



Obituary for Professor Emeritus Jakob Krarup

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Obituary for Professor Emeritus Jakob Kraurp

1. Obituary for Professor Emeritus Jakob Kraurp

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Dorit Hochbaum

Posted 21 hours ago

Jakob Kraurp, former professor at the Department of Computer Science, University of Copenhagen (DIKU), passed away, February 25th. He will be remembered as one of the founders of operations analysis (OR) in Denmark, and for his active work within the European Association of OR companies (EURO)

Jakob was one of the pioneers in computer science in Denmark. He started in 1958 with a student job on Denmark's first electronic computer (DASK) at the then Regnecentralen. This was followed by a few years at the Institute for Mathematical Statistics and Operations Analysis (IMSOR) at the Polytechnic Institute (today DTU), where he worked closely with Peter Pruzan within the new research area "operational analysis" which had been founded shortly after the Second World War. Over 25 years, Jakob and Peter published close to 40 publications in the areas of location problems, quadratic optimization and routing. Jakob was a central figure in the facility location research community, and many of his papers and associated datasets are still being cited.

When the Department of Computer Science at the University of Copenhagen (DIKU) was founded in



1970, Jakob was employed as an associate professor, and later as a professor. Here he helped shape computer science and inspired future generations.

In addition to his academic work, Jakob will be especially remembered for his involvement in EURO (Association of European Operational Societies), where he was one of the pioneers, and which was part of his life for almost 50 years. Jakob was president of EURO in 1989-1990, and he is the only person who has been chairman of the program committee at two EURO conferences. In 2009, Jakob received the EURO Distinguished Service Medal for his enormous work within EURO.

Jakob Krarup liked to challenge the established society. When he wrote his doctoral thesis with Peter Pruzan, the rules required each person to write their own thesis. Therefore, Jakob and Peter had the doctoral thesis printed so that Jakob Krarup was written on the front and Peter Pruzan was on the back. Depending on which side was facing up, you could then have different authors. It caused quite a debate in the Danish media about whether this was allowed, and it is one of multiple examples of Jakob's irreverence towards bureaucratic rules.

Jakob loved to teach, and was a great inspiration to many of us within operational analysis. His slides were always decorated with little stick-men, and he supplemented the dry fabric with pictures from "The Great Bastian". As he said: Lectures must be entertaining so that they inspire people to read more about the material. You don't want people to fall asleep over boring math.

Many of his former students later became professors at universities in Denmark (Jens Clausen, Jørgen Tind, Pawel Winter, Stefan Røpke, Jesper Larsen, David Pisinger) and helped carry on his tradition. Jakob was also very supportive and encouraging of young scholars.

As the son of an organist, Jakob was always interested in music, and he was gifted with absolute hearing. At festive events, he could take some empty wine bottles, fill them with water until they had the right natural frequency, and then play a piece of music on the bottles. Jakob loved listening to classical music and had a huge collection of rare recordings. But we will also remember him for being able to lift a glass of red wine to his ear to hear if it was a good vintage.

Jakob was active until the very end. As recently as this autumn, he wrote a column in Politiken about digitization in Denmark, and he was looking forward to the EURO conference finally coming to Copenhagen in 2024. He was also in the process of gathering material for EURO's 50th anniversary. As if he had had a premonition, in December he sent more than 18 files with his memories about EURO, including anecdotes, the birth of EURO, memories about conferences, information on the working groups, but he also wrote obituaries for four EURO presidents who passed away. It is a strange feeling that we now write about him. Thanks to his fantastic memory and his enormous image archive, he helped to remember and shape EURO's history and identity. As Jakob always said: "without the people and stories that shaped the field, there would just be some empty formulas". When Jakob Krarup was knighted in 2001, he was asked to write his life story. When he was in audience with Queen Margarethe II, she thought it was a life-affirming and entertaining story. The life story can be found at the web page of the Danish OR Society, for those who would like to know more about Jakob.

We will miss Jakob for his always entertaining speeches, and for having gathered the people behind the OR profession for 50 years. Thank you, Jakob, for your great engagement for Operations Research, for EURO, and for having been such a wonderful happiness-spreading person.

David Pisinger, Anita Schoebel
and
Dorit Hochbaum



Dorit Hochbaum

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