

Many happy returns, Erkki Pellervo Liski¹!

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Abstract

Erkki Pellervo Liski, commonly known as Sir ... (skip this please) was born almost precisely 60 years ago, 12 March 1947; in Hämeenlinna, Finland. He is a member of the largest Finnish age group, comprising 108 000 children.

Thirty-seven years later, that is, 23 years ago, on 3 June 1984, Erkki and I stepped out of the train in the Poznań Railway Station and were friendly welcomed by Barbara Bogacka. She kindly guided us to the conference site: International Statistical Conference in Linear Inference, held in Poznań, 4–9 June 1984.

That event was the first time we had an opportunity to meet alive some famous Polish stars of linear statistical models, like Jerzy K. Baksalary. The Dynamic Duo, Baksalary–Kala, was known to everyone interested in linear models.

Five years later, 1989–90, Jerzy spent one year in Tampere, as a research professor of the Academy of Finland. Oh boys, wasn't he working hard! Oskar Maria Baksalary, very appropriately, started his academic career with a sabbatical leave in Tampere while accompanying his father. Antti Mikael Liski did almost the same thing while staying 19 months in Dortmund with his father in 1986–87.

The train trip from Berlin to Poznań in June 1984 was a pleasant experience for such youngsters as Erkki and I used to be those days; no worries made. Now that I'm writing this I wonder how Erkki and I will survive from the forthcoming train trip Warsaw–Poznań on Wednesday, 21 March 2007, arriving at 16:26 (EX 1811). Life is now very different and I doubt whether Barbara Bogacka will care to meet us anymore. Anyways, since we will be accompanied by Antti Liski (who was four when his father first time took a train towards Poznań) and Kimmo Vehkalahti (who is from a big city of Helsinki), I trust we should make it to Poznań at 16:26 smoothly.

The Poznań Conference in June 1984 had a great social program, up to highest Polish standard. The highlight for Erkki and me was the Nordic-Polish Session at the apartment of Jan Hauke. That Session would be worth a separate Abstract and even *Proceedings*: memorable contributions!

It was mentioned above that life is now different from what it used to be in old (good—this adjective is frequently used by serious authors) times.

¹Erkki P. Liski is Professor of Statistics, University of Tampere, Tampere, Finland. Ph.D. thesis in 1979 entitled “On reduced risk estimation in linear models” from the University of Tampere. Since 1969, worked at the Department of Mathematics, Statistics and Philosophy at the University of Tampere; Acting Professor 1988–95, Professor since 1996.

You want hear examples: In 1975, on the Midsummer Eve, Erkki beat me by ca. 3 minutes. This was *Poronkusema Run* in Kemijärvi, Lapland. My time was 1.16.17 while Erkki made it in 1.13.57. The running distance in *Poronkusema* is the distance that a reindeer is capable to do without replying his/her number 1 call of nature. —Now you see that I’m not joking when saying that times are different. However, some things do not change; to give an example, when the Statistics Professorship was open at our department in 1995, 20 years after the *Poronkusema*, Erkki beat me by ca. three papers. (Now you see that I can make jokes about serious matters too.)

My cooperation with Erkki has not always been pure celebration. Here comes an example. On 25th of October 1985, Erkki was invited to meet Maurits Dekker, Chairman of Marcel Dekker Inc., in New York. However, we ended up going to the office of Maurits Dekker together. Mr. Dekker, 85, warmly welcomed us with his young female secretary, Vicky. But immediately, when recognizing me, Mr. Dekker announced his deep disappointment in seeing me with Erkki since he was fully prepared to meet a youngish female person. (My youngish outlooks were clearly not enough, once again.)

Another drawback we experienced in Manchester, UK, on 12 October 1988. Erkki and I had been visiting Bill and Sheila Farebrother and were about to take a train from Manchester to Sheffield. At the Manchester Train Station’s ticket office Erkki politely asked for two tickets to Manchester. The lady of the office in her excellent English replied that she cannot, unfortunately, sell the tickets asked for. Erkki and I looked at each other and felt so disappointed with the rather limited service of the British Railways.

As is mentioned earlier, Erkki was an exceptionally talented runner (I was not so talented and hence I had to train like crazy.) I well remember how in August 1984, we went to the 7th World Congress in Applied Linguistics in Brussels. We stayed in Sheraton Hotel—“Erkki Liski stays always in Sheraton”, had the hotel replied to me a couple of weeks earlier when I told them that my colleague E.P. Liski has booked a room from them and I’d like to do the same—and we were watching TV when a 5,000 and 10,000 meter Finnish runner was caught using steroids in the Los Angeles Olympic games. Only a Finnish man (most of us has a kind of long-distance-running history behind) can understand what such an experience can internally mean.

Erkki Liski belongs to a particular group who together built up the Statistics Group in the University of Tampere. It all has its start in Professor Eino Haikala (1913–93) who was the first professor of statistics in Tampere. We had an enthusiastic group of youngsters, including Tarmo Pukkila and Pentti Huuhtanen. Later we have learnt to appreciate those days even more. We somehow grew together, learnt, pretty much on our own, the rules of academic life style, including the appreciation of international cooperation.

Poland is a very appropriate place to propose a toast to Erkki Liski. Many happy returns, Erkki!