Dear friends,

It was very kind of Ramona to inform me about this memorial session in the memory of Vesa Ruuskanen and Bob Thews, two of the finest gentlemen and wonderful human beings whom I have met in my life. I wish I were here but newly acquired duties hold me back.

Let me first recall Vesa.

I had read, repeatedly his papers on hydrodynamics, especially his master-piece of notes of a lecture he gave at a school in Poland and which had appeared in Acta Physica Polonica, before I met him for the first time at Quark Matter ’91. It remains the simplest and most definitive illustration of hydrodynamics and is essentially a grand-father of all the numerical codes which evolved over decades of the developments in the field. I was struggling to set up the hydrodynamics code on the basis of his lecture when Larry McLerran suggested that I could get the code from Vesa. He wrote a mail to him and within a day I had the code. I and my collaborators have used it, build upon it, and published several papers using it. I always ask all my students to read that master piece when they join us and start working on quark gluon plasma.

 I owe my place in the community greatly due to this simple gesture of Vesa. We came close during the Hard Probe Collaboration initiated by Helmut Satz. I was hoping to see him at a meeting in India, but alas he could not come, as he got sick. We had planned that he would visit Agra to see the Taj Mahal. Later his movements got restricted.

We had such a wonderful visit to Jyvaskula during one of the meetings of Hard Probe Collaboration, and also a visit to his house which he organized. I remember that I had taken a model of Taj Mahal in marble. I was devastated when I opened the box to give it to him. The minarets had broken during their journey from Calcutta to Delhi to Frankfurt to Bielefeld to Copenhagen to Jyvaskula. But Vesa! He just smiled kindly and said, “We have long winters in Finland and I love to work with my hands.” He was like that, saying the kindest things when you needed it most.

I very much wanted our contacts to continue and prosper through the next generation. Thus he invited our student Sourav Sarkar for a short visit. And then another one of our students, Rapa Chatterjee got a post-doctoral offer from Jyvaskula and spent two years there.

In him we have lost a very fine scientist, who was very measured in his speech, who was very generous in his deeds. You could bet your last penny on any number that he gave. I learned a lot from just reading his papers and much more by talking to him.

I do wish all the best to his family members and do wish to tell them that in a far off country- India, they will always find a group of persons who hold Vesa in very high esteem and that he will always have a very fond place in my heart.

Let me come to Bob Thews.

I met him only through the Hard Probe Collaboration. When I saw him from a distance, I realized that I was looking at an extremely fine specimen of human being, with sharp twinkling eyes, with almost child-like mischief playing on his lips. While several other members of the team had problems with my rustic accent, he for one and his darling wife- Johnnie did never misunderstand me, perhaps as they were extremely well travelled and more so as perhaps they were more attentive than others and had had several students from my part of the world. I re-drew several of the graphs on our Drell-Yan paper and re-checked several of the calculations. Yes, it was fun talking to him, with his keen sense of humour, with his easy laughter which put me immediately at ease. He had this fantastic sincerity which made me feel, that I could confide in him and he would never betray the confidence.

I never had the fortune of having had him as a teacher, but I could see that he could guide the students find the answers themselves. During discussions he asked questions, which made you think and which led you to reach the right conclusions. I always had the feeling that he already knew the answers to the questions which we were struggling with and he was just indulging us. His knowledge about almost all subjects that came up for discussions was phenomenal. Both he and Johnny were extremely kind to my wife when they met her briefly at one of the Hard Probe meetings in Trento. Johnnie is an ardent and thoughtful reader and has read enormous number of books and we can sit and discuss literature for hours. She also found time to read my amateurish attempts at short-story writing and I was surprised to find that she had such complete grasp on a subject matter, a village in India, so very alien to her.

I will always cherish the time I have spent with Bob and Johnnie and I wish all the best to Johnny.

 Dinesh Srivastava, 22.10.2013, Kolkata