

Words on receiving the 2002 John von Neumann Medal
at the 6th International Enterprise Distributed Object Computing
Conference (EDOC 2002),
17–20 September 2002,
Lausanne, Switzerland

Mr. Snyder, other IEEE officers, EDOC conference organisers, distinguished guests!

On behalf of the Dahl and Nygaard families I thank the IEEE Awards Board and the Board of Directors for the 2002 John von Neumann Medal. Both Ole-Johan and my father were very glad and very honoured being named recipients of this prestigious prize.

Ole Johan died in June, after a long period of illness. My father died in August, and totally unexpected. In his jacket I found a card from Tove Dahl, thanking him for all the help and comfort given during Ole-Johan's last months.

The two men were very different, both in looks and personality. Ole-Johan was slim, and appeared to be quiet, calm and modest. My father was big, outspoken, informal and not regarded as modest. I have, however, heard Ole-Johan neigh like a stallion at the restaurant table when he was asked how his horse steak tasted.

Ole-Johan, typically, expressed unease at being named first in references because D came before N in the alphabet. My father, typically, said that his only concern was that people eventually would start to call him Al, because the papers were written by Dahl et al.

They came into computer science from different directions. Ole-Johan was an expert programmer, whereas my father was trained in statistics and operations research. This difference in background probably was essential to their success. Discussions, often misinterpreted as heated quarrels, killed the weak ideas and defined the sustainable concepts.

The development of SIMULA was not an isolated, inspired episode followed by decades of applause. The families lived with the process for at least ten years, and along the way traditional thinking and existing power structures had to be challenged and defeated.

In the seventies and eighties, Ole-Johan played a vital role in the development of the new institute of informatics at the University of Oslo. My father contributed to the development of the so-called "Scandinavian school" of socially responsible systems development.

Ole-Johan and my father regarded themselves as scientists, not entrepreneurs. They made no efforts to restrict the use of the ideas and concepts that they developed. Their mutual respect and loyalty was absolute during 40

years of close coexistence in Norwegian informatics. This relationship should serve as a model for future generations of scientist. During the last weeks and months, lots of people have spoken about their ability to guide and inspire students and colleagues.

The John von Neumann medal may contribute to the maintenance of the high standards set by Ole-Johan and my father. And it may tell students of computer science that big ideas may very well come from small institutions in small countries.

Marius Nygaard