

EURO Distinguished Service Medal 2012

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Madam President of EURO, dear Grazia,

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

When I received a message from the president of EURO three weeks ago, I was not only extremely surprised but embarrassed because I was sure it was a mistake and I was expecting a second message cancelling politely the first one; but it did not come!

Why could it be a mistake? According to the rules no currently active officer of EURO is eligible. And if one is involved in IFORS it is even worse!

In addition to this, EURO has been kind enough to confer me seventeen years ago another award which already waives the registration fees for all future conferences. Why should EURO renew this generous offer?

Convinced that the two EURO awards were incompatible I immediately asked whether I should give back the old one.

Furthermore I had none of the merits of my distinguished predecessors, so the reasons of this choice remain quite mysterious.

In such a case one desperately tries to find at least partial answers. What could then be the arguments justifying such a medal? In Sri Lanka, exceptional, distinguished and loyal service over a 25-year period is rewarded with a DSM! Unfortunately it took me almost the double to carry out my humble contribution of OR teacher.

In UK bravery and resourcefulness on active service is required. No way we could have satisfied such conditions. The CIA awards a Distinguished Intelligence Medal to those who have shown acts of courage performed under hazardous conditions or for outstanding achievements under conditions of grave risk. Well, one cannot honestly pretend that a university classroom is really a hazardous place or that teaching Linear Programming is a risky activity...

Finally the Navy also confers such distinguished medals and I just want to express my thanks to EURO for not having followed the Navy model: the first recipient, Charles Doyen, got a DSM in 1919 ... but posthumously!

At this moment I can only address my deep gratitude to the OR community: having played for years with graphs which by essence represent relations and connections I am quite conscious that isolated vertices are seldom productive and therefore that every achievement is a joint operation which succeeds only with the enthusiasm of all actors.

I am very grateful to all those friends which the OR profession has placed on my way. They have always been very stimulating and working with them was a source of enjoyment during many years. I realize that these statements are not original and that they are not very characteristic of OR since in most professions a client often becomes a friend, except perhaps for those who are employed in a funeral home.

Besides my students and my research colleagues who all deserve my gratitude, I would like to express my thanks to EURO and its officers who have provided many opportunities to work for the OR community with an extreme pleasure.

These last years I had the honour of serving IFORS and I want to include in these thanks my friends of the Administrative Committee who have shared exciting times with a contagious enthusiasm and a remarkable sense of service.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like finally to dedicate this award to some people who entered rather recently into my life.

The first one is my dear wife Trudy who deserves much of the award since she has been able to catch up more than forty years of OR in less than six years! Which proves once more that the strongest motivations to study OR are not always scientific ...

The other recent people to whom the medal is dedicated are my grand children (whose exact number I ignore since it may increase within a few days or hours). It is a great pleasure to offer them this award, although I am sure they will remain convinced that I spent my whole life telling or inventing stories and tales for my students and playing funny games with them. Is it not the truth after all? I thank you for your kind attention.