

Erik Kjær Pedersen [1946 - 2020]

With sadness we report the passing on May 24, 2020 of Professor Emeritus Erik Kjær Pedersen, our friend and colleague.

Erik grew up in the Jutland Peninsula of his native Denmark. He received his Masters Degree with emphasis in topology at Aarhus University, then the leading mathematics center in Denmark. He moved on to doctoral studies at the University of Chicago, receiving his PhD in 1974 under the direction of Richard Lashof. He had a considerable reputation in research mathematics as author or coauthor of more than sixty research papers in leading journals.

Erik returned to Denmark and spent a significant part of his career at Odense University before moving to the United States in 1990. That was when he was recruited by the Mathematical Sciences Department at Binghamton as part of an innovative SUNY program called the Graduate Research Initiative, intended to advance the research profiles of the four SUNY centers. He remained in our department until the end of 2006 when he answered the call to return to Denmark as head of the mathematical sciences department at the University of Copenhagen.

While at Binghamton, Erik had a considerable and highly positive influence on the ethos of our department. He increased our profile, organized important conferences, and in his two terms as Department Chair provided strong leadership. Nobody ever called Erik Pedersen mild-mannered. His personality filled the room.

Michael Sorensen, Head of the Mathematical Sciences Department, University of Copenhagen writes: "It is with great sadness that I have to inform you that Erik Kjær Pedersen died earlier today at a hospital in Florida after a long illness. Last summer, it was found that Erik had a brain tumor. After an operation he got relatively well, but unfortunately the improvement did not last.

"Erik, as Head of [the Copenhagen] Department for 10 years, played an absolutely invaluable role both for the department and for Danish mathematics. During his time as Head of Department, MATH's international standing was very significantly improved so that we can now compete with the best European departments. The number of external grants, many of them very prestigious, exploded. The same is true of the number of PhD students and postdocs. In addition, Erik ensured that the department is financially sound and has considerable savings."

Erik Kjær Pedersen is survived by his wife Inger Stricker Pedersen, their three children, and several grandchildren.

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