](#)



During his 2006 interview, he made a special mention of the sports programs at IRRI in which he was heavily involved, especially as the coach-manager of the international staff's softball team. "Playing softball, tennis, and volleyball allowed the international and national staffs to get to know each other better," he recalled. "We also put together a little league baseball team of staff kids—the IRRI Turks. This all added so much to IRRI life."

“Working at IRRI was tops,” Walt said. “I enjoyed my time there more than any other job I’d ever had. The working conditions, the colleagues, the location and—perhaps more than anything else—the Filipino people and Filipino staff made it all most enjoyable.”

Walt was the first president (later renamed chair) of the [Asia Rice Foundation USA \(ARFUSA\)](#); 1999-2003), founded by him and a cadre of other former IRRI staff members who had worked and lived in countries where rice is vital for food and livelihoods. ARFUSA is interested in encouraging the next generation of rice scientists through its Travel and Study Awards for Young Scholars. Walt also later served as the organization’s treasurer and executive director.

Retiring from full-time work in 1988, he settled at Redrock Farm in Chelsea, VT where he established a choose-and-cut Christmas tree operation. He was active in the Vermont-New Hampshire Christmas Tree Association, the Vermont Senior Guard, the IITA and IRRI alumni associations, and the Chelsea community.

Walt was preceded in death by his first wife, Beverly Alyce Kenyon; second wife, Jean Peterson; father Floyd Rockwood and mother Julia (Bowers) Rockwood; his sister Greta (Rockwood) Somerville; and brother Gordon Rockwood.

He is survived by his son Richard and wife Stephanie Rockwood of Chelsea, son Timothy and wife Codie Rockwood of Hartland, daughter Pamela and husband Andrew Russell of Old Lyme, CT, and son William and wife Cynthia Rockwood of Grand Junction, CO; and eight grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

Donations in his memory may be made to one of the following organizations: Chelsea Area Senior Center, 13 Church ST, Chelsea, VT; [Asia Rice Foundation USA](#), Inc., 82 Ashlar Village DR, Wallingford, CT 06492; or the Jack Byrne Center for Palliative & Hospice Care, 154 Hitchcock Loop RD, Lebanon, NH 03756.

A gathering to celebrate Walt’s life will be held at Knight Funeral Home in Windsor, VT on 23 November 2019, 1-2 pm followed by a short prayer service. An additional celebration of his life will be scheduled later at Redrock Farm in Chelsea, VT.

Condolences may be expressed to his family in an online guestbook at <https://www.knightfuneralhomes.com/obituary/walter-rockwood#gb-entry-form>