

Soren Bisgaard 1951-2009

Curious Cat Science and Engineering Blog



Soren Bisgaard died earlier this month of cancer. Soren was a student (Ph.D., statistics) of [my father's](#) [1] who shared the commitment to using applied statistics to [improve people's lives](#) [2]. I know this seem odd to many (I tried to [describe this idea](#) [2] previously and read his [acceptance of the 2002 William G. Hunter award](#) [3]).

Most recently Soren Bisgaard, Ph.D. was Professor of technology management at Eugene M. Isenberg School of Management at the University of Massachusetts – Amherst. He was an ASQ Fellow; recipient of Shewart Medal, [Hunter Award](#) [3], [George Box Medal](#) [4], among many others awards. Soren also served as the director of the [Center for Quality and Productivity Improvement](#) [5] at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (founded by William Hunter and [George Box](#) [6]) for several years.

I will remember the passion he brought to his work. He reminded me of my father in his desire to improve how things are done and provide people the opportunity to lead better lives. Those that bring passion to their work in management improvement are unsung heroes. It seems odd, to many, to see that you can bring improvement to people's lives through work. But we spend huge amounts of our time at work. And by improving the systems we work in we can improve people's lives. Soren will be missed, by those who knew him and those who didn't (even if they never realize it).

[The Future of Quality Technology: From a Manufacturing to a Knowledge Economy and From Defects to Innovations](#) [7] (pdf) by Soren Bisgaard

Related: [The Work of Peter Scholtes](#) [8] - [Management Improvement Leaders](#) [9] - [The Scientific Context of Quality Improvement](#) [10] by George Box and Soren Bisgaard, 1987 -

[Obituary Søren Bisgaard at ENBIS](#) [11]:

Søren Bisgaard has died on December 14, 2009 at the age of 58 years. We will remember Søren as a warm and giving person, a great teacher, a real inspirator, a good scientist and a best friend.

Søren Bisgaard was an individual who had an established record of contributions, not only to the quality profession and industrial statistics, but to Society as well. His publication list is exceptional with many articles in the most important scientific journals like Technometrics, Science, Quality and Reliability Engineering International, Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Journal of Quality Technology, and Quality Engineering. His major contributions are in the area of Design of Experiments but also in Operations Management, Healthcare Engineering, Time Series and Lean Six Sigma.

He was recognized for these contributions by several awards such as Shewell Award (1981 and 1987), Brumbaugh Award (1988, 1996 and 2008), Ellis R. Ott Award (1990), Wilcoxon Prize (1998) and Shewhart Medal (2002), William G. Hunter Award (2002), George Box Award (2004), W. J. Youden Memorial Address (2005) and Cecil C. Craig Award (2006).

Søren Bisgaard has been elected Fellow of the American Statistical Association in 1997, Fellow of the American Society for Quality in 2002 and Academician of the International Academy for Quality in 2007. This can only be achieved if you have made extraordinary contributions in your field.

Since 1997 Søren Bisgaard was Professor. From 1997 through 1998 in the Department of Industrial Engineering at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. From 1999 through 2000 in the Department for Quality Management and Technology at the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland.

When Søren Bisgaard decided in 2000 to return to the United States we were happy to offer him in 2001 a parttime professorship Industrial Statistics at the University of Amsterdam.

In Europe Søren Bisgaard was the founding father of the European Network for Business and Industrial Statistics, a society with more than 1000 members within a few years. In the United States Søren Bisgaard was involved in many professional services like associate editorships (Journal of

Quality Technology, Technometrics, and Quality Engineering), memberships of committees of the American Society for Quality and American Statistical Association and reviewer of several organizations.

Søren Bisgaard was also a very good teacher. Most of us have attended several of his talks during the ENBIS conferences and we were impressed by the way he was able to translate theory in practice.

Bisgaard's professional and personal contributions provided a solid basis for ENBIS.

Our hearts are with his wife Sue Ellen and all their good friends. We have lost a giant in our profession. Let us prepare for his memorial at the Tenth anniversary of ENBIS in Belgium.

