Waterloo tribute to Prof. Siv Sivaloganathan - colleague, mentor, friend

tribute messages to Prof. Siv Sivaloganathan: anecdotes, stories, testimonials, how Siv influenced our work and life

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Hans De Sterck, Chair of Applied Math

Siv's impact on the Department of Applied Mathematics, the Faculty of Mathematics and the whole University of Waterloo over the past several decades cannot be overstated. As department chair from 2016 to 2023 and through his many other contributions he has shaped the Waterloo Math community in countless ways. Above all, Siv touched the lives of so many colleagues and students, many of whom considered him a dear friend. We will miss him dearly.

Michele Mosca

Siv was such a valued and dear colleague. When I started as a professor here in 1999, Siv was one of the first friendly and helpful faces I remember. He even helped me get an emergency last-minute passport once!
Like all my colleagues, I deeply respected his academic leadership and work, and even more I cherished him as a kind person and sincere and dedicated colleague.

David McKinnon

Siv ... I don't think I ever managed to spend more than 60 seconds in Siv's company without hearing him laugh. He was kind, energetic, funny, and a fantastic researcher. It's a tragedy that he's not still creating new content for us, but I know that I will be revisiting his wisdom for years to come.

Hans, Siv's colleague in Applied Math

Siv in the classroom in 2001.

Wednesday, June 13, 2001 Volume 41, Number 35

Gazette

Publications Mail Registration No. 142743

Research in continuum and fluid mechanics by applied math professor S. "Siv" Sivaloganathan and his team is helping neurosurgeons improve their treatment of patients with hydrocephalus. See story, page 6.

Martha Foulds

At my first event in Math I had the distinct fortune to sit across from Siv. He made me feel welcome, brought me into conversations around us, and shared great insights that helped me learn my new Faculty and the people in it. From there on, a knock on my door from Siv always meant a few extra smiles. Even when he was stopping in with a challenging question or a pressing need, he also always had a kind personal word to share or a joke to brighten the day. When his term as Chair ended I lost the opportunity to work with him as closely, but he still stopped by my office from time to time. I will miss our visits.

Alfred Menezes

Here are some excerpts from the 2020 Applied Math Holiday Video. There are some cheesy bits, but we had a lot of fun making it.

YouTube Video
https://www.youtube.com/embed/2oWNKqQePAc

Vladimir Vinogradov

Siv was my friend, colleague and officemate at the Fields Institute. He encouraged me to start working in the field of mathematical oncology and was one of my guides. Siv will be greatly missed.

Frances

What a shock to hear the news. Siv was such a bubbly and friendly individual. We first met via his CMM leadership at the Fields and his smiling and engaging nature was so lovely that I was immediately 'hooked'. Although our interactions were not many, every interaction I did have always made my day - that's what a friendly smile does - thank you Siv. My sincere condolences to your family - take good care.

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Brian Ingalls

Siv was part of the fabric of my experience at Waterloo. He always appeared with a grin and a joke, through good times and challenges. Siv's guidance and support had a major impact on my career development. First as a colleague and later as chair, Siv was always ready to talk through challenges and to lend a helping hand. I'll particularly miss his sense of humour -- he always found a way to lighten the mood and keep conversations going; he had a natural ability to make everyone feel a sense of welcome and belonging.

He was taken much too soon, but we can be thankful for the time we got to spend with him, and for the powerful impact he had on students and colleagues.

Erin Kelly

Siv was a wonderful person with a vibrant personality. He came into work every day with a positive attitude and an infectious laugh you could easily identify a mile away. He always made a point to stop to say hello to every single person on his way to his office – even if that meant he ended up running late for whatever meeting he was set to attend. The halls of MC seem quieter without him here. He will be missed dearly.

Anita

An encounter with Siv always boosted your spirit. His laughs were infectious. His jokes had a way of always making your giggle, even when they were bad. I hope Siv realized how much he was loved by his family, friends, and colleagues. His children's tributes at his celebration of life were so touching. Siv would have been so proud of them.

Mohammad Kohandel

I consider myself incredibly fortunate to have crossed paths with Siv and to have had the privilege of working with him as a postdoc and colleague for over 23 years. Siv was not only a remarkable mathematician but also an exceptional mentor and a wonderful friend. His guidance shaped both my academic career and my perspective on life. His kindness, wisdom, and unwavering support left a lasting impact on me, as I know it did on so many others.

