

Chapter Twenty: The “Other” Emerald City

No one said this would be easy, It wasn't

Pursuing a graduate degree offers numerous challenges. Students have to adjust to new campuses, classmates, teachers, and curricula, as well as higher than previous levels of intellectual complexity. Doctoral programs present particular idiosyncrasies. For example, one enters with a group/cohort but shares classes, offices, duties, and other aspects with students across three, or more, other cohorts. There may also be one or two “stragglers” who have been working toward the degree across many years. Surveys report that Ph.D. studies often take up to eight years after the BA and 5 after the MA for completion. Many doctoral candidates are balancing married life; some are new to their marriage's many challenges while others have long-standing relationships now strained by a return to student life. Still others are trying to study while dealing with children as well as family/marital separations and displacements.

In addition to the student aspects, many participants in graduate education serve as graduate teaching assistants/fellows and thereby work in a liminal zone between University faculty and its undergraduate students. Especially at the doctoral level, teaching assistants might have broad responsibilities; however, they almost always suffer from having limited authority. One can be responsible for delivering a large/mass lecture or organizing many class sections across a basic course; graduate students issue grades and are involved in grievance and governance matters having to do with their students. And yet graduate students have little (if any) real authority; supervising faculty members are responsible for decisions about serious matters while the graduate student(s), who are ostensibly “in charge,” take a lot of the heat from all sides students, the faculty, and administration alike.

Doctoral students also bring indoctrination from their earlier studies at the bachelors and masters levels into clash with the relatively fixed, disciplinary (and sub-disciplinary) worldviews held by faculty members in the doctoral program. Although some students remain at the same school for multiple degrees, many doctoral students attend multiple institutions of higher education. Often, faculty members at the new/current place want to stamp the candidate with what that faculty asserts are *the most important and correct* view(s) of the discipline; after all, isn't that why the student is attending this university rather than one of the others? Sometimes, in order to accomplish this shaping, the program attempts to erase or subvert previous knowledge. This is part of the branding that goes on in many doctoral programs. It enables a program to claim "our Ph.D. graduates are distinctive and special."

Especially starting the first year, doctoral students are under a lot of pressure. They have been in higher education for a long time before arriving at the Ph.D. school. They are facing a long trial ahead as few complete the degree faster than four years and some/many take much longer. They've deferred substantial incomes, taken on student debt, and may be accompanied (at this new location/destination) by a significant other and children. Worse, there is no guarantee that they will finish the degree. In many disciplines, up to 50% of advanced degree holders in the United States reached what is not-so-affectionately referred to as the "A.B.D." degree. **All-But-Dissertation** means that the student took the required coursework and passed the necessary examinations but was unable to complete the dissertation so remains a candidate rather than a degreed Ph.D. Many are called but few finish. I always tell my students that it's possible that the Ph.D.s who teach them were not necessarily the smartest people in their cohort but rather that they were the *best finishers* in that group.

Adding marital and family pressures to the graduate school mix can be volatile. In many ways, our start at the University of Oregon in Eugene was awfully rough. Thank goodness, we did not have children; we viewed colleagues who juggled graduate school, the work/careers of significant others, and children, with awe and disbelief. And unfortunately, like many other graduate students, the new pressures caused us to ignore and/or miss much of the really great stuff available in that wonderful place. Toward the end of our time in Eugene, Professor LaRusso taught me to call such negligence “lack of appreciation.” Unfortunately, I was, eventually, only able to label the phenomena; I was unable to “fix it” after-the-fact.

Early phases in (what was then) the doctoral program at the Department of Rhetoric and Communication (now defunct) at the University of Oregon included indoctrination into best practices for graduate teaching assistants (in a program lasting a week before fall classes began), a diagnostic examination, establishing a class schedule for the first term and eventually a plan of study for subsequent semesters, and making selecting/recruiting faculty members to serve on the doctoral committee, including the all-important committee chair-person. While my effort to populate that committee was the first aspect to go awry, it was not the last.

Not long after arriving I arranged a meeting with “Professor #1.” By 1980, Professor #1 was a tenured associate professor on the faculty, having built a solid reputation across multiple sub-disciplinary specialties. Professor #1 established themselves as an expert teacher and researcher devoted to understanding and treating communication apprehension. Professor #1 was also growing a business and academic specialty around organizational communication, especially its interpersonal and group communication aspects. They were married to a fellow Ph.D. and together they managed a full-service organizational consulting agency in town.

Our initial meeting was cordial and informative and incredibly disappointing. I had high hopes that I'd found the chair for my committee and I had been led to believe, during my visit in Eugene the previous spring, that Professor #1 would probably be willing to guide my work. I wonder if the people I talked with misunderstood Professor #1's interest in "CA" as an indication of shared interest in "CA"? Unfortunately, CA meant "Communication Apprehension" for the professor while "*Conversation Analysis*" to me. These are two very different fields of study.

I had not spoken with Professor #1 during my earlier visit. As soon as we began our conversation in fall 1981, the professor insisted that my plans were not a good fit. Since I was uninterested in communication apprehension and was not a traditional interpersonal or group communication researcher and since the professor was not expert in field research, conversation, or discourse analysis, we were not a good match. Professor #1 made it clear that if I were willing to switch and study either organizational communication, interpersonal/small group communication, or communication apprehension, they would be happy to chair my committee; otherwise, I'd have to find someone else. While I had no idea who that might be, I was unwilling to change my research plans and so we parted amiably. Subsequently I took a class or two from the professor but did not add them to my committee nor do extensive work under their direction. I thereby missed out on a tremendous intellectual resource at the University and I was, for a time, at short odds about the constitution of, and faculty leadership for, my graduate committee.

