On May 8 2001, Jaap Seidel passed away. This volume of the European Journal of Combinatorics is dedicated to his memory.

Jaap Seidel loved Mathematics. He wanted to learn it, to understand it, and most of all to teach it. In his courses and personal contacts he was very inspiring. Many mathematicians, especially young ones, were influenced by Jaap. Besides being a teacher, he was also very interested in what other researchers were doing. He always tried to find links to subjects he had been working on. Jaap’s work makes connections with several branches in mathematics, and he had struck friendships with mathematicians all over the world. He has been called an ambassador of mathematics.

The paper that illustrates best Jaap’s way of making connections is probably: Line Graphs, Root Systems and Elliptic Geometry (with Cameron, Goethals, and Shult) from 1976. This work includes the famous characterization of graphs with least eigenvalue $-2$, but equally importantly it connects graph theory with geometry and algebra. An older
example is the connection between 2-graphs (a concept from permutation groups), graph switching (now called Seidel switching) and equiangular lines. Jaap’s most cited paper is perhaps: Spherical Codes and Designs (with Delsarte and Goethals) from 1977, which involves analysis, algebra and discrete mathematics. Central in Jaap’s work are strongly regular graphs and the generalizations to distance-regular graphs and association schemes.

The present issue contains fifteen contributions by people who were influenced by Jaap Seidel. The subjects vary along the fields mentioned above, and we are sure that Jaap would have liked this volume very much.

Also during his life there have been books and special issues devoted to Jaap Seidel. The introductions in [1] and [2] give a good idea of Jaap’s mathematical career. The latter reference contains an almost complete list of his publications. A more personal overview of Jaap’s life is given by De Bruijn [3].

References


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