Siv's absence leaves a profound void, but his legacy will live on through the countless lives he touched. He is deeply missed.

YouTube Video
https://www.youtube.com/embed/l_ft7k00g6E

Marek

I had the pleasure of interacting with Siv as an undergraduate student, a graduate student and as a colleague. Whether he was teaching me Leray-Shauder theory, explaining the best use of his in office couch, sharing a recipe, or philosophizing about how it's possible that "old Hughie" (Hugh Grant) ever amounted to anything Siv always made me smile, made my life richer in spirit and in an amazing way just made things better. From the simple, but tricky questions at my comprehensive, to being there at my wedding, to the chats when he was Chair and I was Associate Dean all I can say thanks. I hope some of Siv's joy for people, and appreciation for our academic profession rubbed off on me, and that I can carry it with me for as long as I can.

Corina Drapaca

I was a graduate student of Siv and Pino Tenti from 1997 to 2002. From the very beginning, I was impressed by Siv's passion for mathematics, optimism, and adoring love for his wife and children. His erudition, superb teaching skills, and ingenious linkages between poetry and mathematics helped me not only during my doctoral program but also after I graduated. Siv has been my mentor, collaborator, and friend for almost 28 years, an unwavering supporter of my academic career. We even wrote a book together on mathematical modelling and biomechanics of the brain. Throughout the years, we rejoiced in the achievements of his children and many graduate students and grieved together Pino's passing. I am glad that many members of Siv's large professional family were able to celebrate with him his vital contributions to mathematical medicine in September 2024 at the Fields Institute. The photo I share was taken at the end of this event. I will always be grateful to Siv and will miss him dearly. Lastly, I end my message with a few lines from a poem by Rabindranath Tagore dedicated to Siv: 'I bow to you and hold up my lamp to light you on your way.'

Robyn Landers

I don't think I ever passed Siv in the hall when he didn't have a cheery hello and a grin and time to stop and chat a bit. I'll certainly miss his brightening up a day that way.

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Gibin Powathil

Siv co-supervised my PhD studies. He inspired me to work in the field of Mathematical Biology. I happened to listen to one of Siv's talks that he gave at the Fields Institute while I was doing my graduate studies elsewhere, and it was so compelling that I emailed him to ask for an opportunity. He was kind enough to take a chance on me—and here I am. Thank you, Siv!

I rarely saw Siv without his trademark smile. He was a wonderful mentor and a dear friend. He always tried to visit me in Swansea whenever he came to the UK. I fondly remember all his visits. As Kathleen mentioned, I feel so fortunate and grateful that we were able to celebrate with him last September. He will be deeply missed.

(A picture taken with Siv in 2019 at Fields Institute)

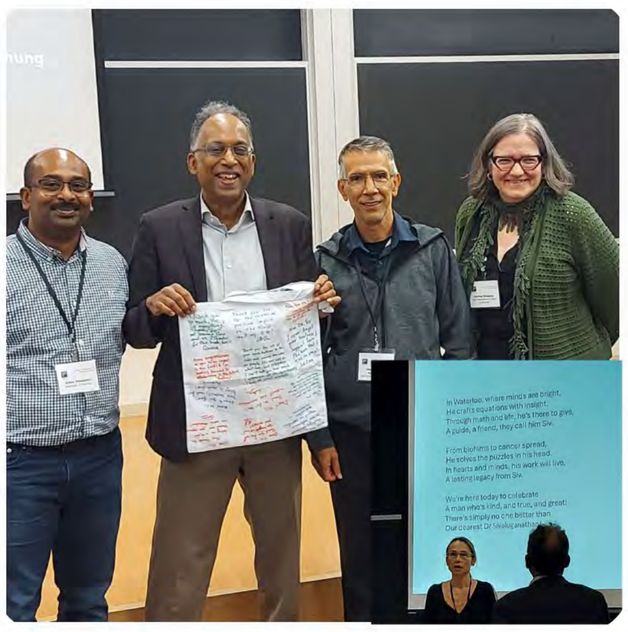
Chris Bauch

I remember how Siv was already a cornerstone of the mathematical biology community when I arrived in Canada in 2000, fresh after my PhD. Over the years, I've had the opportunity to discover his rare combination of qualities: scholarly excellence, disarming sense of humour, generosity, and good leadership. I miss him.

