



Eero Holopainen

* 20.9.1937 † 29.11.2022

Professor Emeritus of Meteorology Eero Holopainen died on 29 November 2022 of a severe illness at the age of 85. He was born on 20 September 1937 in Kuhmo to a family with a small farm and would visit his childhood home even as a professor to help with the haymaking in the summer. Holopainen's primary school teacher noticed that they boy was gifted and steered him to the classical lyceum in Kajaani. That is where Holopainen learned to speak Latin, a skill he would also get to show off later on in life. He established e.g. the Order of Doctors in Meteorology with Swords, the name and code of which were, naturally, in Latin.

After graduating, Eero Holopainen went on to study meteorology at the University of Helsinki in 1957 under professors Vilho Väisälä and Lauri Vuorela and academician Erik "Maestro" Palmén. He got a student pad at the Presidential Palace where President Urho Kekkonen had reserved rooms for talented, poor students from the region of Kainuu. Holopainen's small wedding also took place at the Palace and Kekkonen would later congratulate his gifted former tenant for his professorship in one of the president's disciplinary letters. Holopainen's studies progressed quickly. He conducted his dissertation

research at the Stockholm University (defending his dissertation in Helsinki in 1964), after which his family spent a couple years at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He went on to serve as Deputy Director of the weather department at the Finnish Meteorological Institute, albeit only for a short time (1966–1968), but even within this brief period, he made a positive and crucial contribution to the Finnish Meteorological Institute acquiring its first computer.

Eero Holopainen later worked in the Department of Meteorology at the University of Helsinki as associate professor, professor and head from 1969 to 1996, supervising the studies of several generations of meteorologists and always keeping up with the times. For example, he introduced the climate warming calculations and results of recent Nobel Prize winner Syukuro Manabe into teaching back in 1969, soon after they were first published. Holopainen was a supportive teacher and an amicable head of the department, with good relations with the Finnish Meteorological Institute and the management of the university and faculty. He was elected to membership in the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters in 1974 and the Finnish Society of Science

and Letters in 1975. Increasingly severe illnesses forced him to retire early in the beginning of 1997.

Holopainen was also a hard-working researcher. Lights would often be seen burning late at night in the corner office of the department on the top floor of the Porthania building. He felt most at home studying the behaviour of the atmosphere and climate dynamics based purely on weather observations, particularly energy economy and the chaotic interactions between the main westerly flow and the areas of low pressure within it, for which he developed several methods of description. Holopainen was a popular speaker at conferences and numerous great names in meteorology would stop by Helsinki on their travels to exchange thoughts with the famous duo Palmén-Holopainen. Although Holopainen himself did not practice device research or atmospheric modelling, he succeeded in securing special financing for the university's new, modern Doppler weather radar (the first of its kind in Finland at the time), and was extremely well versed in weather forecast and climate models.

As Head of the Department of Meteorology at the university, Holopainen often found himself educating the public and

decision-makers on whatever weather and climate-related topics and problems happened to be of interest at the time, whether it be acid rain, chaos theory, nuclear fallout and nuclear winter, ozone depletion, climate changes or climate warming, which he warned about already the early 1970s based on Manabe's work. He was also invited to various positions of trust, the most significant of which were probably his long-term memberships in the Scientific Advisory Committee of the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) and the Scientific Advisory Panel of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). The advisors of ECMWF met every year in Reading, England, and WMO's "twelve apostles" in Geneva, so he was well aware of the latest winds in meteorology.

Eero was supported by his wife Raija, four children and a beautiful, literary home in Herttoniemi where guests could enjoy the overwhelming hospitality that is typical of Kainuu. In his later years, Eero also discovered his group singer and a humppa dancer side, which provided a good counterbalance for his Immanuel Kant character who would enjoy long walks deeply absorbed in thought, pondering scientific problems.

Hannu Savijärvi

Photo: Helsinki University Museum