The biggest upset in the early academic experience at the University of Oregon followed quickly on the heels of that disappointing meeting. The so-called diagnostic exam almost proved to be my undoing before I'd even begun. It is not unusual for doctoral programs to give students entry examinations. It is also not unusual for doctoral students to perform poorly on those exams.

Students come from a variety of programs and demonstrate wide variance in their knowledge bases and control over previously learned material. Many students enter doctoral programs with massive sub-disciplinary blank spots; others have broad general knowledge bases that are superficial rather than deep.

The purported purpose of the (diagnostic) exam at UO was to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses and then to plan the graduate curriculum in order to best benefit the student. I suspect that this was the original goal for the exam process. Unfortunately, perhaps due to personalities and “mission creep” over time, the exam had become a kind of passage ritual that functioned more like hazing than diagnosis.

The exam questions targeted knowledge that students were more likely to have *after* completing the program’s coursework than before. The written portion of the ordeal went on for the better part of a day. Soon thereafter, there was an oral question-and-answer period, with faculty members as “inquisitors,” that was excruciating, demeaning and unnecessary. Most students’ blank spots were obvious and could have been ascertained via mere examination of transcripts from previous schools. For the most part, the existence of the oral exercise was virtual proof of its cruelty. Some faculty members berated students over material they didn’t know in ways that seemed neither humane nor functional. Why question students about answers they didn’t know, issues they couldn’t write about or names they couldn’t recall? Answers to the exams indicated lacuna; why require repeated recitation of the words to the effect of “I don’t remember” or “I’ve not studied that”? The whole process seemed to be about showing students how little they knew; perhaps encouraging them to see themselves as “empty” as preparation for the knowledge load that would soon seek to fill them up and fix their deficits. Perhaps the

exercise was merely designed to “take the students down a peg or two.” The holders of master’s degrees are, sometimes, a little too content with their achievements and the quality of their knowledge. Or perhaps the ordeal attempted to raise appreciation for faculty expertise. Still, neither the test nor the oral examination functioned so much a diagnostic as a virtual intellectual gauntlet. Examining faculty members were not equally cruel but the exercise itself seemed very poorly designed.

In retrospect, the most humane arbiter in the room was the faculty member who everyone feared the most, Professor Dominic LaRusso. I had studied Aristotle and Kenneth Burke in earlier programs; I knew little else about LaRusso’s specialties: rhetorical history and theory and non-verbal communication. His breadth was far wider than these specialties. By the time I finished the UO program I came to learn that Dominic towered as a paragon of higher-level knowledge. Before we knew him well, most graduate students were unable to see beyond his sturdy stance and imposing demeanor. Nevertheless, during the oral examination he gently noted that my answers had claimed to understand rhetoric but then only referenced the two figures that I had studied. The Professor wondered if I thought that there was more to be learned? I assured him that I understood the limits of my knowledge. He smiled and did not ask further questions, quite knowing that I would not be able to answer any of them. We would later come to understand a lot more about Professor LaRusso’s value, values and wisdom. For that day, I simply wondered aloud as to why he had not pounced on such obviously defenseless prey as had his peers. Professor #1 was also fair-minded, having the advantage of our earlier meeting and already knowing about my preferences, strengths, and weaknesses. Further, they had suffered more than a little emotional abuse from some other faculty members in a department filled with

overly self-assured males. David Frank, a recent Oregon Ph.D. (alum) and the youngest faculty member, reserved comments throughout probably due to both his humanity and status as a relative “newbie.”

The entry exam dealt me a significant emotional setback. Having been removed from the Ph.D. program at Washington State and excluded from the program at the University of Washington, I lacked confidence in my intellect. Being told that I had, essentially, flunked the entry exam was not a gesture that facilitated my fitting into the university culture. Joined to my inability to land my first choice to chair my doctoral committee, I was left with an exceedingly fragile grasp on my potential for success. Added to my continued immaturity and the growing trouble in our new marriage, these academic setbacks loosened my grip on positive approaches to the Ph.D. program.

A much larger disturbance in the force was developing at home in addition to these two academic setbacks. Cheryl’s malaise over Seattle, and perhaps our marriage, carried over to the early days of our time in Eugene. Married life was still a bit of a mystery and it was unclear how the story would end.

My unhappiness at school and feckless approach to solving the academic challenges before me led us to doubt both ourselves and each other. This added complexity neither festered nor lasted long; as we settled in and I managed the details of my academic endeavors, we began to figure out ways to enjoy each other’s company and to see the good side of our time in Eugene. However, I cannot dismiss our early struggles—they were serious and worrisome. We had just recently made promises including “till death do us part” but we were both pretty quickly less than 100% sure that we’d be willing and able to keep those promises.

How serious was the trouble? Bad enough that after nearly four years of “radio silence” and totally out of the blue, I wrote a letter to Ann Raney. Now, I’m absolutely sure that I had no intention of leaving my new wife for a previous fiancé/girlfriend. Even though, in the past, I had relied on Ann as a fallback excuse in the face of girlfriends, I wasn’t leaving Cheryl or Eugene no matter what I discovered about Ann via my blind lunge toward the Midwest. At the time, I was also pretty sure that, given the way our relationship ended and the ensuing time gap, Ann would not even answer my missive. In fact, I suspected that neither her mother nor father would forward the mail and that she’d not receive the note. I only had 11 Hillcrest as her address and I was pretty darn sure that she had not moved back to Keokuk, Iowa. Ruth or Jack would probably toss the missive in the trash and not say a word about it. So, what in the name of the universe was I doing writing a letter to her revealing that I was married and living in Eugene, Oregon working on a Ph.D.?

