

Anamaria, Some shared memories from graduate school

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We started graduate school at the same time in September 1981. Our first class together was on Mathematical Methods for Physicists with Prof. Udagawa. One of the big seven courses on the graduate curriculum at the University of Texas at Austin. I had freshly arrived from Guadalajara and you from Caracas. I was not as confident as most of our classmates and kept quiet most of the time. I did have a TA on modern physics which gave me access to the laboratory on the 7th floor of RLM, which I could use as an office to do homework and study. I paid attention to the languages spoken in the corridors and class and from time to time I could identify Spanish. That is how we started to interact and have a conversation. By the time the second semester started we were all gaining confidence. You had clear in your mind what you wanted to study, while I was still on the search. I am sure that semester you started attending the seminars of high energy physics, while shining as the star in the next big seven. Your notes were always clear and well organized, but never flashy.

You had arrived earlier for some English courses and got a moped. You were thoroughly systematic about wearing the helmet. I am sure you optimized the use of the motorcycle and perhaps even enjoyed it without the speed-adrenaline of the larger models.

For a while, most of the Latin-American graduate students would gather in the terrace of the RLM to have lunch. Armando Euceda was the driving force behind it, somehow, he held court every day there. We would all bring lunch, a few would go to the carts on the street corner, and we just chatted and discussed things not necessarily related to science. Physics students dominated, but there were others from Mathematics and even Engineering.

By the beginning of the third semester, I was in the second basement of RLM. It was the laboratory of Prof. Walter Millett, who had just semi-retired and had made his mark on positron annihilation work, but then had a passion on quaternions. He allowed us to use some desks at one of the entrances. He was kind and permitted others, friends, and acquaintances of us, to join as well. The laboratory was large, and it had an experiment by another retired professor, Arthur Lockenvitz, who pursued the dream of seeing an interaction of a magnetic field in vacuum with a beam of light. The smell of the smoke of his pipe was ever present and somehow transported us to a time past. This was my first taste of fundamental interaction precision measurements. The tic-tac of the change in direction of the currents in the magnets, accompanied us many years. We had lunch with Dr. Millett often, and he heated the water for the tea in a rather improvised kettle.

I learned during the first semester that on Sunday afternoons, one of the bookstores on Guadalupe Street would receive the full New York Times edition. I regularly bought it and brought it to the office. I would immediately go to the classical music section, but you found the word puzzles in the New York Times Sunday Magazine. Those were hard, we would try to do the phrase with the keys in an acrostic. It would take us the better part of the fortnight. Even Dr. Millett would help.

We found there was going to be an exhibit of works by El Greco in Dallas, and Jose Davila, Pinso, took the lead on organizing a trip. It happened in January 1983, and I am happy to give you a copy of the catalog. You went to Washington and managed to see the Vermeer exhibit, that until the one last year in Amsterdam, had been the most comprehensive ever. I often pass in front of those paintings and smile as I see them and remember the awe you expressed about them.

With our characteristic self-doubt we struggled deciding on an advisor. I went finally with Jeff Kimble, the first faculty member I worked with as I was his TA on arrival. You went with Austin Gleason, you claimed that you appreciated his sense of humor, something I could not say of my advisor. During our second semester we started to attend qualifier exams of friends and colleagues. Your topic for the qualifier talk was anomalies in field theories, which coincided with the visit of Paul Frampton a professor from North Carolina who was working on them. We were candidates before the fall of 1983.

The work on the 9th floor kept you quite busy and so was I on the second basement. You solidified your connections with many others, including some with whom you continue to collaborate: our dear friend Fernando Quevedo.

The highlight for me of the four semesters of Weinberg class happened in 1983, the day when he arrived smiling, after leaving the copies of his notes, proceeded us to tell us that he had received communication from Carlo Rubia, who directed the UA1 collaboration at CERN, that they had a few events of the W and they were within the range of what he had predicted. We all broke into a standing ovation, an applause that took a long time to end, I did not grab the full importance of the announcement and it took me years as to fully appreciate it. Probably you have other memories, but for me that is the best.

Your father, mother, and Mariana your sister attended your formal graduation. Hellen your landlady also attended. You wore academic robes and probably Austin Gleason hooded you. I did fill happy for you and your family that you could give them those memories. I did not participate as my defense was past the deadline for attending the ceremony.

I have been fortunate to continue the conversation since we graduated.

Congratulations and thanks.

Luis A. Orozco