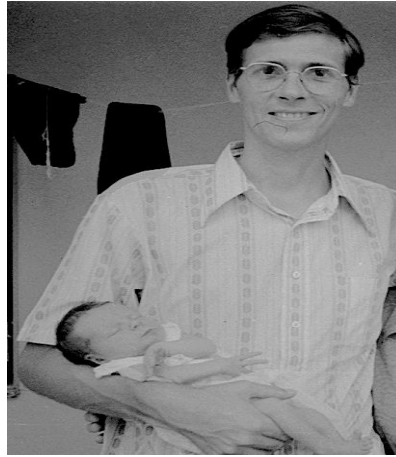


OBITUARY: RUSSEL SCHUH

by

Prof. Norbert Cyffer



Russel Schuh

In March 2016, about eight months before his death, some of his colleagues and friends received a letter from Russ. The news contained the message of his serious illness, but also the hope that this could be overcome. At least we had the hope.

Now, when the sad news reached us, it became clear, that the letter was also written to bid farewell.

Russel and I met for first time in Kano in 1974. We were starting our work at the *Centre for the Study of Nigerian Languages* (then Ahmadu Bello University). Russel eventually moved to Gashua (Yobe State) and myself to Maiduguri (Borno State). Occasionally we met in Kano, but also in Gashua and Maiduguri. An unforgettable moment was, when he and his wife Maxine came to visit us in Maiduguri together with their just born daughter.

Russel was a committed runner. He took regularly part in Marathons almost until the end of his life. He applied the same commitment in his linguistic work. I am convinced that he did not primarily do it for his own linguistic career. Just as much he rendered a service to the speakers of the investigated languages. He made these people feel that their own languages are worth to be respected and studied like any other language in the world. In particular, these are the Chadic languages in Yobe State, which are located between Hausa in the west and Kanuri on the eastern side. He made sure, that his grammars, dictionaries, etc. were also made available to the speakers of the languages, and not only to the international linguistic community.

Later, Russ and I met several times in the US and in Europe. Last time we met some seven years ago in Nigeria, where we met for the first time, this time in Maiduguri. He gave a university lecture. Later we had a wonderful meal in a Lebanese restaurant and a good time to talk about linguistics and other more or less important matters.

It does not need to be specifically mentioned, that Russel Schuh has been an outstanding linguist with an excellent reputation. Still, he never bragged about it. He wanted to contribute to a better knowledge of African languages. The results of the research were communicated to the international linguistics. But what was equally important to him, was the need to present these findings to the speakers of their language.

I don't know of any person, who had nursed any professional or personal grudge against him. We will miss him as a friend, wonderful colleague and an excellent scholar.