Markus Hoff Berge in memoriam

By Rikard S. Andresen

Markus Hoff Berge passed away 20th April 2016. By his death a pillar of the international Subud community is gone.

Markus was opened during the «first wave» in Oslo in September 1958, one of many anonymous young students with a budding interest in spiritual movements.

Always positive and optimistic, Markus felt that he ought to undertake an active role in Subud, but from the very beginning he was convinced that becoming a helper was not his calling, and that his talent lay in the field of administration and economy. Having studied business and economy, his first office in Subud was as treasurer in the Oslo group.

In 1973 Markus was elected Chair of Subud Scandinavia, which consisted of the four Nordic countries Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden that had been established in 1965. In the late 70s the Subud zones became more important. Markus was appointed coordinator for Zone 4, Central and Eastern Europe, an office he held for two 4 year periods. Communications at that time was much poorer than today. Internet as a public service did not exist, telephone and air transport was more complicated and more expensive than today, but Markus managed to keep in contact with all 18 countries in the zone and visit most of them several times – paying all expenses out of his own pocket. The 6 zone reps also served as directors of WSA, and through this he soon became involved in the financing of ISC. For many years his company was the second largest private contributor to the ISC budget.

Varindra Vittachi had already in the 70s discussed with Bapak his idea of establishing a foundation in Bapak’s name to help financing Subud enterprises like schools and hospitals. Bapak agreed to this, but said it must wait till after his death. As we all know, Bapak died in 1987, and in 1991 Varindra decided to establish the Muhammad Subuh Foundation, and here Markus’ assistance was of great value.

In 1993 Varindra became seriously ill, and looked for a successor to the position as WSA Chair. He asked Markus to stand as a candidate. Markus felt that he could manage most administrative challenges, but was uncertain about being exposed to so much publicity. In the test he felt that the job would kill him, stopped the test, and withdrew his candidacy. But when he was proposed as MSF Chair, this test was positive, and during his period as Chair, between 1993 and 1997, MSF’s capital was increased six fold.

The most successful Subud project in Norway is ICDP, International Child Development Programme, a detailed and practical, yet very simple and understandable guidance in child care that was developed and designed by Rukman Hundeide, assisted by Henning Rye, both professors of psychology at Oslo University. The main problem was the marketing of the project. In 1995 they asked Markus for advice. Markus tested a possible involvement, and said
It felt like being raised to Heaven - a deep feeling of worship». So he helped registering ISDP as a foundation, rented premises, set up an office and hired the necessary office help, financing everything through his own company, including travelling costs for several people between many countries. Today, ICDP is practiced in 30 countries all over the world, partly led by Subud people fronted by Lailah Armstrong, partly by UNICEF and various governments. In Norway, ISCP is practiced by 2000 people, and is administered by the government.

We will all miss Markus’ broad smile and always positive attitude. May peace be upon him!