Kathleen Wilkie

Siv was my PhD supervisor, PDEs instructor, mentor, and colleague. I'm grateful for the trail he blazed in mathematical medicine, making it easy for me to follow down the same path. I'm thankful that we were able to celebrate with him last fall in a workshop in his honour at the Field's Institute. See below for the organizers Gibin, Mohammad, and Corina. And be sure to zoom in to read the amazing poem by Nataliya.

I will always remember your laughing, smiling, face. RIP Siv.



Hans

Mohammad's linkedin message Honoring Siv's Legacy: https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7302127637181706240/

JUDITH KOELLER

You always felt lighter and brighter after chatting with Siv.

When I do math workshops in middle/high school, I always mention Siv's incredible work in mathematical medicine. Even in a bustling classroom, a hush comes over the room as they understand the powerful impact of his work. His legacy is tremendous.

James Drake, Professor of Surgery, Pediatric Neurosurgeon at the Hospital for Sick Children, now retired.

I was so sorry to learn of the untimely passing of my very good friend and colleague Siv. We collaborated for over 30 years on delving into the biomechanical properties of the brain, taking an applied mathematical approach, for many years with his friend and colleague Pino Tenti. It was not only an extremely fruitful collaboration, with a significant number of graduate students, peer reviewed grants, and impactful publications, but it was also so much Fun ! Siv had a way of making this whole area of Mathematics understandable, relatable to non-mathematicians in the medical world, always with a warm sense of humour. His impact in the areas of brain dynamics, cancer growth, and MR guided focused ultrasound were very significant, and his contributions to these fields, and the many trainees he inspired will all be very much a part of his wonderful legacy.

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Alexandra Lippert

I will never forget Siv. He was always such a joy to work with. I enjoyed his enthusiasm, his genuine interest in our alumni and donors, and how effortlessly he connected with anyone we introduced him to. His vision for Math Medicine was inspirational, he had big dreams and believed we were the Faculty to make it happen. I enjoyed teasing him when he ordered dessert whenever we were out for a meal with alumni. He knew he shouldn't but would give you that unforgettable smile and order it anyway! His presence is deeply missed.

David

I had the great fortune of first meeting Siv when I joined UW during his time as AM Department Chair. His mentorship and guidance during that crucial career transition were invaluable and I am eternally grateful to have received it. I was lucky enough to also count Siv as a collaborator, we both had interest in high intensity focused ultrasound and I had the privilege of graduating two students with Siv’s help and mentorship. His enthusiasm and positive energy were infectious and our hallway research conversations were always an immense pleasure whenever I rounded a corner and bumped into him. His loss is a deep one and he will be greatly missed.

David Harmsworth

As one of my two original co-supervisors (with Pino Tenti) for my Master's degree, Siv welcomed me to Waterloo in 1997 (the photo is, I think, from Christmas-time in 1998 or 1999). He has always stood out to me as one of the most obviously and genuinely kind individuals in my corner of the UW community.
You are missed, Siv. Thank you for your warmth, your friendship, and your encouragement over the years.

Alison

I had the pleasure of working with Siv when he became Chair. What a lovely person. He was so genuine and down to earth. His smile was infectious. After he stepped down as Chair, he would drop by to say hello. We'd chat about the most recent trip he had been on. If we needed a faculty member to participate in something fun, such as judging the Gingerbread contest (in a funny hat and all), he would be at the top of our list. He will be dearly missed.

Kirsten

Over the years, the Applied Math department has improved in all aspects. Siv contributed to this in many ways. He worked to improve things on many levels, both in his research and in administration. One of his lasting accomplishments as department head was some great hires. On an informal level, his positive outlook helped to improve the department environment and he always saw the humour in a situation.

Jeff Orchard

I first met Siv when I was an undergrad and he taught Continuum Mechanics. Then, years later as a faculty member here at Waterloo. I remember being in meetings with him, and the room always felt brighter once he arrived. He had a way of bringing optimism and positivity... and I admire that.

