

60 IS ALMOST 16 CELSIUS

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Sixty is coming around pretty fast! This is not too bad if we observe that, relating speed to temperature, 60 is almost 16 Celsius.

A rough calculation shows that I have spent about twenty years in bed, more than three years eating and as much time playing tennis. I don't know how much time I have spent working because of the overlap with my sleep.

First and foremost I wish to thank you all for being here today. A massive thank you to Bahk—the initiator and driving force—Michael, André, Gill and Bob, for making this event happen.

I won't say too much about my past: successes are boring and failures are embarrassing. I only hope that the future will continue to be similar, as long as possible.

I was fortunate to grow up in a relaxed and stimulating environment created by my parents, grand parents and a crowd of family friends, mostly lawyers. We were not rich, but happy.

I had eminent professors back in Romania; two have contributed to the Festschrift volume. Academician Marcus, my PhD supervisor, mentor, and collaborator for almost 40 years is 27 years my senior; his recorded lecture will be presented on Friday.

My first academic visits abroad have been organised by Helmut (in Canada) and Arto (in Finland); they had a lasting influence on my career.

I am immensely grateful to Douglas, Bob and Hermann for their help in making the wonderful New Zealand our adopted country.

My graduate students—whom I fondly call “academic kids”—have been and are a source a joy, stimulation and satisfaction. I am very proud of their achievements—much more substantial than mine—and happy to see a few of them here: Lumi, Marius, Cezar and Alastair.

They say, it's friends you call at 4am that matter. Now this is not a threat.

I am extremely privileged to have wonderful friends, most of them also collaborators. Friends, from various corners of the world, are here tonight—a huge thank you to all of them, some are here only “in spirit”, and sadly one, Sheng, is not anymore in our world. “One way to remember who you are is to remember who your heroes are”, aptly remarked Steve Jobs. My friends, you are my heroes!

The Festschrift volume is simply fantastic, an honour I could never dream of. A big thank you to the editors, referees and contributors!

Last but certainly most importantly, Elena, Andreea and Paul, are my ‘raison d’être’. There is no life without them.

Being funny is not my strong point, but I was told that I have to try, so here is a real one. In 1993 teaching proofs in a computer science course in Auckland was “overseas stuff”. To make the proof by induction more concrete I used the following example, borrowed from one of my Romanian professors. We have one axiom: everybody can drink a glass of wine. How many glasses of wine X can drink? Well, using the axiom, X can drink a glass of wine. Once X empties his glass, he becomes a new person Z (just test it, if you don't believe me). So, applying the axiom, Z can drink a glass of wine too. I leave you the pleasure to continue...

I think it's time to apply Wittgenstein's advice: “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent”.

Many thanks! Have a great night!