It was a real honor to work with him.
Ronald Does and Jeroen de Mast

[Søren Bisgaard, UMass professor, The Daily Hampshire Gazette](#) [12]

An international expert on quality improvement, Søren Bisgaard, Isenberg Professor of Management at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, died in Boston on Dec. 14, 2009, after a heroic struggle against mesothelioma. Known throughout the world for his expertise in quality engineering and applied statistics, Bisgaard's colleagues recognized his exceptional commitment and contributions to his profession with an extensive list of awards and honors. An elected Fellow of the American Statistical Association, his many awards include the Ellis R. Ott Award (1990), the Wilcoxon Prize (American Statistical Association 1998), the Shewell Award (1981, 1987, 1995) and the Brumbaugh Award (1988, 1996) from the American Society for Quality Control, the Shewhart Medal (American Society for Quality 2002), and the George Box Award (ENBIS 2004). In constant demand as a keynote speaker at international conferences and as a consultant to corporations world wide, Bisgaard served on the editorial boards of the Journal of Quality Technology and the Journal of Quality Engineering, and on the management board of Technometrics.

His scholarly career reflected his role as an international resource. Beginning with a B.S. in Production Engineering from the Copenhagen College of Engineering in 1975 and an M.S. in Industrial Engineering from the Technical University of Denmark in 1979, he went on to earn the Ph.D. in statistics at the University of Wisconsin in 1985. His academic career spanned a range of assignments in teaching, research, and academic administration.

At the University of Wisconsin, he worked in a variety of roles and units related to industrial engineering, quality control, and productivity

improvement before becoming a professor in the Department of Industrial Engineering, Manufacturing, Systems Engineering, and director of the Center for Quality and Productivity Improvement. He then served as professor, Institute for Technology Management and director of the Department for Quality Management and Technology, at the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland (1999-2001).

Since 2001, he maintained a strong relationship as a professor of Industrial Statistics at the University of Amsterdam (full-time in 2001, part-time thereafter), and from 2002 he served as the Eugene M. Isenberg Professor of Technology Management at the Isenberg School of Management at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and the Isenberg School's interim dean in 2006-7.

While these formal appointments chronicle the geographic trajectory of a remarkable professional life, the extensive series of papers, books, book chapters, invited presentations, and consultancies speaks to Søren Bisgaard's exceptional influence on the world's thinking about quality control and productivity improvement through processes associated with Six Sigma Quality Management, for which he became a major contributor. Rigorous statistical methods applied to real problems of production in engineering and challenges in other fields characterized his approach to these issues as reflected in his lengthy bibliography. His work expanded beyond the boundaries of engineering, applying quality improvement techniques to a wide variety of public issues, including the challenge of quality improvement in health care as illustrated in his most recent book: "Solutions to the Healthcare Quality Crisis: Cases and Examples of Lean Six Sigma in Health Care" (2009).

His leadership in these fields appears reflected in the many conferences he organized or helped organize, journal boards on which he served and the many referee assignments he accepted, along with the long list of invited talks and consultancies. Søren Bisgaard was frequently asked to serve on the selection boards for major awards in fields associated with quality improvement and applied statistics. His key role in the development of the European Network of Business and Industrial Statistics (ENBIS) symbolized his commitment to organizing and supporting the nexus between academic statistical methods and applied applications in industry and business.

While these professional accomplishments identify an exceptional intellectual spirit and highly productive academic, they do not fully reflect the commitment, charm, and engagement of this remarkable individual. True to his Danish background, Søren Bisgaard was an avid and expert sailor with nothing but respect for those who knew boats and sailing, although his high standards of seamanship kept his list of quality counterparts short.

Always willing to help colleagues, provide insight and support, and identify solutions, Søren Bisgaard was also a man of strong principles and high

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academic standards. Warm and outgoing with his friends, a good host, and a fine conversationalist, his brilliant and creative approach to his life and work will be missed by us all.

Søren Bisgaard is survived by his wife, Sue Ellen Bisgaard; brothers Jesper, Peter and Jens and their spouses, Hanne, Anita and Trine; nieces Sofie, Clara, Anne, Mette and nephew Morten.

A memorial service will be held at the University of Massachusetts at a time to be announced. Contributions in his honor may be made to [The International Mesothelioma Program](#) [13] at or to the [European Network for Business and Industrial Statistics](#) [14].

Related: [Obituary: Soren Bisgaard, Isenberg Professor in Integrative Studies](#) [15] - [UMass Scholars Honored - including Soren and Lynn Margulis](#) [16].

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