In his life, Peter Hammer was a founder. He was the founder and Director of RUTCOR, Rutgers Center for Operations Research, which is now an internationally recognized center of excellence and an open institute, where seminars, workshops, graduate courses, and a constant flow of visitors create a buzzing and stimulating research environment.

He was the founder and editor-in-chief of several highly rated professional journals, including

- *Discrete Mathematics,*
- *Discrete Applied Mathematics,*
He also was the founder of LAD, Logical Analysis of Data, to which part of this book is devoted. To emphasize the importance of data mining techniques, he launched the theme of “Discrete Mathematics and Data Mining” (which he called DM&DM), organized several workshops within the SIAM Data Mining Conferences, and edited special issues of *Discrete Applied Mathematics* devoted to these workshops.

After his untimely death in a tragic car accident on December 27, 2006, many tributes to his memory and many articles about his life appeared in the literature and in the Internet, see e.g. [2-7,9-12]. In the present note, we would like to share with the reader a few personal stories about this extraordinary man.

In the end of 1996, I (Vadim) was working on a generalization of a special method for computing the graph stability number invented by my Ph.D. advisor Vladimir Alekseev in the beginning of 80s. Browsing the Internet, I found, by pure chance, that the very same method was discovered under the name *struction* independently and approximately at the same time by another team of researchers: Christian Ebenegger, Peter Hammer, and Dominique de Werra [8]. I wrote an email to Peter and proposed to join our efforts in developing and exploring the generalization of struction method\(^1\). This was shortly before Christmas and I did not expect any reply until some weeks later. To my great surprise, a reply came in 15 minutes and this reply has changed my life as well as the life of our family.

In 2000, invited by Peter, we went to the USA for our first visit. Peter arranged for one of his Ph.D. students to meet us, which was very kind of him. What was much kinder is the fact that the refrigerator in our apartment was full of food, which was due to Peter again.

During the very first week of our visit, we have been invited to Peter’s home for a dinner. Afterwards, we visited this hospitable home many times and had always enjoyed the unique atmosphere of the home and of the family. Peter’s charming wife, Anca, was part of his life, his closest friend, who supported him in all possible respects. Typically, all conversations at the dinner table eventually ended up with “business matters”, and if a guest wanted to apologize for this, Anca always said that this is what their life with Peter is.

Peter and Anca had always been very kind to our family, but one story was of particular impression. Our daughter, Yana, was a teenager at that time and lived in Russia, but she frequently visited us in the USA. One day she was returning

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\(^1\) This endeavor resulted in the paper [1] written jointly with Peter Hammer and Dominique de Werra. Christian Ebenegger passed away by that time and the special volume of *Discrete Applied Mathematics* where the paper appeared was partly devoted to Christian’s memory.
to Russia by plane, but because of some technical problems the plane landed in a different airport far away from her home city. For a few hours we lost track of our daughter and of the plane. These were one of the most difficult hours of our life and Peter’s help and support during these hours cannot be overestimated. He called the police, hospitals, airport managers, etc. Thanks God and Peter the situation was happily resolved.

Peter was insatiable in work. He worked everywhere, including his car while driving, and he expected the same attitude from his Ph.D. students. Often he finished his working day with the students late in the night and in the morning he already called asking for new results, ideas, etc.

Although Peter worked very hard, he always did it with joy and curiosity. He liked learning new things. For instance, in spite of the fact that he spoke several languages, including Russian, he always wanted to improve his skills. In particular, he bought an English-Russian dictionary and frequently spoke to us in Russian.

He also had a good sense of humor and frequently made fun or behaved in a funny way. For instance, he often called his students “victims”. In his email to Irina he wrote: “Enjoy my absence, and work, work, work – as the great Lenin would have said if he would have been admitted to RUTCOR, but do not work more than 24-28 hours per day”. In the Call for Papers for the first DM&DM meeting he expressed the hope that “the upcoming workshop will represent an important event in bringing DM closer to DM”. In the Foreword to the first issue of *Discrete Applied Mathematics* (abbreviated DAM) he wished “to all of us who might have an interesting new result, which is Discrete, is Applied, and is Mathematics, a cordial DAM it!”. When he chaired a session in a conference and wanted to let the speaker know that he is running out of time, Peter flashed the headlights of his electric wheelchair, or even honked.

We finish this note with a funny story, which shows, indirectly but very clearly, who was Peter Hammer. During the INFORMS conference in Florida in 2001 we met two colleagues who were shocked to hear that we give talks in the session chaired by Peter Hammer. ”He must be over 100 years old”, was their reply. Peter was not even 65 at that time, but he made already so many contributions to so many fields that people who did not know him personally thought of him as a legend rather than of a real human being. He is a legend indeed.

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2 The picture in the beginning of this note was taken by Irina in one of these “working nights”. Later, it appeared in most articles devoted to Peter’s life.
References