I can’t say. It’s not that I won’t say, it’s that I can’t describe why I wrote the letter. I don’t think I even knew for sure why I wrote it then let alone now, over four decades later. Retrospectively, I know that I felt very unstable as neither school nor married life was going smoothly. I was probably looking for something solid to grab onto and Ann had always been there for me; that is, until I cut her off. I think that I was hoping for a familiar place to unload my troubles although I did not fill that first letter with many concerns. Instead, I merely wrote that I was married, detailed the move to Eugene and the Ph.D. program, and asked about her life. I did not consider whether she wanted to hear from me. In fact, I had every reason to believe that she did not. Nevertheless, I mailed the letter in hopes that she was still a more reasonable and mature person than me. First contact, all over again.

Much to my surprise inside two months I received a letter in response. Ann reported that she too was married, in school, and in a new city. She and her relatively new mate moved to Chicago while both attended the Divinity School at the University of Chicago. Ann's husband was working on a Ph.D. in theology and Ann was working through a Master's degree toward a Ph.D. program in clinical psychology. Her letter wasn't an angry response; I suspect that no letter writer could be expected to capture the nuances in the range of her emotions on writing to me: Disgust, anger, confusion, the urge to ignore me, complacent resignation over what an ass I had been and might still be. Who knows? Regardless, Ann stayed to the high ground, told me about her life, disclosed their mailing address, and thanked me for writing. We did not exchange many letters while Cheryl and I were in Eugene but we through those first letters we regained a connection for communication. That connection is, eventually, going to be pretty important to the rest of my stories.

Despite our initial troubles, relationships with many enjoyable companions, coupled with the advantages in our living situation, soon infused our time in Eugene with positive energies. Before long, the dark clouds started giving way to clear(er) skies, although my academic situation would take nearly three years to fully turn the positive corner.

Cheryl was fortunate to find work quickly and took up selling *Clinique* cosmetics at a *Frederick & Nelson* store in the *Eugene Mall*. She was able to take a bus to and from work, she liked the people she worked with, and she was very quickly really good at the job. Once a year, Cheryl traveled to Portland for a sales/training. The trip afforded a couple of days enjoying Portland's restaurants and included a visit with Neil and Mary Lou Anderson and family. Neil was still working as a sports reporter covering the Portland Trailblazers for the *Oregonian*; Mary

Lou, aunt Lucille's youngest daughter, was a nurse at one of the local hospitals. The Anderson family included six children, ranging from 2 years to 10 years younger than Cheryl and I. The Anderson house had served as a stopping point and sleep-over spot during all of the trips between Long Beach and Pullman and during the Eugene years provided us the closest spot for a family visit.

In Eugene, we rented an efficiency apartment from the university in the married-student housing complex, *Westmoreland Place* (now *Westmoreland Village*). The complex contained more than 400 units and housed as many as 200 families about 2½ miles from campus on *16th Street* between *Garfield* and *Arthur*. The facility was on a bus line and the university was an easy walk on a rustic path along *Amazon Creek* that passed through the *Matthews Community Gardens* just before reaching our apartment.



Westmoreland Place Apartments



Kitchen/Eating Area

The apartment was an amazing space that packed one bedroom, a small den/office, a bathroom, a combined kitchen/half dining room/living room, and an amazingly adequate amount of storage space into 450 square feet. A narrow closet was formed from the back-interior-wall of the kitchen area and the left side of the hallway just outside the bathroom/bedroom/den. The apartment complex featured lots of trees and grass and provided a laundry facility that would later prove important to my academic work (yes, the laundry room became a vital academic space—More on that later).

On the one hand, 450 sq. feet isn't much and the apartment was aptly labeled an "efficiency unit." On the other hand, without children or pets, the apartment was plenty large for us. In fact, we were delighted that a small one-bedroom apartment provided a second room (about as big as the "master" bedroom) where I set up an office and study area. That room also included a fold-out queen-sized sofa-bed enabling us to host overnight guests. There was ample parking in an uncovered lot right outside our bedroom and den windows. I locked my bicycle to the wooden stairwell just outside our door; it was stolen once, but I quickly recovered it from a nearby apartment complex. The apartment at *Westmoreland Place* was indeed efficient.

The only real drawback to the unit was more about us, our ignorance and poor judgment, than about the space itself. The units were constructed from cement blocks and were almost airtight. Eugene is notorious for excessive humidity, rain, and mold. The native Kalapuya people of the Willamette Valley are said to have called the place "the Valley of Death," although the epidemics that nearly wiped out the tribe were probably more due to exposure to the white man's diseases than to the region's weather and mold. Condensation formed on the inside of our windows and then water collected in the rails at the bottom of the windows on a regular basis. Soon, slimy green mold formed and floated all along the bottoms of the windows. We spent four years cleaning out those window rails with towels and buckets and disinfectant. Ignorance? Well of course, combined with graduate-student-level poverty. In the back of my mind I suspected that if I went to Sears and purchased a dehumidifier we could get rid of, or at least manage/reduce, the problem. Unfortunately, a unit of that nature cost between \$150.00-200.00; money that we did not put aside and then said that we did not have. Can you spell *S-T-U-B-B-O-R-N*? How about *S-T-U-P-I-D*?

