

My Early Teaching Years

Up after arriving in Manhattan in 1965, I interviewed with Professor Jewell Hughes Bushy at Hunter College downtown. Shortly thereafter, I was offered a teaching position in mathematics. This was the beginning of my teaching career, and I introduced myself to the class with enthusiasm and anticipation. I remember it was a very hot September, and the rooms were not air-conditioned. The class tried to test me by asking irrelevant questions. Eventually, I gained the respect of my students, and things settled down. At the end of the semester I felt they had learned some mathematics!

The next semester, teachers were needed at Hunter College uptown which was located in the Bronx, so I transferred there. Unlike Hunter downtown, it was a large and beautiful campus with many old trees and several spacious buildings, including a cafeteria and a student center. It was here that I met John Snygg, who was to become a very good friend to both me and Joanne for the next fifty years. John and his wife Virginia lived in a loft on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, near our place on Delancey Street. Joanne and I began socializing with the Synggs, frequently playing bridge (picture below). One morning, not too long after I met John, the department secretary Mrs. Wonzel announced, "Professor Snygg is the father of a new baby girl named Suzanne. Isn't it wonderful!"

In 1968, Hunter College uptown was renamed Lehman College in honor of former New York governor Herbert H. Lehman. I continued to teach there for several years. From my house on Delancey Street, I could go by subway or drive in my rather interesting car - a Checker Marathon. For those that don't know, this car was made by Checker Motors Company of Kalamazoo, Michigan and had a Continental engine.

Not too long after I first met John, he received a job offer from Uppsala college in New Jersey from Jack Roth who was the chairman of the math department. Shortly after that, Joanne also received an offer. We learned that Jack Roth was also a well-known artist, and we became good friends with him and his wife Rachel. John and Virginia, also an artist, moved from Manhattan to East Orange, New Jersey. There were many get-togethers with the Roths, the Snyggs and the Trimbles.

Today Jack, Rachel, John, Virginia and Joanne are all gone. My wife Penny and I are good friends with Jack's daughter Lin, who lives in Montclair in the same house where Jack and Rachel lived for so many years. Today, several of Jack's unique paintings are on display where I live.

That's the story of my early teaching years!



