

In memoriam—Eulogy to Lodewijk Bos

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Losing a colleague unexpectedly, at any time in your life, is a very sad and confusing time. Yet it is a reality check that combines the good times spent together with the sadness of the news and a reflection regarding our own mortality. When this person is, in addition, a good friend, the task of writing a eulogy becomes more difficult because your heart and sentiments interfere deeply with the logic of writing a piece in this precise moment where all you want is to focus on the departed one and find the right words to honor him.

Although what follows are mostly personal observations, I have tried to project what his life and work meant to others. Obviously each of you, who knew him, either personally or professionally, may have other stories to share. During the World Congress 2015 of Medical Physics and Biomedical Engineering (WC 2015) that will take place in Toronto, I am planning (with my colleague, Andre Linnenbank) to have a special session to honor Lodewijk. I hope that you will be able to join us on that occasion to share with us your own stories. I met Lodewijk many years ago through my friend Swamy (Laxminarayan) and instantly our minds “connected”. Unfortunately with Swamy’s unexpected passing away in September 2005, already 9 years ago, the dynamics changed. Since then, Swamy’s youngest brother, Raj, and I became very close friends and I invited him to come to Munich for WC 2009. During the inaugural party I introduced him to Lodewijk and instantly a great friendship got expanded one more time.

Both Lodewijk and Raj became part of IFMBE’s Global Citizen Safety and Security Working Group. Since the summer of 2010, I had the pleasure and honor of working with Lodewijk as co-Editors-in-Chief of the *Journal of Health and Technology*, co-owned by Springer and IUPESM. We co-wrote the inaugural editorial entitled: “Just another journal? No, a different one!” (Introductory Editorial). *Health and Technology*. URL:<http://www.springerlink.com/content/w8383115811w8g7g/>

That editorial reflects well the spirit we shared.

Lodewijk didn’t share much information regarding his family, however at a personal level, on 19 August 2011 he wrote: “I have the sad duty of informing you of the passing away of my mother (the day before), leaving behind her husband of almost 57 years, 2 sons, a daughter and a daughter in law as well as 4 grandchildren”.

1 Wired Differently

To say that Lodewijk was “different and unusual” would not be enough to explain what his approach really meant to an ordinary person. His candor and appreciation of life was such that sharing circumstances that others would consider private or out of line, was, for him, normal. Lodewijk believed not only that social media was useful for communication and dissemination purposes, but that individuals around the globe could improve (the health of others suffering from similar conditions) outcomes by sharing their own experiences, good and bad, so that we could all have a set of “lessons learned” derived from our own living experiences.

Here is an example of some segments he wrote on his personal blog entitled: *Life of a Chemo Patient Lodewijk Bos’ Personal Blog—Unhappy again* (and which can be found <http://lodewijkbos.com/2012/08/17/unhappy-again/> ~

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Fig. 1 World Congress, Munich September 2009, at the inaugural party from right to left: Lodewijk Bos, Rajaram Lakshminarayan and Luis Kun

by lodewijk bos on August 17, 2012) demonstrating how different Lodewijk was:

On July 2 I had to have surgery on my left foot, as something was growing out of the side of it. As my GP told me that it was a tumor, although for the appearance of it benign, I decided to pay a visit to my oncologist, just to get an informed diagnosis. My oncologist called a dermatologist and both came to the conclusion that it most definitely was benign. As it was at the inner outside of the foot, it was beginning to hinder my walking abilities, already not the best part of my motor capacities. So to surgery it went. And from there on it went wrong, seriously wrong. I was told I should not stand or walk on that foot for at least 2 days. And I was sent off, on foot. So by the time I arrived at the reception desk 5 floors down there was a whole blood trail running through the building. I was given new bandaging and this time someone went to find a wheelchair. I was told the bandages could be taken off after 2 days. Fortunately I kept the information of the wound nurse that helped

my to get through the open leg ordeal, 2.5 years ago. She came and started to take away the bandages. Her first words were “That could have been done nicer”. Nobody was really surprised when the next day the threads tore and left a quite big open wound. I will save you the panicking discussion with the surgeon who had the impression he had seen something malign on the removed tissue, so suggested to take away a larger piece of the foot and cover it with some skin transplant. It was the surgeon’s proposal, although it was decided that my oncologist would take the lead if necessary. The surgeon’s call came on Friday midday so I didn’t talk to my oncologist till Monday. He completely annulled the surgeon’s decisions.

