Dan the Man

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Rutgers Business School Newark and New Brunswick

MIP 2022 / Danniversary Session
May 23, 2022
Happy Birthday, Dan!

- I would like to wish a very happy belated to 60th to my friend and fellow New Jersey inhabitant Dan Bienstock
Personal Talk

• I thought I would give a talk about Dan’s personal history

• I think it’s interesting

• Reactions were mixed...
E-Mail #1 from Jeff

Thanks Jonathan!

Non-technical content is perfectly fine.
E-Mail #2 from Jeff

Based on your abstract, I think your talk would be a GREAT concluding talk.
E-Mail #1 from Dan

Jon, you could also give a talk about your research! People will be interested!
E-Mail #2 from Dan

But you could also talk about your research! I would like that!
# Some Parallels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dan</th>
<th>Jonathan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father left Germany in late 30s</td>
<td>Father left Germany in late 30s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Got into computers and math in high school</td>
<td>Got into computers and math in high school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Majored in math in college near Boston</td>
<td>Majored in math in college near Boston</td>
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<tr>
<td>Got a doctorate at the MIT OR Center</td>
<td>Got a doctorate at the MIT OR Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worked in research for a tech company, but then...</td>
<td>Worked in research for a tech company, but then...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Got a faculty job in the NY/NJ area</td>
<td>Got a faculty job in the NY/NJ area</td>
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## Some Parallels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dan</th>
<th>Jonathan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married a Brandeis graduate</td>
<td>Married a Brandeis graduate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does more computer coding than most OR researchers</td>
<td>Does more computer coding than most OR researchers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father of 3 sons</td>
<td>Father of 2 sons</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Drives a white dual-motor Tesla Model 3 with white interior</td>
<td>Ordered a white dual-motor Tesla Model 3 with black interior</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Editor-in-Chief of <em>Mathematical Programming Computation</em> 2014-2018</strong></td>
<td><strong>Editor-in-Chief of <em>Mathematical Programming Computation</em> 2019-</strong></td>
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Deeper Similarities

• Dan and I both feel strongly about the relationship between applied mathematics and computing
• Both feel that computer programming needs to be strongly integrated into how we
  • Train researchers
  • Perform research
  • Present results

• No surprise that we have both been editors-in-chief of Mathematical Programming Computation
Both of our Lives Were Shaped by World War II

- My own father was sent alone out of Germany (without my grandparents) at age 12-13
- From a town about 1 hour North of Frankfurt
- To a foster family in Columbus, Ohio

- All of Dan’s grandparents got out of Europe in the 30’s, with Dan’s parents (as children)
- They all went to...
Uruguay (from Berlin)

- Dan’s father’s family was from Berlin
- They just decided to take a boat to South America
- But “the exact destination was not always clear”
From Poland

- Dan’s mother’s family was from Poland
- In an area long disputed between Prussia/Germany and Russia
- “At the time of her parents' birth it was German.”
- “When she was born it was Polish, with a lot of tension.”
- “My Mom's father (and other male relatives) were arrested by the Russians during WWI on suspicion of being German spies.”

- Dan’s mother’s family also went to Uruguay
- Separately but similarly
In Uruguay

• Dan’s parents met in Uruguay
• “I grew up in Uruguay.”
• “There was a lot of German at home and as a little boy I had an accent (in Spanish) and had to see a speech therapist.”
• “My throat still hurts from attempting multiple rr words while using the German ‘r’ ”
Math, Computers and Brandeis

• “I went to the public schools in Uruguay (excellent) and while a teenager I became strongly interested in mathematics and computer science (meaning programming).
  • Question: I wonder what computers and languages he used there

• “Brandeis accepted me with financial aid (including work, loans, etc) and this was something my family could afford. So I came to Brandeis, and never regretted what followed!”
Sorry, Now a Little Bit About Me

• I tried going to grad school in Mechanical Engineering at Stanford in fall 1982

• But I hated what the engineers did to mathematics and switched to OR (which I had just discovered -- another story)

• I found the Stanford engineering doctoral students rather dull

• In February 1984, I entered the MIT OR doctoral program
Meeting Dan

• One of the first fellow students I met at the MIT OR Center (ORC) was Dan
Our First Meeting

• Dan was hunched over a computer terminal (we still had those), typing a mass of characters

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etc.

• “What’s that?”, I said, “A contour map of some nonlinear function?”
Our First Meeting

• “No,” he said, “it is the face of Professor Dimitri Bertsekas.”

• OK, I realized, this person may be many things, but not dull...
The ORC and Paul Tseng

• Dan created a “festive” atmosphere at the ORC

• He had a tendency to tease Paul Tseng

• Paul (may he RIP 😞) was very intense about both his work and his hobbies

• The teasing did not seem to bother him

• I am not sure he even realized he was being teased
Paul and Mannequin-Paul

• Paul was really “into” continuous optimization
• But also played many sports

• In his grad student cubicle he had
  • A basketball
  • A tennis racket
  • Full hockey gear (he mostly grew up in Vancouver and did his undergrad work at Queens College in Ontario)
  • Sports clothes and running gear

• One day when Paul was out, Dan assembled these items into Paul’s chair, making a simulated mannequin-Paul, sitting in his chair
The ORC as Modified by Dan

Bowling alley

= Grad student cubicles

(Using Paul’s equipment)
Summary

• Dan has been my friend since grad school
  • Which means over 35 years

• I like to think that I am not a boring person
• As you know, Dan is definitely not a boring person
• And in grad school he was definitely, definitely not a boring person
• And he has an interesting background

• Thanks, Dan!
• And happy birthday!