



Reflections on the Life of CR Rao

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In 1988 when Professor CR Rao joined the statistics department at Penn State University, marked the beginning of a dramatic increase in the number of interactions with the world's greatest statisticians. As described in the article published in the Notices of the American Mathematical Society (Vol. 69, No. 6, pp 678-692), CR was invited to join Penn State after his collaborator at University of Pittsburgh passed.

Department Head Thomas P. Hettmansperger of Penn State invited him to accept the inaugural Eberly Family Chair in Statistics, funded in 1986 by the Eberly Family Charitable Trust. CR and his wife Bhargavi moved to State College, PA, purchased a town home a short walk to a bus stop and a park and became active in the community for the next 21 years. Although his initial appointment was for three years, as he approached his 70th birthday the administration waived the mandatory retirement age, and Rao remained active another 10 years and retired in 2001 at age 80.

During his tenure at Penn State, he was regularly recognized for his groundbreaking work in statistics and in addition to his earned Ph.D. and Sc.D. from Cambridge University, UK, he received 27 honorary doctoral degrees from universities in 16 countries around the world.

He was elected Fellow of the National Academy of Sciences, was awarded the Wilks Medal from the American Statistical Association, the Guy Medal in Silver from the Royal Statistical Society, the Megnadh Saha Medal of the Indian National Science Academy, and J.C. Bose Gold Medal of Bose Institute, and the Mahalanobis Centenary Gold Medal of the Indian Science Congress. He has been the president of the International Statistical Institute, the International Biometric Society, and the Institute of Mathematical Statistics, USA.

The Government of India honored him with the second highest civilian award, Padma Vibhushan for “outstanding contributions to Science and Engineering/Statistics” and instituted a cash award in honor of C. R. Rao, “to be given once two years to a young statistician for work done during the preceding three years in any field of statistics.”

Shortly after his retirement, in 2002 he was awarded the National Medal of Science, conferred by US President George W. Bush, on June 12, 2002, at the White House. His citation read: “for his contributions to the foundations of statistical theory and multivari-

ate statistical methodology and their applications, enriching the physical, biological, and mathematical, economic, and engineering sciences.”

Along with these many achievements, as the Eberly chaired professor of statistics at Penn State, he continued an active research program as Director of the Centre for Multivariate Analysis at Penn State, and he continued to teach courses in multivariate analysis and direct graduate students Ph.D. research.

Speaking as the department head during 15 years of his tenure at Penn State, CR Rao was the catalyst for bringing many international visitors from among the world’s leading statisticians to Penn State, which benefited our faculty and graduate students and increased the stature of the department. He endowed several lectureships, the C. G. Khatri and P. R. Krishnaiah Memorial Lectureships, and the CR and Bhargavi Rao Prize which brought renowned speakers to Penn State.

Long after his retirement, CR continued to attend lectures and colloquia events at Penn State and continue to engage in discussions with graduate students during their Ph.D. defense presentations. His impact on the scientific vibrancy of the department was immense and long lived.