

## Peter Taborek timeline 1974-2024

1974- 1980: I went to grad school in physics at Caltech. There was an opening in the low temperature physics group, which I joined. This naïve and random choice affected the rest of my career. I basically had a good time there. Feynman was on my committee. Barbara Preston (Scripps '74) and I got married in 1975.

1980-1988: We moved to New Jersey in 1980 where I started work at Bell Labs, Murray Hill. It was exciting and fun adjusting to east coast culture and weather. We lived about 45 minutes west of New York city. Several of our friends of those days would eventually win the Nobel prize. Our 3 kids were all born in New Jersey. More about them later. When AT&T was a monopoly, it could support fundamental research at Bell Labs, but after the break up, Bell Labs fell apart and most of my colleagues left, mostly to academia. When I was looking for a job, I got 2 offers: one from UC Irvine and one from Texas Instruments. The TI job was weird and exciting, so I postponed UCI and we moved to Dallas. The project was to grow diamond films from low pressure vapor. That was a new and revolutionary concept at the time which has since grown into an industry. I worked on this for about 2 years at TI, and then we moved to Irvine in 1989.

1989-present: My work at UCI was focused on phase transitions and fluid flow problems, mostly at low temperature and mostly with liquid helium. There were a few detours driven by funding issues into friction (at low temperature) and methane clathrates, which are compounds of water and methane that are important in the carbon cycle of the planet.

UCI was a young and growing campus. They had undeveloped land adjacent to the campus for faculty housing. We built a custom home which we still are in. I walk to work and seldom get in a car, which is an unusual lifestyle in southern California. Our kids live nearby. Our oldest, Alex, is an anesthesiologist and lives in San Diego. #2 son Nick was a journalist and worked for Bloomberg in New York and DC, but moved back to Irvine when covid hit. He started his own financial data business and is doing very well. He supplied 2 grandsons. Our daughter Eva is a nurse in Santa Barbara. They all have dogs, and since we are the default dog sitters, we see their dogs more than we see them.

I was Department Chair for 5 years. The Physics Department had over 50 faculty and a large staff, and I had to deal with lots of personnel and financial issues. It was a learning experience, but I am glad it is over. I am still teaching and doing research. On average, I like what I do, so I am not in a hurry to retire. Barbara was the administrator for a small foundation that gave grants to California college students (including Harvey Mudd) to do community service projects. She retired from that last year and continues to be active in community service.

Two other projects that take up a lot of my time: I am a Mathematica fan and guru. Stephen Wolfram was in my class at Caltech; I recently got an award from Wolfram research [2023 | Wolfram Innovator Award: Wolfram Technology Conference](#) . I teach Math methods for physical sciences to students at various levels and have written a text book in Mathematica for this [mathematica-handbook.com](#) . At the beginning of covid, I got a large grant from the State of California to develop online teaching tools . We developed a web site with large libraries of physics problems which can be automatically graded and provide instant feedback to students using calls to Mathematica APIs.

A seemingly random but influential event occurred 10 years ago when I met this Icelandic guy at a conference. He had recently joined the faculty of KAUST (King Abdullah University of Science and Technology) in Saudi Arabia. We started a collaboration which is still on-going and has resulted in many trips to Saudi Arabia; I just got back from a 2 month visit a few weeks ago. Barbara comes for at least part of the time, and we have used the opportunity to travel inside Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Israel. On the way home one year, we did a Road Scholar tour of China and Tibet.

I enjoy scuba diving, which motivated a lot of our travel to Raja Ampat in Indonesia, the Coral Sea off Australia, Palau, Sharm El Sheik in Egypt, Belize, Bahamas, Cozumel, etc. The fall of the Soviet Union in the early 90's also influenced our travel. My family repatriated property in the Czech Republic that was stolen from them after WWII, including a vacation cottage on a lake in southern Bohemia. I also made contact with a half brother and sister who live in Dresden, which was in East Germany, so we have made several trips to that part of the world.

I was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2013 and had surgery and radiation in 2014. My PSA is zero and the plumbing is all working, so I have been luckier than many of my acquaintances who have had a terrible time with this common issue.



*Peter and Barbara, 1974*



*Alex, Nick, grandson Ethan, Peter, grandson Isaac, Barbara, Eva. 2023*