A healthy body needs no exercise.

I have never been so full that I couldn't eat.

You are born with only so much health. If you waste it on foolish exercise when you are young you run out of it and have none left when you are old - and I don't want to die young.

Girl watching is the best eye medicine.

I do not like girls who are good for nothing; I like girls who are bad for nothing.

If a 100-pound woman is beautiful than a 200 pound woman is twice as beautiful.

Love is an itchy feeling; if you can scratch it, it is a flea.

Marriage is when two people very bravely face all the problems together that they wouldn’t have at all if they weren’t married.

When I retire I am going to train myself to lie on my back and spit on the ceiling; a little to one side of course.

I'm glad I don't have to worry about dying young any more.

What is heaven for the flea is hell for the dog.

I am going to start a society to save the tapeworm. We must be sure it doesn't become extinct.

When I feel like exercising, I lie down until the feeling passes.

“When I die I want to be reincarnated as a tapeworm in the belly of a beer drinker.” OJ
Known for his quick wit and his wonderful sayings, Finnish born Dr. Oiva Joensuu passed away at the age of 87. He was a colorful part of the Rosenstiel School faculty from the 1960s until he retired in 1980 and moved to Michigan. The setting for today’s celebration is the RSMAS bar where quick one liners off the foamy lips of Oiva Joensuu were a common end of day occurrence for two decades.

Today he would have been considered politically incorrect for his love of beer (“Happiness without alcohol is merely pretending.”) and his vocal admiration of woman (“Yummie, yum, yum!”), especially the large breasted variety (“Wow!”) but in the context of his days at RSMAS he was warm, flirty, good natured, playful, and he always gave people the feeling he was up to some mischief. “His humor was never cutting”, stated Nancy Voss. Cindy Moore knew him to shave off his mustache in the middle of the workday just to see if anyone would notice.

The list of Oivisms on the back covers a full range of his humorous philosophy about being happy in the moment, playfully ethnic (“Scandahoovians are the best people.”), and laughing, mostly at himself. “Work doesn’t bother me. I can lie down right next to it.”

He was raised on a farm in Finland which he considered to be the best place to grow up. “My mother really believed that the one who saves the rod hates the child. Often it was hard to sit.” he said of his early days in his brief, undated autobiography written after he left Miami. A friend taught him to read at age 4 so he wouldn’t have to ask so many questions. He confessed to rather have “a Lesson of the Birch” from his mother than to apologize to his brother after a fight.

He began university in Helsinki in 1934. His studies were interrupted by hospitalization in 1939 for tuberculosis. In 1941 he decided to marry the nurse Aira he had met during his confinement. After a two day honeymoon they each went to opposite ends of the country to join their military units. He found out after the war ended that he had made the “A list” of 6,000 anti-communists who would have been either executed or sent to Siberia if the communists had gained control of Finland.

He finished his studies after the war and began working as a spectrochemist at the Geological Survey of Finland “analyzing small samples for low concentrations”. In 1947 he got a scholarship to Sweden to study more about spectrochemistry. On a field trip during that time he spoke of the Island of Ytterby where most rare earth elements were discovered including Yterbium, Terbium, Erbium, Holmium and Gadolinium, Thulium, and Thorium. The science community proposed that part of the island be purchased for a science park but no government funds were allocated so the land owner sold the whole hill of rare minerals for gravel. “If I think of it I still have tears in my eyes.”

To get his wife and family away from dealings with the “Red police” he accepted a research assistantship in Chicago. He had 3 children by then. He was troubled with repeat bouts of eye inflammations due to his TB and ended up being a guinea pig for testing the use of dihydrostreptomycina as treatment with the warning that the treatment might take away his hearing. Opting for sight, the experiment was successful in treating flare ups. After four years in Chicago they moved to Tennessee where he worked in the determination of rare earth elements. Then followed the job offer to come to Miami to analyze marine sediments, advising student and occasionally teach. He spoke about his research trip to the Galapagos where he and his roommate swam with a 600 pound sea lion for over an hour and how he felt connected with the spirit of the famous naturalist as he sat and observed the movements of the Darwin finches.

After retirement he and a friend started their own laboratory doing environmental chemistry work. It was a seizure that set off the health problems that lead to the decision to move in with their daughter in Ann Arbor and see the house in Miami. Oiva had to learn to walk all over again. That’s where Oiva’s autobiography ended at age 79. Health problems were nothing new to Oiva who had struggled with tetanus and diptheria as a child as well as the TB. It is easy for us to imagine that he faced those end year struggles with same wit and goodheartedness that got him through his decades at Rosenstiel.

Today he is fondly remembered.

“See you next time and not before that.” Oiva Joensuu