

A Tribute to Bruce Shawyer

Obituaries

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I have many fond memories of Bruce Shawyer. He was a treasured mentor and friend. I knew Bruce before being an undergraduate student at Western in 1979. Both my parents were Astronomy professors at Western and they had all been in the same Physical Science department before it was subdivided into specialities. This led to a friendship between our families. I well remember attending semi-pro baseball games watching the London Majors as a pre-teen and teenager. Bruce would often attend games and occasionally would look after me in my parent absence. He was a push-over for getting an ice cream or hotdog.

Later, when I became a student at Western he supervised me and two other undergraduates, David Cowan and Pam Hagan, for an NSERC Undergraduate Summer Research Project after my second year. The department had purchased one of the newly released Radio Shack TRS-80 personal computers. We were tasked with writing software that would allow the departmental secretaries to enter books into a small departmental library catalogue. In retrospect, this was a doomed task but Bruce was very encouraging and kept our spirits up. I developed a comprehensive knowledge of the TRS-80 machine language and many skills for optimizing code to fit within the 68 byte cassette tape buffer available to us. Unfortunately, this skill has proved to be of limited use in later years.

However, in addition to working on this programming project Bruce exposed us three undergrads to a number of fascinating mathematical topics. In particular, he would allow us to borrow books from his personal library. I remember him lending *Naïve Set Theory* as well as *Mathematics Made Difficult*. The latter was a favourite of his and I treasure my own photocopied version. I happily pass on Bruce's recommendation to locate and read this brilliant book.

Bruce was the long-time Associate Head of Mathematics at Western and I often visited him or sought his advice in his office in Middlesex College. He was always willing and happy to help me. Over the years, I regularly saw Bruce either at CMS meetings or when I visited Memorial University. He was always warm, friendly, generous and had a quick wit. I will miss him.