

Preface

*I mean, what is an un-birthday present?
A present given when it isn't your birthday, of course.*

(L. Carroll, Through the Looking-Glass,
and What Alice Found There.
Chapter VI: Humpty Dumpty)

To those who are familiar with him since many decades, the scientist and human being Harry L. Trentelman displays a remarkable *almost invariance property*. For as long as we have known him, the adjectives that best continue to describe Harry's attitude to science and academic work are: resilient, creative, energetic, hard-working. When one is almost giving up trying to prove some result and is ready to add yet another assumption to make life a bit easier, Harry always comes to the rescue (typically the next morning, after a night of hard thinking) with a simple and effective solution. In science, Harry is also rigorous, original, open-minded, and skeptical: we fondly recall his ability to shoot down our most cherished pet theories with one sharp question, and his tireless efforts in correcting our sloppiness in thinking or writing. One should add that Harry has always been the epitome of scientific integrity, that he has consistently displayed an excellent taste in his choice of problems and in finding elegant solutions to them, and that he is an ambitious, kind, helpful, conscientious, and truly educational supervisor to his Master and Ph.D. students. All these qualities have brought Harry to make pioneering and lasting scientific contributions to areas as diverse as geometric control theory, the behavioral approach, and most recently systems over networks. The excellency of his work has been officially recognized in his recent nomination as IEEE Fellow and Senior Editor for the IEEE Transactions on Automatic Control.

The adjectives that come to mind when trying to describe his personality are: charming, sociable, enthusiastic, optimistic, witty. His particular brand of humor would require far better writers than us to be described adequately; suffice it to say that nobody who has sat next to him at conference dinners can easily forget his cheeky, brilliant one-liners. All of those who know him even tangentially remember

his outspoken passion for sports and outdoor activities, his appreciation of good music, his love for and involvement in his family, and his taste for dancing.

Here is a man who loves life so unconditionally as to be an example to all who meet him. He does not philosophise about how to live life fully; he shows one how to do it in practice. What then, one could ask, does such a man deserve as a gift for the anniversary of almost threescores years of a life? What could be the best token of our appreciation for him as a man and a scientist?

As his friends and former students we pondered long over the obvious choices. A luxurious penthouse in Manhattan? A shiny Lamborghini? A stately Tuscan villa? After much deliberation we discarded all these options: none was good enough to really translate our affection for and esteem of Harry (and given his unswerving devotion to Volvo family cars, he would not have liked the Lamborghini anyway).

Almost driven to desperation by our inability to make our feelings concrete, we finally found the perfect gift: a collection of scientific papers written specifically for this occasion by friends, colleagues, and former students! The confirmation that this was the right idea was the enthusiasm with which it was accepted by the contributors to this volume, who quickly produced the high-quality works gathered in this volume.

What you are holding in your hands then, Harry, is the best “sixtieth un-birthday” gift we could think of. We present it to you with affection, admiration, and our best wishes for several decades more of top-level scientific productivity.

Mumbai, India
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Southampton, UK
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Behavioral Systems and Robust Control

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