

# Edsger and Netty

## Netty van Gasteren

Student, Colleague, and Friend of Edsger's  
December 13, 1952 – September 6, 2002



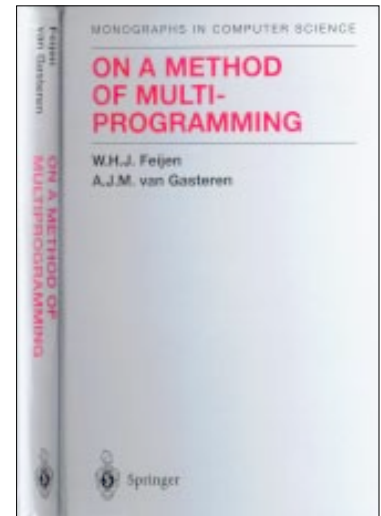
Netty's closing remarks at Edsger's 70th Birthday and Retirement Celebration

### White Asparagus

Now, it is way past your birthday, so I think we have to talk about white asparagus. To me you are like white asparagus.

It is a delicatessen, so this comparison is OK. You see, I'm from that little part of the country where they grow white asparagus, so I just grew up with it. To me it is everyday stuff. But later I learned to the rest of the country it is a delicatessen.

So I have been living with a delicatessen all of my life. Well, the same is Edsger to me. He is the delicatessen in my life. Thank you.



## Netty's Graveside words

10 augustus 2002

Two years ago, at the symposium in honour of Edsger that was so superbly organized by his colleagues and friends in Austin, I compared Edsger with asparagus; the famous Dutch white asparagus, that is.

I called him "the delicatessen of my life". And so he was.

It was a great privilege to see him work, and think, and teach, and write at such close quarters, and it changed my life. The pun with which he used to tease me is that "he programmed all my life".

It became an even greater privilege to be his friend, and that is mainly what I and many others have tried to be over the past months, when we over here were so fortunate to have Edsger and Ria back in our midst in Nuenen.

And now, as a friend, he became our teacher again: he showed us how to live when you know you will be dying soon.

And all this time, he was being guarded by Ria with that perfectly balanced mix of utter caring and sternness, of which only she knows the recipe.

It is so good to be part of it all.

Indeed, Edsger Dijkstra is, and will forever remain, the delicatessen of my and many others' lives.

Netty