We became especially close with two sets of graduate students while living at *Westmoreland Place*. David was one year ahead of me in the Rhetoric and Communication Ph.D. program; we saw each other regularly in classes and worked together as graduate teaching assistants. David and his wife, Karen, had two small children: toddler David Jr. and their oldest, daughter Cynthia. Cyn was six when we first arrived and had recently suffered terrible burns from an accident around a stove and boiling water. Recall that dad/Roger's sister, Lauretta, was killed by just such an accident. Cyn was beginning to reengage with everyday life when we arrived in Eugene; by the time we left, she was fully recovered except for bad scarring and lots of missed school due to surgeries. The two families shared meals and spent time chatting and drinking beer while their kids played in the large yard in the complex. Their unit was on the ground floor like ours, two units away from us.

We found another set of close friends in a 2nd floor unit at the other end of our building. Chris Manzer was earning a PhD in Environmental Psychology while Donna Manzer worked on a Master's degree in Counseling Psychology. The Manzers were older than us by perhaps five or six years. We spent a lot of time together playing cards, trading turns cooking potluck meals for each other, drinking and laughing and, once, sharing a weekend apartment on the Oregon coast. That brings us to the Oregon Coast.

We had only been in Eugene a short time before the Oregon coast captured our attention. Florence, Oregon is less than sixty miles west of Eugene; the beautiful trip over the Oregon Coast (Mountain) Range takes less than eighty minutes. Regular weekend trips to the Oregon coast were well beyond our budget. Nevertheless, we either saved the money or charged the cost of the room at *Driftwood Shores Resort*, and food at coastal restaurants, as often as we dared.

While in Eugene I discovered that I had virtually ignored the benefits of being around the ocean growing up in Long Beach. Although I made occasional trips to the beach to fish off the Long Beach pier as a young boy, body surfed (at risk of life and limb since I do not swim) in the relatively calm waves inside the Long Beach breakwater as young and stupid thirteen-year-old, and partied my ass off at *Bolsa Chica Beach* many a night in high school and college, I underestimated my affinity for walking along and looking at the ocean. Our time in Oregon established a connection with the ocean that I had never before experienced and have since become addicted to *in abstentia*. Eating fresh seafood had been an affinity for both of us and Dungeness crab on the Oregon coast sealed that deal. Cheryl had not previously spent time at the ocean; her watery experiences growing up were river-based. She was totally taken by the surf, wind, sand, and shells. We simply could not get enough of walks along the beach and of sitting at our room (inside or out) staring at the waves, the sea gulls, the sunsets, and a couple of special times, snowfall disappearing as it melted at the water's edge. The experiences reinforced our personal connection and contributed strongly to strengthening our marriage.

Cheryl and I developed numerous additional habits that were good for our souls and marriage but were terrible budget busters. Friday afternoons were particularly ritualistic at the University of Oregon. Graduate students regularly gathered toward the middle of Friday afternoon at a favorite local watering hole. The Rhetoric and Communication crowd preferred a place that sits directly across the street from the university, not far from *Villard Hall*, our departmental building: *Rennie's Landing* featured cold beer and deluxe hamburgers along with scrumptious french-fries. Many Friday afternoons were spent quaffing beverages and telling stories. Very little academic work got done, among the graduate students, on Friday afternoon.

The weekly session at *Rennie's* found me drinking just enough beer that I was unable to say “no” when Cheryl finished work and wanted to go out for hors d’oeuvres and cocktails. And so, our second Eugene ritual was born: Friday evenings at *Stuart Anderson's Steakhouse*.

We could seldom afford dinner at *Stuart Anderson's*. That was unfortunate as it was the best steakhouse in town. Mercifully, the place featured a regular Friday night happy hour with cheap drinks and loads of high quality hors d’oeuvres. Even early in the evening, there was dancing to live or recorded music. And so, after leaving the Friday afternoon soiree at *Rennie's*, I often drove to Cheryl's workplace and transported her over to *Stuart Anderson's* for happy-hour drinks and hors d’oeuvres. Now and then the alcohol and fun led to dinner, at *Stuart Anderson's*, that we could not afford. CHA-CHING! Up went the balance on our charge card. Nevertheless, we remember the Friday night happy-hours very fondly.

Eugene's plentiful and varied food culture provided numerous regular and distinctive pleasures. There was a small but very powerful Mexican restaurant on *Blair Blvd.* at *14th* (the place is now a soul food restaurant), across the street from the iconic *Tiny Tavern*. We didn't even bother learning its name; we simply said to each other “let's go eat at *Blair Street* (even though it was on *Blair Blvd.*).

Eugene's *Fisherman's Market* stood on a corner few blocks down *Blair*. There we purchased all manner of fresh fish, usually out of our price range but always well within our lust for seafood. Sundays were often spent walking from shop to shop at Eugene's *5th Street Market* where one could always count on fresh baked goods and luscious coffee drinks

Downtown, *Old Towne* was the best pizza joint of the day providing a reasonable replacement for the deep-dish delights we had enjoyed first at *Hoseapples* (Troy and Moscow

Idaho) and then at *Northlake Pizza* (U. district, Seattle). Just down the street from the university, *Prince Puckler's* ice cream shop met most of the needs of my habitual ice cream jones. And at *Station Square*, a new gelato shop, *Ciao Bella Gelato Co.*, served what struck us as the best frozen confection we'd ever tasted. In short, we never lacked for good food or places to spend money that we didn't have during our four years in Eugene.

