Mikael Passare

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I got to know Mikael in the eighties, when I was a PhD student at Stockholm University. I had completed a number of graduate courses and became interested in complex analysis. Mikael was a young lecturer in Stockholm, and our overlapping interest in that subject brought us into each other's orbits. As far as I know, I was his very first student. During the academic year 1987–88, Several Complex Variables (SCV) was the theme of the Mittag-Leffler Institute, and once a week I took the commuter train to Djursholm for the seminars. Many prominent researchers in SCV visited the institute, and it struck me how Mikael seemed to have a personal relationship with all of them. He was a highly social person and introduced me to all of his maths friends. At the time, integral formulas and residues were among the hot trends in SCV. Mikael had done some important research in this field, and he explained to me how the previous algebraic approach to the subject was making place for a more analytical and computational one.

For personal reasons I quit my PhD studies in 1989, and took them up again only years later at another university. Hence, from 1989 onwards, my relation with Mikael became a purely private one. He was a good friend, who always had time for a chat, and although our contact became sparser in the later years, we kept in touch until his untimely death in 2011. Mikael valued the simple life; he had no admiration for the consumption society. For many years he made a point of using an extremely old Volvo as the family car. But he compensated for this with a great interest in travelling; at the time of his death, he had succeeded to visit 152 countries. To Mikael, mathematics was always an activity in a social context, and he attended as many conferences as he could. Nationalism and borders were alien concepts to Mikael, who treated all people equally and was a true cosmopolite. He worked internationally with mathematics in Africa, amongst other places.

Mikael had many interests besides mathematics: such as politics, music, and sport. We shared an interest in bandy, a team winter sport that is played outdoors (mainly in Nordic countries and Russia) by skaters on a field as large as a soccer field. Bandy is particularly popular in certain areas of Sweden, and we both grew up in those parts of the country. When it came to bandy, Mikael left behind his normally balanced manners, and he could almost be described as fanatical. To him bandy was more than a sport, it was history, it was culture. During the 1980s

the dominating team in Sweden was Boltic; a team that Mikael didn't recognize as authentic, as it lacked tradition and many of its players were transferred from other teams. With something between joviality and seriousness, he expressed contempt for that team more than he supported his own. We used to go to games together and it created a special feeling of brotherhood to stand in the freezing cold for 90 minutes, cheering and shouting. When I made a world trip as a backpacker in 1990, he sent me a large envelope to a Poste Restante address in Bali. Upon opening it, I found a VHS cassette with the full game of the Swedish championship final. Mikael also went to almost all the World Cup finals, whether they were in Sweden or in Siberia.

Mikael's contribution to Swedish mathematics community is immense; first and foremost because of his research, but also because of his deep engagement and enthusiasm for everything he did. He had many successful students over the years. He truly believed in the value of mathematics for society, and it was very natural that he chaired the Swedish Mathematical Society and the National Committee for Mathematics for some time. In the latter role, he called me in 2011 to ask me if I was interested to become a member of the committee. It turned out to become our last contact. A very fine personality has left us.

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