

In Memory of Pentti Kouri 1949-2009

Kiasma February 3, 2009

So hard to accept
the injustice of this passing away
of a man so titanic in strength and talent
so superbly at full swing with ideas and inspiration
with up-and-running projects that would further shake
the world
and elevate to even greater heights
his already impressive achievements.
So hard to accept
that Pentti was
taken away in the middle of it
just when his finest hour
the decade of his grandeur
was finally within his reach.
Had life granted him more years,
I am convinced
we would have witnessed contributive actions
unparalleled before or after for the good causes
Pentti believed in.

He had endured
fifteen years of knockdown blows
had lived through pain and disrespect
and feeling rejected by the country that he loved.
Every time he came back
unbroken by cynicism
his horizon of possibilities
and drive for contribution
extended yet one more dimension higher.

Pentti was a global citizen
with a Finnish heart and the soul of an artist
with the burning spirit of a soldier from Lapland
who makes it no matter what.
He left his country as a young boy
with a commitment to excel.
I remember him speaking with admiration of his mother
who after her husband's premature death
built up and raised her children with dignity
and respect for learning.
The heritage of his family
strengthened by his growth at the Atlantic College
built the foundation of Pentti the intellectual,
the man of resolve
and a never-to-stop quest
towards the mental build-up.

Intellectually he was
primus inter pares.
His mental capacities were without equal
his conceptual acumen towering
his range of imagination knew no limits
and his eye for striking openings
remained unblinker throughout.
Pentti read books like no-one I've known
his thirst for knowledge was unparalleled.
"I've just read a brilliant new biography of Lincoln
which you should immediately get,
it is fundamental", was a characteristic Pentti line.
Convinced that striking insights were everywhere to be
found, he would read physics and history, religion and

economics, theory of music and theories of the universe,
scientific books and more popular books
everything from the point of view of a synthesis in the
making,
as based on facts, insights, new perspectives
and above all, on Pentti's chief instrument of operation
his gigantic intuition
which he played like a musical instrument
with the ease of a virtuoso
and a master conductor's ear for the vibrant
hidden harmonies
of the God-made universe and man-made world.

The possible was Pentti's
chief category
along with *ideas*.

A man of imagination and innovation
Pentti had an unwavering faith in the powers of the
human mind and in the creative inspiration.
In discussions he was a unique combination of an active
listener and an inspirational challenger, a
transformer, and a magician of hope.
Pentti upgraded the life force
of people with whom he discussed
because unsurpassed though he was
with his supertalents
he still did not overshadow his dialogue partners.
His style was not one of self-importance
or self-promotion
but one of optimism and movement towards the future
through mutual discovery.

Yet what I miss most in the passing of Pentti

is his personal humanism
his warmth and generosity
his zen-like aura of shyness
through which he often maintained his distance
to even those that he loved most.
Now that he does not call any more
I realize how much I miss Pentti's voice
that reassurance of life's beauty which resonated
from his baritone,
from that rhythm of tender dynamism that was
characteristic of one of the finest men I have had the
privilege to know.