Eugene was close enough to Lewiston/Clarkston that Cheryl's family visited during our time in Oregon. The queen-sized sleeper sofa in the office/den of our little efficiency unit provided room for family guests. Once, Cheryl's older sister, Patty and younger sister, Margaret, took the quick puddle-jump over on the Pacific Northwest's regional carrier, *Crashcade Airlines* (*Cascade*) for a short visit. Once, Stan Sanders, Cheryl's mom Shirley's same-age cousin, brought Shirley over for a stay. The highlight of these family jaunts occurred when Stan brought Margaret over and the four of us spent a day at the *Portland Jazz Festival*. Stan was an old-time jazz guitar player so we particularly enjoyed sets by *The Great Guitars* (Charlie Byrd, Herb Ellis, and Barney Kessel) and Pat Metheny, among others. Stan owned two classic electric guitars: an original *Les Paul* and a starburst *Gibson ES 175*. Knowing that I was a long-time, albeit frustrated, guitar player, he promised that I'd inherit one after he passed away. Sure enough, some years later a very large box containing the *Gibson ES 175* arrived in Peoria, unannounced but heavily insured.

Sports played a featured role toward normalizing the Eugene years. One form of exercise even played a major role in binding our marriage. Cheryl has never been enthused about exercise. Our deep dive in Eugene constitutes just about the extent of it for her, excepting a few sporadic months of low-impact work outs at *Curves* during our child-rearing years in Peoria.

Given all the food we were enjoying, we both realized that we should attend to weight management and health maintenance, so we signed up for an aerobics course at the local park.

Before detailing our time with the local aerobics-junky, a quick word about past events. I didn't mention this in a previous chapter; I believe that subliminal suppression is responsible. During the final term of my Master's work at WSU, while I was completing the thesis and in anticipation of eventually celebrating our wedding day, we took advantage of my student status and signed up for a "social dance" class. Although I had been a very energetic rock and roll dancer in high school, I was not much of a disco dancer during my time at *Hoseapples*. In fact, when I hit the dance floor there, I repeated many of the James Brown-esq moves from my youth, with a few disco spins thrown in. In other words, I knew nothing about, and had little facility with, social dancing.

Once, during my time in Pullman, good friend Sandy Powers took me country swing dancing at one of Troy, Idaho's smallest and roughest cowboy bars. Sandy was a graduate student in our communication disorders clinic and a graduate housing neighbor. She was tall, blond, very attractive, and well out of my league so we became fast friends and had lots of fun without dating. The place she took me had a foreboding reputation: roughly, "Be gone before dark or be prepared to join in the fights that broke out regularly." More than once, Sandy and I ventured across the border into Idaho, enjoyed a beer, happy-hour-snacks, and a few dances, before heading to the car ahead of darkness and potential trouble. Sandy enjoyed the dances and laughed her ass off at trying to teach me how to follow her. Country swing just wasn't my thing.

So, when the opportunity to prepare for the wedding arose, Cheryl and I signed up for a social dance class at WSU. That was, more or less, a mistake. Here, we have a brief note about

part of my approach to feminism. Despite the fact that I'd mistreated women, relationally, for almost a decade, I thought of myself as a liberal (Southern California-style) feminist. Was that merely a lame excuse for not being able to lead while dancing? Probably so, as the real reason I can't lead is that I can't count and do physical things at the same time (this presents problems when I play music, but that is another story).

My claim (at the time and now) was that I was unwilling to lead. Lame genuflection to feminism or not, this presents insurmountable problems for most kinds of couple-based social/ ballroom dancing. My beloved and I learned, during the dance lessons at WSU, that I was simply no damn good at it. Period. Oh . . . and that I'd better find other/better ways to support and demonstrate feminism.

This knowledge did not keep us from signing up for the aerobics class in Eugene. It also did not help me excel at most of the pseudo-dance moves therein. I was comical. Worse, the class was more than just aerobics; it was *early morning aerobics*. The building holding the classes was a couple of blocks from our apartment. As a park district offering, the class was relatively inexpensive. Held from 7-8am, the course forced us out of bed and into jock straps and leotards at an un-godly hour in the dark only to find the instructor blaring music from *Fame* and *Flashdance* at top volume. If either of us ever again hears more than one or two notes from Michael Sembello's single *Maniac*, before switching channels or breaking the machine playing it, it's way too many. Our instructor loved that song and often added exuberant shouts of "WHEW" and "LET'S REALLY GO FOR IT NOW" over the track as we kicked, jumped, spun, and, now and then, I slipped and fell over my feet. It was enough to encourage us both to lose our coffee. We toughed out one series of sessions, and then I took to other forms of exercise.

Cheryl did no more exercise in Oregon and we both stayed in bed at least an hour later each morning.

During our years in Eugene I reacquaint myself with the game of basketball. Ramon and I played a lot of one-on-one in his driveway during high school and college. I don't recall that I played *any* basketball in either Pullman or Seattle, so it had been at least five years since I had touched a basketball.

In Eugene, I played hoops with a group of fellows from school. David Frank was the youngest assistant professor in the department, having recently received a Ph.D. from the school. He remained at his alma mater; quite an honor as jobs at UO were very difficult to attain. Sean O'Rourke was a graduate student "sideways" to our cohort: he entered the Ph.D. program the same semester but was also in a concurrent J.D. program at the law school. Ron Jacobson was in our Ph.D. cohort studying radio and television. The four of us played many games of two-on-two and over the four years I managed to recover what little skill I'd had at the game: by the time I left Eugene, I was probably playing about as well as I ever had. We joked and laughed, made fun of each other, didn't play very good basketball, but had one hell of a good time.

