

# A humble, generous and inspirational mentor

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Anyone who has met Gustaf, however briefly, would know that he embraces life with enthusiasm. He is passionate about his work and the people around him. Although he has made an incredible intellectual contribution to the field of instrumentation, control, and automation (ICA), he is equally respected for his kind nature and genuine approach. His generosity toward others made a big impression on me as an early career researcher, and I have strived to model his optimistic outlook in my career, and return that generosity of spirit to the next generation.

I met Gustaf in 1994. In the spring of that year, I arrived at Ghent University in Belgium to commence research on water system automation, after saying goodbye to aviation control, which I had studied for more than 10 years. Early in my Ghent appointment, I came across Professor Olsson's landmark 1976 ICA discussion paper, which was a major influence on my academic direction. Later that year, among a few hundred other researchers, I attended the 1994 Forum on Applied Environmental Biotechnology, led by my postdoctoral advisor, Professor Willy Verstraete. At the time, I didn't recognise the gentleman who asked many wise questions at the meeting, leaving a deep impression on me. It was only later, when I saw his name tag that I realised the gentleman was Professor Olsson. During the seminar break, I summoned the courage to approach Gustaf, who took time to discuss ideas with me, a complete novice with limited language skills, and he warmly encouraged me to pursue my ideas. Gustaf does not remember our first encounter, but I gained a great deal of confidence and inspiration from our conversation. I am sure a great scholar such as Gustaf, with his positive attitude and enthusiasm for knowledge exchange, has unknowingly influenced many of the next generation.

Gustaf can be called a living treasure in the field of water system automation. Gustaf's exciting ICA work laid the foundation for my generation of automation scholars. Gustaf is the only scholar who has attended all the conferences in

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the ICA series of the International Water Association (and predecessor). From the first conference held in London, England in 1973, Gustaf has tirelessly and enthusiastically shared his passion for ICA. I look forward to welcoming Gustaf to the 13th IWA ICA Conference in Beijing in October 2022, of which I am a co-chair. Unfortunately, this will be a virtual conference due to the pandemic, and I will miss an opportunity to show Gustaf around in the city in which I studied for 11 years.

Not long after I joined The University of Queensland's Advanced Wastewater Management Centre (AWMC) in 1998, Gustaf arrived for an academic sojourn. During these few weeks, we often met to discuss ICA issues. Also participating in the discussion was Pernille Ingildsen, who was then a PhD student of Prof. Olsson, and now an internationally leading water professional. These discussions were inspirational, and I gained great benefit from the intellectual challenge and stimulation. At this time, Professor Olsson gave me my first big break by inviting me to give a keynote presentation at the upcoming 8th IWA ICA meeting to be held in Malmö, Sweden in 2001. This keynote opportunity proved to be a turning point, raising my international profile and boosting my career immeasurably. With the guidance and support of Gustaf, I gradually joined the IWA ICA leadership team, my first major research leadership position, and subsequently I was elected as the chair of the IWA ICA Specialist Group in 2005. In that year, Gustaf and I published our joint book 'Instrumentation, Control, and Automation in Wastewater Systems' (IWA Publishing), in collaboration with Marinus Nielsen, Anders Lynggaard-Jensen, and Jean-Philippe Steyer. The idea was initiated at the 8th ICA Conference in Malmö, 2001. It was a challenging job, but owing to Gustaf's genuine leadership and tireless effort, we were able to launch the book four years later at the 9th IWA ICA Conference in Busan in 2005. In 2009, I successfully hosted the 10th ICA Conference in Cairns, Australia. It was my great honour to present Gustaf with a lifetime achievement award at the closing ceremony, a small token of appreciation for his inspirational leadership.

Gustaf has been a humble, generous mentor who greatly supported my professional growth throughout my entire career. However, I am just one of many people who owe much of their success to Gustaf's ongoing guidance and support. In retirement, Gustaf continues to embrace life; he is still productive and giving back to our community. Here, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Olsson on behalf of all the colleagues who he has helped.

*Gustaf Olsson and Zhiguo Yuan at the 9th IWA Conference in Busan, Korea in 2005, following the launch of their joint book 'Instrumentation, Control and Automation in Wastewater Systems' (IWA Publishing).*

