Netty's Graveside words

10 August 2002

Two years ago, at the symposium in honour of Edsger that was so superbly organized by his colleagues and friends in Austin, I compared Edsger with asparagus, the famous Dutch white asparagus, that is.

I called him "the delicatess of my life." And so he was.

It was a great privilege to see him work, and think, and teach, and write at such close quarters, and it changed my life. The pun with which he used to tease me is that "he programmed all my life."

It became an even greater privilege to be his friend, and that is mainly what I and many others have tried to be over the past months, when we over here were so fortunate to have Edsger and Ria back in our midst in Nuenen.

And now, as a friend, he became our teacher again: he showed us how to live when you know you will be dying soon.

And all this time, he was being guarded by Ria with that perfectly balanced mix of utter caring and sternness, of which only she knows the recipe.

It is so good to be part of it all.

Indeed, Edsger Dijkstra is, and will forever remain, the delicatess of my and many others’ lives.

Netty