I had generally stopped playing golf after leaving Long Beach although I had clubs with me at every stop. I played a round or two at the Washington State University course; I didn't play any holes in Seattle although I hit balls at a driving range a couple of times. I took the clubs out in Eugene as the yard area was large and conducive to hitting plastic practice balls. Before long I headed a couple miles up Highway 99 to *Fiddler's Green*, a large pro-shop with driving range. At one point, I took lessons from Chuck Hogan, a teaching professional who went on to a stellar career coaching Raymond Floyd, Johnny Miller, and Peter Jacobsen. Hogan is a master at the

mental game of golf, but unfortunately, he was unable to do very much for my swing which, in those days, was horrid. Eugene is often a terrible place for golf as the weather seldom cooperates. During our time there I managed to reconstruct my game and play a few rounds with my eventual Ph.D. committee chair, Carl Carmichael. Now and then Ron Jacobson joined us on those trips to local courses. In Eugene, my game remained under-developed and mostly very frustrating.

Mention sports and Eugene in the same sentence and running is usually the first activity that comes to mind. However, running was far out of my mind during and after high school. Running was something of a punishment meted out at the end of baseball practice. I never ran distances for training or fun; the closest that I came was running up and down the stairs in Pullman with Scott and Mike. But that's "running stairs" rather than running/jogging distances.

It seemed that (nearly) "everyone" ran in Eugene and so I decided to give it a shot. I started out by walking between the apartment and school. Before long I added weight to my backpack. Then I cut back on the weights and started timing myself, attempting to cover the distance more quickly with each trip. Within a couple months I was packing jogging shoes and outfits in the bag so that I could jog home. Eventually, I was out on the Hayward Field track running around like I belonged. One of the great things about being a student at a large university in the 1980s was that one got to use most of the facilities inhabited by varsity athletes. I was amazed running around the track where Olympic trials were held. Pervasive culture at college can rub off unexpectedly.

Before long I was running three and four miles on the track loop across the millrace from campus, out toward where the old Autzen Stadium stood, where, I experienced the most sublime

running event of my life—or at least until I ran a sub-seven-minute-mile (once) many years later. There, in Eugene, *I ran with Mary Decker Slaney*. Well, let me rephrase that. I was out running one day and heard fast footsteps coming up behind me. I turned to see Mary Decker Slaney and recognized her just as she passed by me. No cloud of dust but, for sure, I was looking at the bottoms of her feet in front of me much faster than the time it took for us to run a few steps together. I recognized her because she grew up in Long Beach and I had watched her run as the youngster, “Little Mary Decker.” I never dreamed that I would have the opportunity to work out on a track route with her. And, of course, I never really did.

You may have noticed that I haven’t said much (lately) about school, studying, classes, or making progress toward the degree. I’ve been writing about everything else. In fact, I could go on in this vein because it wasn’t long after arriving, taking the entry exam, struggling with our marriage, and playing a lot of sports, that I became addicted to video games. Now, it is true that later in life I became connected to technology as co-founder of the Multimedia Program/Department of Interactive Media at Bradley University; a program/department that eventually featured a highly successful game design major. But when I was floundering in Eugene, playing video games served as a dodge to facing that I was terrified of failure and was somewhat unwilling to buckle down to the work required to avoid it. It was a lot easier (and more fun) to play *Pac-Man*, *Centipede*, *Space Invaders*, *Missile Command*, and *Star Wars*. And *Asteroids*; man did I play a *lot* of *Asteroids*. The damn games should’ve come with a warning label reading “addictive mechanisms for work avoidance.”

Sometimes we succeed because we are good at things; in this case I succeeded at school, in part, because I was lousy at video games. Had I been a better video game player, I might not

have gotten a Ph.D. Fortunately, I really sucked at video games. Unfortunately, it spent a lot of time and quarters learning that hard lesson.

Eventually, I got down to the business at hand. As had been the case at CSULB, WSU, and the University of Washington, I enjoyed the classes, learned a lot from the teachers, generally impressed them, kept up with my classmates, and seemed to be capable of the work and likely to earn the degree. I just needed to manage the difficult dissertation process.

After Professor #1 turned me away, I wondered how to proceed. I was unwilling to switch sub-disciplines and there wasn't anyone in the department who was interested in what I was doing; in fact, there wasn't anyone in the department who had much of an idea about the kinds of stuff that I did. I was a unique character there. I had strong general knowledge across the speech discipline but a specialty in a rather esoteric approach to field-based (*in situ*) conversation analysis. I sought shelter outside the department and found two people willing and able to help.

Derry Malsch taught in the Department of Linguistics. Linguistics was very strong at UO at that time. Although Derry was not their star faculty member he was an excellent teacher with a specialty in socio-linguistics, the sub-discipline that most matched my interests. Dr. Malsch was eager and willing to help me and so I took his courses and I put him on my committee. One additional fortuitous aspect quickly emerged. Linguistics met the University's "research tool" requirement for Ph.D. candidates. This meant that I would only have to take the modest amount of statistics required of all candidates rather than the much larger amount required if statistics were the research tool of choice. I found another committee member in the Department of Sociology, David Wellman. David was a top-notch field researcher with an active research and publication program. I signed up for all of the field research courses that he taught. David also

taught me a lot about structural and white prejudice. His book, *Portraits of White Racism* is a classic and Wellman enabled me to start coming to grips with the underlying facts of white privilege in my upbringing and life. Wellman left the university before I graduated; Ken Liberman, another deeply experienced field researcher in Sociology, took over his role on my committee.

