

25 Years per Page: Reflections on Life for the Past Half Century.

Dan Kalman

Greetings, classmates. Congratulations to all on the occasion of our 50th alumni reunion. Although Linda and I did not make it to Claremont for the event, it has been a great pleasure to reconnect with so many of you via emails, phone calls, zooms, and posts (Thanks Tim!). I would love to tell you all about life since graduation, but unfortunately this word processor does not support font sizes less than unity. So I will just try to hit a few of the highlights.

Career. Grad school at University of Wisconsin, Madison. Math professorship over 40 years, with hiatuses of 8 years at Aerospace Corporation in LA and 1 year working for the Math Association of America (MAA) in DC. Teaching and math were my first loves. Working at



Constructing balloon polyhedra.

Aerospace was stimulating, motivating, intellectually satisfying, and a pleasure socially – but it just wasn't teaching. Then Linda said her future career opportunities were going to move to the DC area. So she transferred to Aerospace's VA offices and I returned to the academy at American University. Teaching remained fulfilling and satisfying for a long time. I taught courses, advised math majors and grad students, developed curricula, lectured at conferences, got very involved with the MAA, and loved (almost) every minute of it. I also developed a powerful avocation in mathematical writing, authoring lots of papers and a few books. Looking back, I had the amazing good

fortune to find something I enjoyed doing and that was appreciated and valued by my peers. They even wrote about me in the HMC Alumni magazine!

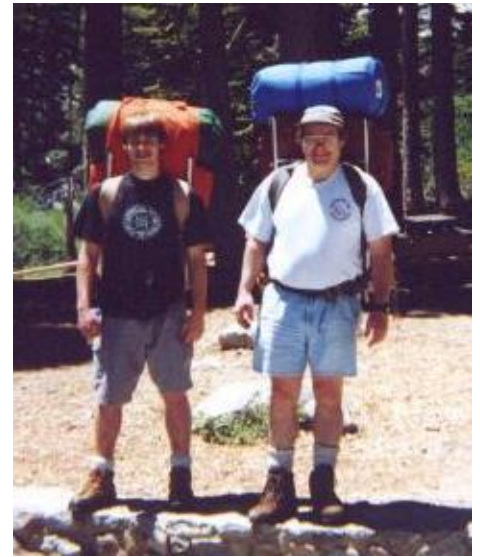
When I stopped loving teaching, I retired from that part in 2018. Since then I have continued to be active in math, learning, writing, lecturing, etc. It is a constant source of entertainment, puzzlement, frustration, triumphs, and epic fails! It beats the hell out of crossword puzzles (which I also do), and mostly has about as much significance in any practical or utilitarian sense. At least it keeps me on my toes and off the streets.

Family. Linda has already posted her report for this forum. Her comments regarding family matters are incorporated here by reference. I will just add a few reminiscences. Holding newborn Jenny and feeling the universe lurch into a new trajectory around me. Two years later I was expecting it when holding newborn Chris gave me the same feeling. Expecting it but not prepared for it!

When Linda landed her first post PhD position, I became a stay at home dad for a year and a half. Amazing experience, being primary care giver for one year old Jenny ... In LA 4 year old Jenny and I attended a special *company night* at Disney Land, starting at 8pm. No lines. You could exit a ride and walk right back to the entrance and do it again. Small World – 8 times!

Around midnight, she said she was tired and ready to leave. Back at the car I cleaned her face and hands, got her into a onesie, and buckled her into the car seat. Looking over my shoulder as I backed out the car, I could see she was already asleep.

Watching both kids' games: soccer, little league, softball, basketball. They were both quite athletic. I remember hyperventilating when 7 year old Chris got a chance to pitch at one of his little league games. The dad who was working with the pitchers, NFL wide receiver James Lofton, had to kind of talk me down. ... Backpacking with Chris in the high Sierras when he was 16. Just the two of us. Discovering that even with training, I was no match for steep climbs at altitude. Poor Chris must have felt like he was walking his pet sloth! Looking out over a still mountain lake at sunset. Just possibly starting Chris's feet on a path that would have him dedicating himself to mountain pursuits all over the world for the next 25 years. Two years later I had to have stents placed in two major coronary arteries. No wonder those trails seemed so steep.



Chris and Dan at trailhead.

Standing up next to Jenny when she got married, and next to Chris when he followed her into matrimony a decade later. I can remember the occasions with crystal clarity. Far more impactful than anything in my professional adventures (he tritely observes). And that is saying nothing about grandkids.

And through it all, Linda. Keeping all those eggs in the air: kids, home, career, competitive equine sports, gardening, cooking, and now quilting. Amazing! What drive. What accomplishments. What stamina. As many will recall, the 50th reunion of the class of 74 coincides with the 51st anniversary of our nuptials.



Linda spreading gravel at the barn.

Lessons Learned

- No one size fits all solutions in education. Know students as individuals, master different teaching methods to meet the needs of a broad spectrum of students
- If a student says something that doesn't make any sense, listen harder
- If anyone ever told me I was a helicopter dad, I didn't hear – must have been drowned out by the noise of the rotors
- Beware the law of unintended consequences. There will always be some
- The editor is always right!
- Murphy was an optimist (as observed by my brother David, HMC '72)
- I believe in counting my blessings, but the trouble is, it's hard to count that high

