

A pioneer has left us

Ebbe Höffner, the innovative founder of OxyGuard International, passed away on Saturday, August 10, 2019.

We all leave footprints as we walk through life. Ebbe's footprints are more significant than the average. If you have fish from aquaculture farms for dinner, there is a good chance that the fish, somewhere along its journey from egg to consumer product, was swimming in water monitored with an OxyGuard instrument. From the time when Ebbe founded OxyGuard up to now, OxyGuard equipment has, more than once, revolutionized the field of aquaculture. The incipient production that started in the basement of Ebbe's house grew quickly and it became a world leading company on the global market. Journalists in Denmark have called his journey "the entrepreneurial dream", many have tried to unlock the "formula" for success, and this made Ebbe a popular lecturer.

In 1977, newly graduated from The Polytechnic School, Ebbe started his career at Mobro where he became responsible for the production and development of pH and oxygen probes, primarily for breweries, the dairy industry and power plants. In the early 1980's, Ebbe was contacted by a group of Danish eel farmers. They needed oxygen sensors that could be used under the rough condition at their farms. At that time, this kind of equipment was none-existent, so Ebbe went home and rebuild his basement and started the innovative process of building the equipment they needed. The result was the well-known OxyGuard oxygen probe that made both OxyGuard and Ebbe famous in the sector.

The cardinal point of the story is the line of decision made by Ebbe during this period. While working on the oxygen probe in his spare time he began to consider if there perhaps was an entire market for equipment for aquaculture use. He went to his boss with the idea, but he found it crazy. However, Ebbe was convinced that his idea was viable and without further ado, he quit his job, and started working full time in his basement as a self-employed entrepreneur.

The most basic reason for Ebbe's success was his amazing ability to see the exact needs of his customers. On top of this, he had a will to hold onto his ideas and focus on the needs of the customers. This proved to be a good criterion for success.

Thanks to Ebbe's innovative spirit and skillful leadership, the growing number of employees began innovative projects alongside the production of the oxygen sensor. Many of these became big successes and the company started to grow. In 1989, OxyGuard moved out of the small basement

and the expansion continued. In 1996, OxyGuard moved to Blokken in Birkerød and today it is located in an even bigger facility in Farum.

“The first year was rough, but after that it just sky rocketed” as Ebbe’s first accountant said.

In 2005, Ebbe entrusted the company in the hands of two employees to ensure the continued development of the company. This gave him more time to pursue his biggest passion, namely British cars and motorcycles. If Ebbe drove a car, it would be a Jaguar and if he drove a motorcycle, it would always be a Norton or an Ariel.

Originally, Ebbe was from a small village in the countryside, but as there was no high upper secondary school there, he moved to Birkerød where he attended the boarding school and obtained his diploma in 1968. Kirsten Kriegbaum became Ebbe’s life partner and she played a significant role in turning the company into what it is today.

Ebbe was a member of Lions Club in Birkerød for many years and he managed funding events to support the local community. His big heart and his desire to help other people have benefited many of those who met him. He was a true humanitarian and this was reflected in everything from the staff at his company to the circle of friends he collected around himself throughout his life.

Many people will miss the “crazy scientist” or the “Professor” as he was lovingly called within the walls of OxyGuard. He was with his quirky thinking always an interesting discussion partner. Mostly, he would get the last word in a conversation and often he would leave you with a cryptic comment that you would think about for the rest of the day.

No more words will come from Ebbe, but many people will carry his words with them through their lives. Ebbe has meant so much to so many and he will be remembered and missed.

A service is being held at Høsterkøb Kirke on Saturday August 17 at 2 PM

After the ceremony, Kirsten invites everyone who knew Ebbe to a reception at OxyGuard International, Farum Gydevej 64, 3529 Farum