

Dear Dominique,
we know each other and have collaborated since many years, 52 years to be precise. The whole story is way too long for even a rough survey within the limits of this birthday party. So I will pick just two events of great importance for me (and my wife Annelie) in which you were decisively involved.

- Erlangen 1972



Figure 1: Erlangen 1972

This picture was taken by Konrad Jacobs when I was his doctoral student .

- Konrad Jacobs



Figure 2: Konrad Jacobs

Konrad was very peculiar as an advisor: as a mathematician he saw himself as a *generalist*, not a *specialist*. Besides his speciality, probability and in particular ergodic theory, he had broad interests and he personally knew many colleagues around the world and in many fields. A doctoral student was not given a precise problem for the thesis, instead he (or she) had to decide for a particular field of interest (for

Konrad). Then Konrad put him (or her) into contact with an expert in that field, expecting that a sound thesis would emerge. This way the student would teach Konrad what he had acquired.

I had written my Diplomarbeit (Master's Thesis) on *fluctuation theory* under Konrad's supervision, so *combinatorics* was an obvious choice for my doctoral thesis. Following the advice of a colleague Konrad in 1972 invited Dominique to come to Erlangen for two weeks. That's the way we met for the first time and started cooperating. So Konrad was the official thesis advisor (Doktorvater) and Dominique became my de facto thesis advisor. I completed my doctorate in 1974, precisely 50 years ago.

- Dominique 1973

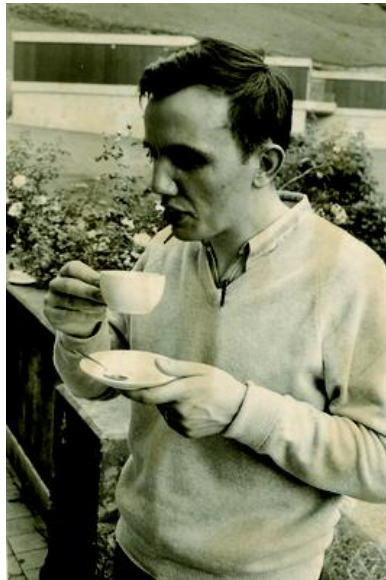


Figure 3: Dominique 1973

There was more to it: Thanks to Konrad's excellent relationship with the executives of the Oberwolfach Institute combinatorics meetings were held on a quasi-regular basis starting in the 70's, first lead by Konrad and Dominique, then by Dominique and Adalbert Kerber. The *Séminaire Lotharingien de Combinatoire*, Dominiques brainchild, was, in a sense, an offspring of these Oberwolfach meetings.

- Dominique and Pierre



Figure 4: Dominique with Pierre Leroux

At one of the Lotharingian meetings (SLC 8, Saint-Croix-aux-Mines, May 1983) Dominique was asked by two participants from Canada, messengers of Pierre Leroux, for suggesting a candidate who might be interested in taking over a professorship at the UQAM as a substitute for one year. Dominique immediately pointed to me – and that was the beginning of another exciting and important experience for both, me and my wife Annelie.

- Canada 2024



Figure 5: Canada 2024

40 years have passed since then, but friendships from those days are still alive and we were happy to visit last week several of our old Montréal friends.

Enduring friendship is a precious gift which we value very high, and this applies especially to you, Dominique and Anne.

Thank you and best wishes,

Annelie and Volker Strehl, october 2024