

1056-00-40

Steven Strogatz* (shs7@cornell.edu), 212 Kimball Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853. *The calculus of friendship.*

In this public lecture, Professor Strogatz tells the story of his extraordinary connection with his high school calculus teacher, Mr. Don Joffray, as chronicled through more than thirty years of letters between them. What makes their relationship unique is that it is based almost entirely on a shared love of calculus. For them, calculus is more than a branch of mathematics; it is a game they love playing together, a constant when all else is in flux. The teacher goes from the prime of his career to retirement, competes in whitewater kayaking at the international level, and loses a son. The student matures from high school math geek to college professor, suffers the sudden death of a parent, and blunders into a marriage destined to fail. Yet through it all they take refuge in the haven of calculus. . . until a day comes when calculus is no longer enough.

Like calculus itself, this lecture is an exploration of change. It's about the transformation that takes place in a student's heart, as he and his teacher reverse roles, as they age, as they are buffeted by life itself. It is intended for a general audience, and especially anyone whose life has been changed by a mentor. (It also includes some nifty calculus problems.)

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