

Cleo M. Christensen

Born: November 24, 1935

Died: April 15, 2010

South Dakota State Geologist from 1992-1997

Cleo M. Christensen passed away at his home in Shalimar, Florida, on Thursday, April 15, 2010, at the age of 74 after a battle with cancer. He grew up in the Spirit Lake, Iowa, area and after serving 2 years in the U.S. Navy, he enrolled in the geology program at the University of South Dakota. He began his career with the South Dakota Geological Survey as a field assistant in 1960 and was hired as a geologist in 1961. He first worked on municipal water-supply studies and then on county-wide assessments of geology. His career changed emphasis from dominantly field based geology to planning and managerial duties in 1985 when he became a Natural Resources Administrator with the Geological Survey. Cleo was appointed as the South Dakota State Geologist in 1992 and served in this capacity until his retirement in 1997. He was an expert in South Dakota's Pleistocene geology and was the author of 19 Geological Survey publications, including reports on the geology of Bon Homme, Clark, Clay, Davison, Edmunds, Faulk, Hanson, and McPherson Counties. Cleo's work contributed significantly to the understanding and development of South Dakota's geologic and ground-water resources. He also influenced the lives of many students through his teaching of introductory geology for many years at the University of South Dakota. Cleo was readily available for consults on South Dakota's geology with Geological Survey staff until his death.