

## Tributes to Gérard Herman

When a friend dies, a piece of your heart dies as well. Gérard Herman was a kind friend and great colleague for many of us: the geophysicists at Shell, the professors and students at the Delft University, the editorial tribe of *GEOPHYSICS*, and the guys of the Global Affairs Committee, where he was the Netherlands representative. His generous heart failed while he was teaching in Indonesia, leaving us shocked and astonished, and a gap we will never fill in our community.

I like remembering Gérard when we were attending an SEG workshop during the last Annual Meeting in Houston. A big room was packed by geophysicists, who almost unanimously were supporting a large project. Only Gérard and I had a different view, dictated by the similar needs of our companies. Of course, we spelled out our reasons, which were well received, but we could not change the prevailing views of the outnumbering crowd. At the end of that meeting, Gérard came and told me: "We are like Don Quixote and Sancho Panza." The characters of Cervantes' fantasy fought against the windmills and were defeated. For a while, I asked myself who of us was who. Our relative height suggested a solution, but soon I argued that the real valiant noble hero was Gérard.

Gérard lived in the Netherlands, the land of windmills. Perhaps because of this, when "fighting against the windmills," he usually was the winner, unlike Don Quixote. When serving as editor of *GEOPHYSICS*, he managed the introduction of the new system for electronic submission and review of papers, which reduced dramatically the processing time. And when recently he joined the Global Affairs Committee, he emerged immediately as one of the best and most active national representatives. A few weeks ago, he was a candidate for SEG president-elect, the first from Europe.

Gérard was a world-class scientist. His papers combined elegant mastery of physics and mathematics with the



Gérard Herman and Aldo Vesnaver at the EAGE convention in Vienna, June 2006.

practical needs of the oil and gas industry. Thus, even the most theoretical ones had a clear application, either included or reachable soon. As a professor, he trained outstanding students, and he was part of the strong "Delft School," one of the best in Europe and in the world.

Gérard shared with Cervantes' hero the pursuit of high ideals and a tragic death. His kind smile is gone and will be greatly missed.

—ALDO VESNAVER  
past chairman, Global Affairs Committee

It is one of those slowly moving afternoons in 1981. Together with one of my study mates in Delft I'm struggling with a mathematical problem, and we just don't seem to make any progress. "I have a better idea" my friend says. "Let's give up for today and go to a PhD defense; one of the PhD students of Adrianus de Hoop is defending his thesis today, and I heard he is really very good." I welcomed this suggestion because it would give us a break, and I thought it might be inspiring as well. And so it was! The student defending his thesis that afternoon appeared to be a very young man, looking not a single day older than me (but I just started my PhD project, and he was finishing it!). He addressed all the tough questions of the committee in a charming way and with an ease that made a deep impression on me. Apparently he did not impress only me,



Current and former *GEOPHYSICS* editors at the 2005 Annual Meeting in Houston, USA.

because the committee decided to award him the degree *cum laude*. The young man was Gérard Herman, and this encounter appeared to be the first of many more to come, and was the start of 25 years of friendship and collaboration.

Shortly after his PhD, Gérard joined Shell in Rijswijk, a 10-minute drive from Delft. During those days we often met during PhD defenses, either at both sides of the table (Gérard was the expert from industry on my PhD committee in 1986), or at the same side. In September 1989 Gérard joined Delft University as associate professor in the faculty of Applied Mathematics, where he set up and supervised many research projects in applied geophysics, medical imaging, and geomechanical engineering. Gérard inspired many MSc and PhD students, not only by excellently supervising their research, but also by organizing

lectures in mathematics for large groups (300 or more!) of civil engineering students. Gérard highly enjoyed the cooperation with students and helped them develop into self-conscious professionals, able to give excellent presentations at the SEG conventions. In the early 1990s the Centre for Technical Geosciences was established in Delft, which intensified the cooperation between the various groups involved in geosciences. I had the pleasure of organizing lectures for PhD students together with Gérard. The classes were small, but the students were highly motivated and they actively participated in the discussions initiated by Gérard and me. With much pleasure I remember the barbecues we organized to celebrate the end of our courses. In 2001 Gérard became editor of *GEOPHYSICS* and asked me to join the associate editors' team. I very much appreciate the gentle way in which he chaired the editors' meetings. He never acted as "the chief;" he appeared to be just one of the team, but at the same time he managed *GEOPHYSICS* very well. In that same year Gérard returned to Shell, but our cooperation continued. This last summer we traveled to Boston together with some of our colleagues to set up an exciting new research project among Shell, MIT, and Delft University. Gérard's input for this new

cooperation was instrumental and will remain important for the years to come.....

It is 12 September 2006. I'm on my way to a meeting in Oslo and high in the air I'm reviewing a paper about the application of seismic interferometry on the Merapi Volcano in Indonesia. Despite my enthusiasm for the subject, my mind drifts away to one of the last e-mails of Gérard, in which he talks about his experience of climbing the stairs of the Borobodur at five o'clock in the morning. "Apart from two tourists, I was alone. I walked up in the dark with my flashlight and, arriving at the top I saw the sun slowly appearing from behind the smoking Merapi Volcano. It was sooo beautiful." As geophysicists we are used to observing the world with scientific eyes, which is great, but we should not forget to look at it with a sense of poetry from time to time. Gérard did both; he was an excellent scientist, and he intensely enjoyed all other aspects of life. I'll miss a great colleague and friend.

—KEES WAPENAAR  
*GEOPHYSICS assistant editor*

Dear Gérard,

I suppose this is a little bit macabre, since you are now gone and I am writing you. But memorials, like funerals, are for those left behind when someone extraordinary leaves this life. It gives me a chance to say a few things that never seemed to get said when we had our all-too-brief meetings at the far corners of the world.

You will recall, of course, that we became friends while working together as *GEOPHYSICS* associate editors. When I was suggested by Sven as his successor, I tapped you to step up as one of my assistant editors. Your tact and diplomacy were only exceeded by the breadth and depth of your scientific knowledge. We shared an academic perspective back then.

As the story unfolded, I suggested your name to the SEG executive committee for consideration as my successor in the editor's chair. There were no objections, of course. If someone wanted to dislike you, they did not have much to hold onto. The photo (at right) is from the editor's dinner that year. I can't say with certainty if we are talking about professional or personal business, a conversation with you was equally welcome in either case. Later that year, I remember you coming to Tulsa and to my new house. Before there was a stick of furniture in the place, it was a home because of friends like you. The housewarming gift, a nice bottle of Bols, was thoughtful and considerate. This will surprise no one who knew you.

After the editor days were done for me, we always had some time together at that premier event of the SEG Annual Meeting—the editor's dinner. But then we kept bumping into each other around the world. I will always remember a nice night in Bahrain when we left the party behind to get some air on the beach and solve a few of the world's problems. With you around, it always seemed possible.

But I am getting off track. This is a tribute to your life, your character, and a reminder of how lucky some of us were to be a part of it. It is the great benefit of geophysics that I have come to know a few men like you. Very, very few.

Take care Gérard and know you will be missed.

—CHRIS LINER



Herman visits with Liner at an SEG Editor's Dinner on 10 September 2001 during the Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas (USA).

### Hassan visits China to give five-day course



SEG instructor Osman M. Hassan (center) recently taught *Digital Signal Analysis in Seismic Data Processing*, a five-day course, to students, geophysicists, and managers at the BGP, CNPC training facility in Zhuozhou City. He is pictured above with BGP, CNPC Director Huang (left) and Training Director Lu.