



## Petri Juha Pohjanpelto

December 14, 1959 - February 13, 2024

Petri Juha Pohjanpelto, 64, passed away at home in Corvallis, Oregon on 13 February 2024.

Juha was born in Helsinki, Finland on 14 December 1959 to Jaakko and Raili Pohjanpelto. Juha was a storyteller and polymath with interests including fishing, fossils, languages, history, gardening, biking, running, tennis, music and mathematics. His precociousness in math became obvious when as a preschooler of five he would add up the cost of items in his mother's grocery basket and tell her how much she owed the clerk. While studying for his M.Sc. in Mathematics (1983) under Olavi Nevanlinna at Teknillinen Korkeakoulu, now Aalto University, he coauthored a high school physics textbook, taught as a lecturer, and completed a year of service in the Finnish army as a lieutenant in an anti-aircraft division.

Juha moved to Minneapolis to study for a PhD in Mathematics (1983-1989) as Peter Olver's first student with a dissertation on generalized symmetries of Maxwell's equations. During his time at U of M, he found time to play in U of M's tennis club and prepare Chopin and Liszt pieces for piano jury. He met his future wife on a bus in Helsinki while visiting for Christmas. He joked that he had to go to Finland to meet an American girl. They moved to Corvallis, Oregon in 1989 where he worked as a professor of mathematics at Oregon State University teaching classes across several areas of mathematics from

geometry, algebra, topology to real and complex analysis, and financial mathematics. In addition, he published a series of highly regarded papers in his field and served as chair of teaching, and graduate committees and assistant chair.

Juha was always active and thinking. He spent years teaching himself languages and collecting new words he didn't know in English, Swedish, Italian, German in addition to his native Finnish. He was full of tidbits of information about history and science. He enjoyed running in the hills around Corvallis and biking long distances in the valley. In addition to replacing decks, flooring and windows in the house, he built a chicken chalet to house his son's chickens and eventually added ducks to the flock. He had a sweet spot for baby animals and would sneakily bring home more young chickens or ducks that needed a home.

Juha enjoyed gardening and plants from a young age tending a garden as a young child at his family's summer place. As an adult he maintained a large vegetable gardens of tomatoes and hot peppers and grew succulents and cacti from seed to fill a greenhouse full of unusual plants alongside palm trees and cycads in the yard. An impressively symmetric and large monkey puzzle tree is testament to his green thumb. Those times during long summer days in Finland also were spent fishing. At the age of 10 he enjoyed rowing by himself around the lake by his grandfather's farm in search of fish. In Oregon he perfected his art of fishing on the Alsea River, learning to sense the river bottom and techniques to try off the coast. He was always thinking like a fish and was successful in filling the freezer, edging out the berries' space. He enjoyed two happy years of retirement in weekly pursuits of fish. His last story was about the one that got away. He was bringing in a steelhead without a net when it wriggled off the hook on the bank and landed in the river. He jumped in the Alsea and caught it barehanded, threw it on the riverbank to check if it was hatchery, which it was, but it made one last leap to freedom in the river

and was gone.

Juha's stories, sense of humor, and enthusiasm are tremendously missed by his friends and family and colleagues. He is survived by his wife Anne-Marie Girard-Pohjanpelto of Corvallis, Oregon and sons Max and Alex Pohjanpelto of Helsinki, Finland, along with relatives in Finland and Canada.

In his memory, please recall all the stories you remember about him.

# Tribute Wall

AE

“ *Tutustuin Juhaan aloittaessamme opinnot Teknillisessä Korkeakoulussa syksyllä 1978.*

*Juha innosti, kannusti ja jopa yllytti kanssakulkijoitaan hyvinkin yllättäviin suorituksiin.*

*Ilman Juhan hybridivaikuttamista en olisi koskaan juossut marathonia eikä mieleeni olisi juolahtanutkaan lähteä Lappiin vaeltamaan.*

*A clumsy translation follows:*

*I met Juha when we started our studies at Helsinki University of Technology in the fall of 1978.*

*Juha inspired, encouraged and even incited his companions to quite unexpected performances.*

*Without Juha's "hybrid influence" I would never have run a Marathon, nor would I have even thought of going hiking in Lapland.*

*Antero Elovaara*

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**Antero Elovaara** - April 08, 2024 at 09:20 AM

MF

“ *Similar interests in math brought Juha and I together, and he and I became good friends. We always had a great time together whether talking about fishing, the outdoors, or rock/bone hunting in Utah. He is fondly remembered by the faculty at Utah State from his time here. Ian and I had a toast to him with some fine whiskey which he would have appreciated. He will be missed.*

*Mark Fels  
Utah State*

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**Mark Fels** - March 19, 2024 at 06:11 PM

TM

“ I met Juha in August 1978 when we started at the Helsinki University of Technology (today Aalto University) as freshmen. We became instantly friends. We both lived in eastern part of Helsinki and soon both our families moved to Laajasalo suburb in Helsinki, where his and my parents had built a house in a row. We lived in Laajasalo some 500 meters apart. Our parents knew each other very well and Juha was a frequent visitor at our place.

Studying was fun with him and especially the nights out. On one of those nights out, we spotted a nice-looking blonde female from the US and she became later Juha's wife Anne-Marie.

Juha went to the US study mathematics in St Paul, MN. I followed him one year after to Ann Arbor, MI to study business. During my two-year study in US 1984-86 I was in constant contact with Juha and we went to see each other in MN and MI.

My wife and our three boys had a memorable visit to Juha and Anne-Marie in Corvallis. Those were the good times.

It is so sad that this 46-year friendship ends now. All the best to Anne-Marie, Max and Alex.

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**Tapio Makkonen** - March 18, 2024 at 02:00 PM

EW

“ The thing that stands out in my reflection on Juha is first and foremost the genuine love and pride that he took in his family. He was always happy to tell you about it too. Beyond this, it was impossible to keep up with the diversity of his interests, although I once tried with beer -- big mistake ! In a shared appreciation for the desert and its plants, we have planted a First Light (Trichocereus hybrid) cactus plant in our Tucson front yard, which we have also named Juha. A unique plant for a very unique individual.



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**Ed Waymire** - March 15, 2024 at 08:27 PM

JM

*Helsingin Ilmatorjuntarykmentti 1/81 ja RUK 167 Juhana. Ei voinut tästä valloittavasta persoonasta kuin pitää, todellinen tsemppari ja hengenluoja! Ei voi kuin valitella, että tiemme erkanivat, eivätkä koskaan enää kohdanneet...*

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**Jari-Pekka Messula** - October 09, 2024 at 01:23 PM