

Always be a Good Samaritan

I remember as a young boy of ten reading a book about Albert Einstein. What struck me was that he could walk into a coffee shop up the street from the Princeton Institute for Advanced Studies and they would sit him down and give him a free cup of coffee and a donut. I thought, he must be important to warrant such respect: a common man with uncommon talent, respected for his contributions to humanity. I took out as many books as I could to learn about Einstein only to discover my library card only allowed me to take children's books.

At the age of twelve I was granted an adult library card and by the time I was 14 I had discovered my father's calculus textbook by M.I.T. Professor H.B. Phillips titled "Analytic Geometry and Calculus" and did all the problems in the book. By the time I was fifteen I had mastered calculus. By 16 I was mastering Bergman's "Introduction to the Theory of Relativity". When I finally got to university it seemed a place that was uninspiring and lonely.

It was only in my third year, that I had a chance to finally meet and work with some scholars in the Department of Physics and Astronomy at UBC. What was nice is that these gentlemen approached me to help me out. You see, I had by then, crushed my spine and damaged my neck saving the life of a young officer cadet while I served as the youngest naval reserve officer in Canada. They saw a bright young man, in naval uniform, who was suffering through terrible hardship. They stepped forward to help.

Scholars in particular who made a difference in my life then were Dr. George Volkoff and Dr. Malcolm McMillan. I am forever grateful to them for their kindness. That year I also met Dr. I.I. Rabi while he visited UBC, a meeting that would set a somewhat different course to my life, a course that would help see Canada's Parliament and the world safely through several nuclear crises over nearly thirty years.

The most recent crisis, the North Korean Nuclear Crisis, would see two former Liu Institute professors and I being the architects of the United Nations sponsored Naval Quarantine of North Korea. I proposed and worked the quarantine idea beginning over lunch with one of the professors, a former chief policy advisor to the Secretary General of the UN, the day after North Korea's first test in October 2006 and the quarantine would be supported by the five veto powers at the Security Council and implemented scant days after a second nuclear test in 2009. The other Liu Institute professor would spend time at sea with the

US Navy to help steer the Chief of Naval Operations to this course. In this light perhaps my April 2009 editorial takes on a broader meaning. Canadian Naval officers, past or present, Protect the Realm, Serve Parliament, Respect International Law and Keep the Faith with those who serve.

The severity of my 1981 injuries brought me to within a hairbreadth's of death. It took me the better part of a decade before I led a semi-normal life and fifteen years before I was healthy enough and had a chance to take a Master's in physics. Dr. McMillan invited me to be his final graduate student before his retirement in 2001. He held open an invitation to work with him for fifteen years. By the spring of 2010 I will complete my fourth UBC degree and my second graduate degree, a PhD. in nuclear astrophysics. This will be in and above fifteen years in the high technology sector in Canada.

My grandfather use to say, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." He would know, breaking his right hip and leg working two shifts a day in a coal mine in Alberta during the Second World War. All this to make sure Canada and her friends in the world would be victorious and that his son could one day become an engineer. For many people, suffering makes them bitter or cynical. For some, personal suffering opens their heart to the suffering of others and the challenges to help lift the human spirit and improve the human condition. A lesson my grandfather taught me: in whatever you do, be a "Good Samaritan!"

I have had the pleasure to work with several scholars while undertaking my PhD. however, I have all but reached the conclusion that it is hard to be a "Good Samaritan" at a university. Universities do not represent the real world, nor the world of the common man. They are melting pots of attitudes and ambitions that are well off the norm as far as human behaviour is concerned. Universities are filled with people with limited real life experience and personal illusions as to the reality of the world. Under the guise of "academic freedom" there is sometimes indifference towards behaviour that would never be tolerated elsewhere. Indeed, there are some great souls, but they are lost in sea of lesser souls.

There is a virtue of courage needed to be a "Good Samaritan" at a university. In the aftermath of the APEC riots at the UBC I was the only person to stand for and argue the necessity of Scholastic Responsibility and the importance to respect the Vienna Convention, diplomatic dialogue and International Law, a private and substantive legal argument that I successfully pursued with the



late Chancellor of UBC, a former Chief Justice of the Appellate Court of BC. What came of this? A new UBC President with a background in international law and a proven track record of work with the Red Cross.

What does this have to do with physics? We have to be "Good Samaritans" and real world people. Richard Feynman said it best, "We physicists through our understanding of the physical world hold the keys to heaven and to hell". As a young physicist he and his colleagues Wheeler, Teller, and Oppenheimer unlocked and left the gates to hell ajar. Thankfully humanity has not walked through the gapping doors over the past six decades. As to why... I would recommend Dr. Silvan S. Schweber's *Einstein & Oppenheimer* a book which puts this issue into an ethical perspective.

In case you are wondering what it was that got President Obama his Nobel Peace Prize it was, amongst other initiatives, the Naval Quarantine of North Korea. Congratulations Mr. President. Perhaps, as the next step in Strategic Arms Reduction you can do away with the third stage on thermonuclear weapons. This is the stage that produces over half of their output and makes them city busters. It would be an easily verifiable step and would respect our "Responsibility to Protect" the non-combatant. All you would need to do is measure the Z of the radiation tamper and overnight you would cut the yield in the world's arsenal by over 50%. We physicists must help shut the doors to hell forever.

This edition of the journal has a theme "Careers in Physics" and features an interview of Dr. Ralph Sultan, a distinguished Canadian and public office holder, one of the few with a science or applied science background. There is a need for more such distinguished and qualified men and women in the public life of our nation.

This issue of *CUPJ* will be my last as Editor in Chief. Before I leave I hope to find *CUPJ* a permanent home and mentor a successor.

My parting advice: Be a "Good Samaritan"! Honour thy God, thy Queen and thy Country, and you'll never do wrong.

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