

## Graduate Study at Purdue University

In 1960, after graduating from University of California with a BA in mathematics, I was offered a graduate teaching assistantship at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. I had no one to travel with, so one bright Sunday morning, at the age of 19, I began a trip of over 2000 miles alone in my 1952 Ford. I carried absolutely everything that I owned, including all of my clothes, my books, my personal papers and my violin. I was flat broke and had no money to buy food, so I grabbed a loaf of bread and a jar of honey, which I happened to have, to sustain me on the road. My father had given me a Gulf Oil credit card to use for gas so that was not a problem. The car used a grade of gas called Gulftane, which I was able to buy for as little as 19 cents per gallon. That kind of price is hard to imagine today! My routine was to drive for four hours, then pull off the road and sleep for an hour or two. This continued day and night for three days since I was expected at Purdue on Wednesday to assist with an undergraduate math course. Professor Harley Flanders, whom I had known at Berkeley and who had administered the undergraduate NSF program in mathematics, had accepted a position in the Purdue math department. I arrived very early in the morning and drove to his house where I parked the car and fell asleep. Seeing my car, he came out and invited me to come in and catch a few hours sleep before my duties began that afternoon. I became good friends with the Flanders family, especially their two sons Daveed and Zvi, whom I still hear from today.

At Purdue, I enrolled in several graduate courses which began that fall. One of the most interesting was a course in real analysis taught by Professor Casper Goffman. He would begin each class smoking a big cigar and holding folded sheets of yellow paper with his lecture notes. His manner was very interactive, and he would frequently ask for responses from the class. If he liked what you said, he would nod with encouragement while taking a draw on his cigar. On the other-hand, if he did not, he would say something like, "Do you have anything meaningful for us or are you just going to talk?" The class was always amazed as they watched the ashes on his cigar continue to grow, sometimes to almost an inch in length before finally falling to the floor! He would assign very challenging problem sets which he looked over very carefully and graded along with comments and suggestions.

After arriving at Purdue, I had moved into a house at 128 Wiggins St. Around Thanksgiving time, the landlady invited me to a big dinner at noon on Thanksgiving day. Shortly thereafter, Professor Goffman invited me to an *evening* Thanksgiving dinner. That meant I would attend two dinners in one day, separated by just a few hours. I was concerned!

The day finally arrived, and I enjoyed a delicious Thanksgiving dinner served by my landlady. To begin the dinner she said, "I know you boys must be very hungry, and I'm expecting you to eat everything on the table." Without thinking, I had two large helpings of the main course, and, when a dessert was brought to the table, helped myself to a large serving! At 4 o'clock that afternoon, I got up from the table feeling totally stuffed. Then, after resting for an hour and a half, I walked two blocks to Professor Goffman's house. I was warmly welcomed and led into the dining room, where the Goffman family and a few guests were sitting. I gasped as a large Thanksgiving meal was brought in with much fanfare. I tried to look hungry, but it was no use. I confessed that I had just been to a Thanksgiving dinner served by the landlady. It turned out that

was just the thing to say, because Mrs. Goffman then replied, “Don’t worry,. You can take it home with you.”

During my first year, I made many friends, both in the math department and elsewhere. Some were people I met because of my musical interests. This is covered in another memoir. Others I met in the places where I lived. One I remember was a Vietnamese student by the name of Le Long. I frequently would have dinner with him in the basement of the house where we lived. He introduced me to Vietnamese culture including cooking. I learned to really enjoy that cuisine. I also became acquainted with the Curfmans – a family that frequently invited Le Long to social events at their house. Rex and Maryellen Curfman had two lovely daughters Celia and Katy, as well as an energetic son TJ. Rex and Maryellen died several years ago, but to this day, I continue to communicate with my good friends Celia, Katy and TJ. Recently, my wife Penny and I had the pleasure of visiting with Celia and meeting her charming husband Gil.

At Purdue my classes included courses in algebraic number theory from Professor Flanders, analytic topology from Professor Blair and calculus of variations from Professor Golomb. In my second year, I received an MS degree in mathematics and began work for a PhD degree. I then passed the required language exams in French and German by showing I could read and translate mathematical papers in those languages. Next, I went on to pass my written preliminary exams in various mathematical subjects, followed by a required oral presentation of a research-oriented topic.

One event that I remember vividly, something which has nothing to do with my graduate work. On November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1963, when I walked into the student center, I saw a lady holding up a portable radio and crying. People had gathered around to listen, and I knew something was really wrong. I soon learned that John F Kennedy had been assassinated. Everyone was in a state of disbelief. I remember that day now, even after so many years have passed.

One day Professor Flanders, who had become my major professor, informed me that he would be going on leave from Purdue. Arrangements were made for me to go to New York City to teach and pursue further study. I did not realize it at the time, but this ended my career at Purdue University. Years later, I visited the Purdue campus on IBM business. Things still looked the same, but they really weren’t!. I was no longer a student!