With two thirds of my committee in hand, I returned to the Rhetoric and Communication Department looking for a chairperson; I recruited my sometimes-golf-sometimes-poker-partner, Carl Carmichael. Carl earned a communication science Ph.D. at the University of Iowa, was good at statistics, and featured a specialty in geriatric communication. None of his strong points were of any help to my research agenda. But based on our informal relationship on the golf course and at the poker table, I was able to convince Carl to help me out and serve as the chair of my doctoral committee. None of my specialties were of particular interest to Carl; he left that part of the work to professors Malsch, Wellman and Liberman. But Carl was more than able to guide a Ph.D. student through the process of taking exams and completing a dissertation and he did that, for me, with care and distinction. Regardless of anything else that happened along the way, I have to give him props and thanks for that. Otherwise, I probably would only hold the A.B.D. degree today.

I received additional help toward finishing the degree from another professor in the Department of Sociology, Robert O'Brien. O'Brien filled the tenure-track line vacated by Wellman's departure. I couldn't escape statistics altogether; even if not one's research tool, nine hours (one year's worth via three-quarter-long-classes) of statistics were required in order to get a Ph.D. at UO. Don't get me started as to why there were requirements for quantitative analysis

when there are none for qualitative methods; I could bore you for hours with the reasons why such a requirement is narrow-minded, unfair, unscientific, and just plain stupid. Nevertheless, the requirement was in place and I was cast back into the statistics classroom.

You may recall that I am terrible at math, especially algebra. Gratefully, Prof. O'Brien was excellent in the classroom and was able to teach even dummies like me. I managed a "B" in both of the first two courses. At approximately week two of the third course I was taking notes as Bob was writing equations on the board and something weird and not so wonderful happened: the equations shifted from difficult mathematical statements to unintelligible Greek. I quickly raised my hand and in a somewhat panicky sounding voice asked "Bob, did you just go algebraic?" Prof. O'Brien smiled. Thinking that he had identified my hidden ability to ferret out the truth about algebraic equations he replied "well yes, I'm glad you noticed. We have entered nonparametric statistics." I lowered my hand and mumbled that we should talk after class. That was the last day that I understood virtually anything that happened in the class.

I went to Bob's office after the class and explained my inability to understand algebra. I told him that I had flunked high school algebra twice (once at SAHS and once in summer school) and barely earned a D grade the third try, in summer school, in a course that was designed for remedial students in Long Beach high schools. He nodded, understood, and we negotiated a deal. I would come to class every day and do my best to take notes, listen, and study. I would complete and turn in homework, regularly. But when it came time to take examinations I would not take the timed exams in the class with the rest of the students. Rather I would come to the class, collect the examination, and go to my office in Villard Hall to work on the exam with an open textbook, hand calculator, and my class notes.

Truth is, I could work algebra problems by following the step-by-step guides in our text; however, I could not do them quickly. In fact, I needed hours to solve algebra problems even when using the book, my notes, and a calculator. Nevertheless, we both knew that I could solve the problems and Bob agreed that in my future life as a professor I would not attempt to do high-end statistics without an open book, my notes, a calculator, and all the time that finding the right answer took. And so, Bob and I agreed that this is how I would operate: I could not get an “A” in his course. Instead, my grade could be no higher than a “B” (and might be lower, depending on my performance). I earned a “C” in that class (my only “C” at U of O) and thereby remained eligible to receive a Ph.D. I also remain indebted to Robert O’Brien for life, because without his cooperation, I would not have been able to finish the required coursework for even the incomplete, yet oft-earned, A.B.D. distinction. Three decades later, I contacted Professor O’Brien, by then recently retired, and learned that our quarters together took place in his first year on the Sociology faculty at UO. I regaled him with thanks and gratitude as he’d taken a modest risk in making an exception during his first year on the Sociology faculty.

Since I was a field researcher using qualitative methods, after Bob’s class, I’ve never had to solve an algebra problem. I have, however, examined the ways that other researchers used statistics when I served as an academic journal editor or the critical reader of papers submitted for publication. I understand statistical principles well enough to accomplish that task, so the nine credit hours at UO and the one class at WSU served me well.

A significant factor in my sporadic academic behavior was that I lacked clarity as to why I was pursuing advanced degrees. I entered graduate school on something of a lark as I, initially, engaged WSU with hopes of working in its sports information office. Graduate studies toward a

Master's degree was a second thought. I very much enjoyed academic work; I think I liked being smart or at least I liked being treated as smart. Yet, I believe that the rush that I got from "being smart" was more than vanity. Occasionally in Pullman and Seattle, and most of the time in Eugene, I found that I derived honest pleasure from understanding material that escaped students who are not of the top order. In fact, when attending professional meetings, I often found that I was able to deal insightfully with faculty with much broader and deeper understandings than mine. I derived satisfaction from being able to understand difficult material in ways that struck me as healthy rather than as merely indicative of my own self-absorption. Perhaps I was "special" after all? So, while I most often issued the mantra "I'll stay in school as long as someone else pays for it," I suspected that my interest was deeper than that. Still, I wasn't sure about my calling.

Eventually, serious academic work started fitting aspects of my self-concept and life goals. I long opposed professionalized work that leads to chasing money in the world of business and/or industry. I'd sampled a diversity of career paths and I always turned away from those focused on making money. That was one of the reasons I resisted Professor #1's suggestion that I engage in organizational communication. "Org Com" was the hottest sub-discipline in Speech studies in those days. Students who went into "Org Com" usually made a lot more money than those of us who stayed in the liberal arts and humanities. The "Org Com" Ph.Ds. sometimes took jobs in high(er) paying schools of business or were able to do a lot of consulting on the side. As a result of my lack of interest in making money, I was willing to continue in graduate school as long as someone else paid the freight and I was not overly concerned by the fact that the academic life would lean toward poverty rather than wealth.

