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Obituary

Pieter Eykhoff, 1929–2000



On November 15, 2000, Pieter Eykhoff passed away after an illness that he was confronted with during the last year of his life. Pieter Eykhoff has played a prominent role in the international control society, in particular in the construction and shaping of IFAC, which he served in many offices during more than 30 years. The international community has lost a prominent member and an excellent scientist, who was known to many of us not only through his scientific work as one of the founders of system identification, but also through the friendship and support that he offered to many people through extensive contacts that he maintained worldwide.

After obtaining an M.Sc. degree in Electrical Engineering from Delft University of Technology in 1956, Pieter Eykhoff spent two years at the University of California at Berkeley, where he obtained a Ph.D. degree in 1960 with a thesis on *Optimizing Control and Process-Parameter Estimation*. In August 1964 he was appointed Professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering of Eindhoven University of Technology in the Netherlands, where he built up a group on Measurement and Control Engineering, a position that he maintained until his retirement in 1990.

His research interests were focused on the area of System Identification and Parameter Estimation, an area which he pioneered in the 1960s and 1970s, reflected in the seminal survey paper of Åström and Eykhoff that was published in *Automatica* in 1971. His book *System Identifi-*

fication, Parameter and State Estimation, Wiley, 1974, which together with the paper became a citation classic, was translated into Russian, Chinese, Polish and Romanian and served as a standard reference on System Identification for almost two decades. He was a Visiting Professor at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada (1968) and at Kyoto University (1974 and 1985), and he lectured in many countries, including the USA, Canada, USSR, Japan, People's Republic of China, Chile, Brazil and Morocco. He received many international signs of distinction and honour: he was a Fellow of the IEEE, Honorary Professor of Xi'an Jiaotong University, Xi'an, People's Republic of China, Doctor honoris causa of the Free University of Brussels, Belgium, and a member of the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences.

Within IFAC, Pieter Eykhoff was prominently present and active. He felt a deep affinity with the philosophy of the organization: the stimulation of joint activities and cooperation worldwide, the promotion of the systems and control field, and the building of contacts across national borders were aspects that he propagated strongly. Within IFAC he served in many different offices since 1970, for example, as Honorary Editor and as Member of the Executive Council for six years. From 1976 until 1993 he was continuously involved in the publication policy of IFAC, e.g. as a member of the Publications Managing Board since its conception. He took the initiative and was instrumental in establishing the IFAC

One-Publisher scheme involving the relation with Pergamon Press. This successful cooperation is, to date, one of the cornerstones of the success of IFAC. Besides this, he was one of the originators of the IFAC Symposium series on System Identification, for which he acted as a Chairman for the Symposia in Delft/The Hague in 1973 and in Beijing, People's Republic of China, in 1988. The appreciation of IFAC for his contributions was symbolized by an Outstanding Service Award which he received in 1990, and by his appointment as IFAC Advisor, a position that was awarded to him by the former IFAC President at the IFAC World Congress in Beijing in 1999. Often accompanied by his wife Hanneke, Pieter has participated in many IFAC activities. A lot of people within IFAC will remember him for his characteristic attitudes: his jacket loosely hanging over his shoulders, walking in fast pace, having his camera around for

documenting the meetings, and always willing to address people in their own language.

IFAC has lost a prominent member of its community. All of us who knew him will miss Pieter, his expertise, his friendship, his warm-heartedness and his deep loyalty to IFAC and its people.

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