

Since Dennis arrived on the math scene around 1977 I have enjoyed his many interesting papers and captivating lectures. He is one of the few lecturers whose talks I can follow from beginning to end and who has something substantial to say each time. He has a unique sense of humor which can make the most mundane statements sound amusing. Despite some serious adversity Dennis has always kept his good spirits and sense of humor.

I never became seriously involved in hypergeometric series and their  $q$ -analogues, a primary interest of Dennis. However, he has quite broad additional interests which brought me a lot of pleasure and in some cases had significant influence on my work. This work includes such topics as  $q$ -Lagrange inversion, so-called Stanley-Reisner rings, the RSK algorithm, unimodality, rim hook lattices, the Tutte polynomial, cyclic sieving, and the combinatorics of  $GL_n(F_q)$ .

I especially enjoyed having Dennis as a colleague at MIT when he was a postdoc for the two academic years 1978-1980, despite my being unable to beat him at raquetball. Dennis has the singular honor of being the first person to whom I ever sent an email, around 1993. I can remember his return email congratulating me on my success, though sadly it did not occur to me to save this precious document.

I am sorry to miss the Special Session in honor of Dennis, but unfortunately a conflicting conference beckoned in northern Sweden. If it is any consolation to Dennis, I'm sure the January weather in San Diego is nicer than in Pitea [pronounced PEE-tay-aw, approximately]. Dennis is thoroughly deserving of this recognition, and I wish him many future years of mathematical revelations.

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Dennis is an amazing colleague, mathematician, and friend. I feel extremely lucky to enjoy his friendship, and I want to join everybody in telling him how much we love him and appreciate him. Please use those buttons today so that he can be close to your hearts, as he is to mine.

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Ole Warnaar

Dear Dennis,

Let me begin by congratulating the world's nicest mathematician on his 65th birthday. My apologies for not being quite as nice as you and failing to attend your party. Earlier family commitments intervened, unfortunately.

I hope you will, however, accept my birthday present, an invitation to visit The University of Queensland, costs fully covered.

In case you need convincing, Brisbane is the perfect city for you. It has over 300 days of sunshine a year rather than Minneapolis' 300 days of sub-zero temperatures. It has the world's best ballet company, led by artistic director Li Cunxin (also known as Mao's Last Dancer). He was so revitalized by our great city that he recently 'unretired' to dance the Nutcracker. Maybe Brisbane will inspire you to do the same | unretiring that is, dancing the Nutcracker is perhaps best left to others. . . . Celestien and I may not have any pets but Oscar, our neighbor's cat, is super sociable and spends plenty of time on our couch. I am sure the two of you would get along splendidly.

So pack your hat, bathers and some sunscreen, and book yourself a trip Down Under soon.

Happy birthday & hartelijke groet

Ole

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Bruce Berndt

When one wishes "Happy Birthday," pleasant memories should come to mind. Since Dennis is one of the most affable workers in our field, indeed lots of such memories will come to mind for all of us. I would also like to take this opportunity of thanking Dennis for the many papers he has (fairly) refereed for me as an editor.

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I'm sorry I'm notable to be there for tonight's special celebration. Please accept my feeble attempt at a limerick as a substitute.

*For polynomials orthogonal and Laguerre  
Dennis's work is without compare.  
On q-series and partition statistics  
and all their many characteristics  
His impact is everywhere.*

Dennis, congratulations! Thank you for being such a good friend and also for being my go-to-guy on Chebyshev polynomials.

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Lauren Williams

In October 2009, Sylvie and I spent a week in Minneapolis in order to work with Dennis and to learn about orthogonal polynomials from him. We had a truly memorable week, learning a lot about mathematics as well as Dennis' love of cats and the ballet. We also learned about Dennis' recent driver's license, and we got to experience his driving first hand one night when he took us out to a lovely dinner followed by a ballet performance. On the way back we were talking and laughing in the car, and at a big intersection, Dennis made a left turn -- straight towards the oncoming traffic. Amazingly, not a single car honked -- everything they say about Minnesotans is true! Instead, everyone approaching the intersection just froze, and waited for Dennis to back up into the intersection and then turn into the correct lane. I will remember this week forever, recalling the paper we started work on "Formulae for Askey-Wilson moments" (with Corteel-Stanley-Stanton), the fun times we had with Dennis, and most of all the fact that we survived. Thank you Dennis!

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I know several stories about Dennis Stanton, but I'd like to tell one that illustrates Dennis's importance to combinatorics at Minnesota. In the 1980's Dennis got an outside offer. Now we all know that an offer is a sure way to bump our salary. But that's not what Dennis did. He went to our chairman – Willard Miller, I believe at the time – and said he wanted another position in combinatorics. At that point in time, Jay Goldman wasn't doing much math, Jim Joichi was near retirement, which left just Dennis and me. Also at that time, we in combinatorics had to fight for every crumb. At every faculty meeting we heard how the “traditional strength” of our department (analysis, specifically, PDEs) was sorely underfunded.

But Willard said yes to Dennis, Paul Edelman was hired, Paul became Ezra Miller who became Pasha Pylyavskyy. Vic came as a postdoc shortly thereafter, and that's how combinatorics became a “traditional strength” of mathematics in Minnesota.

We all know about Dennis's health issues 10 years ago. We are all so happy that he is here to help us celebrate his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. Now Dennis's last cat, Felix, died a few years back. And despite urging from several of us, Dennis has not acquired another cat since Felix. I'm not sure of the reason for this – travel concerns, or concerns about his health maybe. But since his illness he has had graduate students – Jessica and Nathan. This made me think of all the ways that cats are at least as good as (and maybe better than) graduate students. I made a list. It's short – you can think of some more yourselves.

1. A cat will never produce the first draft of a thesis that you will have to read. However, a cat will cough up a hairball every so often and you'll have to clean up the mess.
2. Your cat will provide you with a new and enjoyable use for your laser pointer.
3. If you tell a student that behind that bush there is beautiful theorem, he will come back and say “what bush”. If you tell a cat that in that attic is a mouse, she'll come back with a dozen dead mice.
4. You'll never have to write a letter of reference for your cat.
5. If you take a cat to a math meeting, you don't have to introduce her to Richard Stanley.

Dennis and I both joined the department the same year, 1980. While we have never directly collaborated — if anything Dennis is closer to my father than me — he and I have been very good friends during those many turbulent years at Minnesota, and I have been very happy to have him as a colleague. He also taught my son Sheehan, now a successful mathematician at Imperial College, whom I am visiting whilst over here in Europe this week, which is why I am not in San Diego. I am sure many Dennis stories will be shared, and so will not try to add to that, although I would love to see the proceedings of the evening! It is hard to believe we are both up to our mid sixties (I am even slightly ahead of him) — where did the time go?

Best wishes, Dennis, for many more years of mathematical adventuring!

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James Wilson

A short story for the dinner guests: Dennis was best man at my wedding. Apparently, he was mystified by a posting of the hymn numbers in church. According to my brother-in-law, Dennis asked whether the numbers were for Bingo.

Dennis, thank you for your companionship and your enthusiasm for special functions, which helped to make some of the happiest years of my life.

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