It took weeks to find out that when left alone, the healing speed of the wound could easily be beaten by the slowest kind of snail. So the nurse suggested to use a new kind of bandage Promogran Prisma. And lo and behold, it seems to work. However, since we started the Promogran, my neuropathy worsened. The open wound on top of my neuropathy was already hell, but that



Fig. 2 Five years later in September 2013, during MEDICON 2013 in Sevilla, Spain, during the final dinner ceremony we met again. From left to right: Robert Istepanian, Luis Kun, Lodewijk Bos and Rajaram Lakshminarayan enjoying “Laura Roa’s party”

*diminished considerably after a couple of days. However, after applying the new bandage, my foot started hurting much more, but above all, my chemo brain came back in full force. When I get out of bed I stumble, having to catch myself not to fall. After 5 min that acute problem disappears (balancing problems remain however), but then the next one appears. My eyes start to spontaneously turn direction nose bridge, as if I were squinting. Which makes concentrating a very complicated business. Combined with the physical balance problems, it leaves me, activity wise, almost paralyzed. Oh, and my tinnitus is worse than it has been for years. So I sincerely hope that the wound heals soon. As you can see from the picture, walking is no option, the wound is over 1.5 cms large. Oh, and if you know of any neurologist who might be knowledgeable about this kind of problems (see “**Chemo brain. Recognition**”?), “please contact me in the comment field.”*

Lodewijk Bos was a person of vision who understood strategy very well. He was a trusted individual and his integrity and quality of outcomes were unsurpassed. Yet his operational

capacity, to me, was one of the most impressive characteristics he had and that I have ever encountered before I met him. It was always a pleasure discussing with him any type of challenge we encountered because of his disposition to listen and to implement quickly whatever was decided or needed. For example due to his effort, personal involvement and commitment, every time you attended the ICMCC annual conference, as you registered the first day to the meeting, you were given a hard-bound book which contained all the papers to be presented.

After Swamy died in 2005, the “Swamy Laxminarayan Lecture” was created and the first to deliver this keynote was Prof. Brian O’Connell, former President of the IEEE Society of Social Implications of Technology (SSIT). Unfortunately, Brian died shortly after this event and within 24 h of my informing Lodewijk, the ICMCC website posted news of Brian’s death and an account of his professional life.

In June 2009 my colleague Robert Mathews and I put together an Interoperability Summit entitled Healthcare Reform or Healthcare Transformation at the National Academy of Science / Engineering in Washington DC. About 30 professional organizations (i.e., ICMCC, IFMBE, SSIT, AIMBE,

EMBS, Computer Society, etc.) and 23 different Federal Agencies / Departments attended as well as many of you. Lodewijk's website was the first place where any type of comments regarding this meeting was published.

In March 2011, during the Fukushima earthquake—tsunami and later nuclear / radiation crisis, through the IFMBE Global Citizen Safety and Security Working Group I was trying to help colleagues and the people from Japan. I spoke with Lodewijk and within 24 h he had at the ICMCC website a blog where individuals could ask questions and relevant materials could be shared.

I saw him for the last time at the MEDICON 2013 dinner (Fig. 2). We spoke a lot during the summer months since in August we were publishing this special issue of the Journal on "Global Citizen Safety and Security." As usual he was very excited and pleased with the outcome.

As I was leaving the CDC in Atlanta to come to the Washington area, a dear friend gave me a poem entitled: "Success", by Ralph Waldo Emerson .

SUCCESS

To laugh often and much
to win the respect
of intelligent people
and the affection of children;
to earn the appreciation
of honest critics and endure
the betrayal of false friends;
to appreciate beauty,
to find the best in others;

to leave the world
a bit better, whether
by a healthy child,
a garden patch
or a redeemed social condition;
to know even one life
has breathed easier
because you have lived.
That is to have succeeded.

I believe that Lodewijk Bos not only fits this definition of success but has joined now a list of colleagues who departed earlier and who have made the lives of many better. I am very sad for his sudden disappearance from our lives, yet I am thankful for having the opportunity to meet him and share moments of my life with him and all of those whom I met through him.

Please let me or Andre know if you are interested in participating in a special Memorial session to be held during WC 2015 in Toronto. Part of the session will be presentation of technical papers. Immediately before or after this session, a second part sponsored by the IFMBE Global Citizen Safety and Security WG will be of a social nature, with the purpose of allowing those of you wishing to share stories about Lodewijk. We are hoping Lodewijk's brother will be able to join us.

Thank you Lodewijk for your contributions, for your friendship and for sharing yourself with us.

You will not be forgotten ... Your friend and colleague,
Luis Kun