Roberto

Siv was the Chair of the Applied Math department while I joined it. His guidance and support while that critical transition has been invaluable. His infectious laugh and humor have left an indelible mark on whoever had the fortune to interact with him. His determined attitude towards establishing an engrossing environment in the department will be one of the many legacies he gifted us with. Siv will be missed dearly.

Bev

What a special human being! Siv's kindness, spontaneous smile, and sparkling sense of humour so often lifted my spirits, to say nothing of smoothing the daily grind for everyone. It's rare that someone's influence is so uniformly positive on so many facets of academic life. Bravo, dear Siv!

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Ghazal Geshnizjani

Just a couple of years ago, when a former colleague passed away, Siv shared these words with us, quoting Benjamin Franklin:
“It is the will of God and Nature that these mortal bodies be laid aside, when the soul is to enter into real life; ’tis rather an embryo state, a preparation for living; a man is not completely born until he be dead: Why then should we grieve that a new child is born among the immortals?”
Today, as I remember Siv, these words take on a profound meaning.
When I first joined the Applied Mathematics department, Siv was someone who made an immediate impression. He would always stop in the corridor, a warm smile on his face, his kind voice ready to exchange a few words, always asking about family and how things were going. Over the next decade, as I got to know him better especially during his time as Chair of the Department, his presence was always one of strength and generosity.
It is hard to believe that it was only last spring that he mentioned returning from a most enjoyable three-month visit to the Indian Institute of Science. He spoke with such appreciation for the experience, and it is heartbreaking to think that, in less than a year, someone so full of life will no longer be walking the corridors of the sixth floor, talking with colleagues and students.
But as Siv himself reminded us, "why then should we grieve"? He lived a full and meaningful life, and his legacy through his work, his mentorship, and, above all, his kindness will endure. He will be greatly missed, and the world will not be the same without him, but his memory will live on, and we will carry forward the warmth and wisdom he shared with us.

Kumaraswamy Ponnambalam (Ponnu)

I had known Siv since he moved to Waterloo from Alberta. Not exactly sure how I met him but I was glad to invite him home (once only he came I believe, so long ago..1990/1?) when I knew he could speak Spanish fluently with my Venezuelan wife and her father who was visiting, as my knowledge of Spanish was not as good as his was. Both Siv and I are Tamils (from two different countries) and one another common love we had was mathematics. He was instrumental in introducing me and my master's student to Neurology and Neurosurgery specialists in Toronto Western General hospital which resulted in a very interesting thesis on Detection of epilepsy before the seizure starts. Early days I have been to his home once or twice and was glad to meet his family but given that both his family and my family are large and all four spouses were full time workers and that he lived "far" we rarely could meet, which saddens me. I always joked to my kids that he was a perfect role model for them as he spoke mathematics, Tamil, Spanish and of course English. I will miss you Siv.

Jodi Szimanski

Siv was a ray of sunshine. You could be having the worst day and Siv would slide in your office with that smile and you couldn’t help but feel better. He had the best jokes (or worst depending on whether you don’t like dad jokes).
He became a friend and a bad influence at meetings - I often got a case of the giggles sitting beside him.
I will forever remember that twinkle in his eye and that smile.

Hans

here is a link to the Waterloo obituary article for Siv, written by Hans, Mohammad and Jon, with input from Alfred, Yu-Ru and Mark:

https://uwaterloo.ca/news/mathematics/remembering-siv-sivaloganathan

Miriam Schoeman

I have had the pleasure of interacting with Siv over the past 7+ years while working at the FIelds Institute. He never failed to give a warm smile and a friendly hello when he came in to the building and stopped by my office. Siv had such a lovely, engaging way with people. He served as a Member of Corporation representing Waterloo and was a co-founder of the Fields Centre for Mathematical Medicine where he was co-director for many years. He will be deeply missed by all who work here and by our many long and short-term visitors. May your memory be a blessing, SIv.

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Joe West

Siv was my co-supervisor for a Master's and two URAs. He was always a pleasure to work with, and an easygoing, fair, friendly, and wise department chair. His warm presence will be missed, but as he said to his loved ones, he is still here. In my lectures, I will continue to carry a part of him, saying "bless you" whenever a student sneezes, a habit picked up after my office mate in grad school said that he did this. (I never had the pleasure to be in one of his courses.) Even the futon in my office was inspired by the couch that he used to have in his.

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