Yet, I had no solid answer to the question “why are you trying to be an academic?” To my merit, and in favor of academic work, over the years I was a better-than-average teacher. Because of my background in theater and oral interpretation I was always able to prepare and deliver dramatic and insightful lectures.

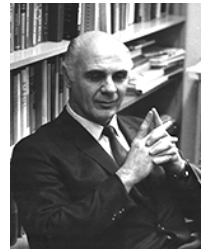
In those days lecturing was still the primary mode for teaching in college; only later did the lecture fall out of favor. In favor or not, the lecture was my best mode for delivering academic content. Sometimes my lectures were extraordinary. At other times, unfortunately, they only seemed extraordinary to me while most of the students probably missed the point. Nevertheless, I was never at a loss for what to say in class although I was usually clueless as to what I should ask the students to do while in class. I was old-school: Students should listen, take notes, ask questions, discuss the material, and learn what’s taught. I was uninterested in whether they immediately saw how the knowledge applied to their first job. I was even less interested in what they thought about what I taught: they didn’t yet know about the topic let alone understand it well enough to have well-formed opinions.

One would think that my interest in learning, and my teaching abilities, would’ve made clear that I was headed for a career as a university professor. However, I wasn’t really aware of that until well past our second year in Eugene. At that point, Dominic LaRusso’s influence began to kick in. Dominic taught me a LOT about how a great teacher teaches and to be honest, I wasn’t very good at it then or now.

In addition to the entry examination, the UO Rhetoric and Communication graduate program featured an additional curricular quirk. Most of the graduate students in Rhetoric and Communication chose to take a year’s worth of study in a series of undergraduate courses taught

by Dominic LaRusso. The three-course, year-long sequence was required of undergraduate majors but not of graduate students. However, graduate students were allowed (encouraged?) to enroll under a separate number and we received graduate credit after completing assignments in addition to those given the undergraduates. This arrangement was in place for additional upper-division undergraduate courses shared by graduate students, but LaRusso's "Theory and Literature of Rhetoric" courses were the only shared classes that drew nearly the entire graduate student cohort.

The classes presented theoretical and historical coverage of the five canons of rhetoric. LaRusso's treatment included thorough study of historical influences but focused primarily on conceptual aspects of invention, organization, style, delivery, and memory. Although he taught other courses, including historical rhetoric across a number of periods (ancient, Renaissance, Enlightenment), nonverbal communication, and the rhetoric of humor, "Theory and Literature of Rhetoric" was Dominic's special domain. The series was very popular at the University, was always fully enrolled, and served as a paragon of pedagogical excellence. Dominic's teaching engaged even the least interested student; it appeared that he reached every person in the room at a deep level and changed their lives forever.



*Professor
Dominic A.
LaRusso*

Each day, LaRusso arrived at the classroom before students and filled the chalkboard, in longhand, with the day's notes. He seldom failed to meet his expectations for covering the material despite the fact that his examples were expansive and sometimes seemed far afield. He adeptly blended ancient Greek and Roman rhetorical theory with Renaissance thought, modern psychology, and contemporary communication studies.

LaRusso required every student in the room to participate by standing and speaking when they answered questions and he insisted on accurate articulation. Many times during the morning, after calling on a student who stood up and began an answer with “Ah . . . ,” Dominic interrupted with a loud “**AH. AH?**” after which the student was required to begin again, this time without the dysfluency. Dominic often reminded us that “you are the way you are because you speak the way you speak” and that articulate speech habits are built, and in-grained, over time such that they are not like a water spigot that can be turned on and off at a whim. He convinced students of the importance of representing themselves honorably, of showing others responsible, intelligent, adult communication behavior as a way to actively engage in everyday life as well as business affairs. No one in the room was safe, yet, despite the worry that one would be asked to answer a question without knowing the answer, students eagerly anticipated being called on: Showing LaRusso what you knew in a fashion that was acceptable to him earned one an invisible badge of honor eagerly sought by his students.

Graduate students were only allowed to answer after LaRusso had plumbed the depths of the undergraduates in attendance. He empowered students to believe that they could understand and articulate difficult ideas. He thrived, for example, on interaction with athletes. He loved nothing better than to focus on people who, for many students in the room, were thought to be less-than-focused on scholarly work: football players were especially singled out. For example, former UO and NFL quarterback, Dan Fouts, proudly relates stories about LaRusso’s classes.

Dominic prodded and coached students into eloquent expressions of intellectual insight. Then he smiled and discreetly encouraged them to transfer their eloquence to everyday life. He never patronized students although he sometimes teased students (gently) when they didn’t meet

his highest standards. For example, students who came to class late were sure to face Dominic's suggestion that "the buses must be running late today." Nevertheless, he encouraged students to attend the class whether they were late, tired, or not at their best because being there provided "soaking time" with material that they would not be exposed to if they stayed away.

After three semesters in his presence the graduate students were in awe of the range of his knowledge and of his teaching ability. We also came away a little frightened by his presence, still a little bit ill at ease. Dominic presented a somewhat imposing figure. He was neither large nor small; instead, he was broad. Standing somewhere between 5'10" and 6' tall, his walk seemed a little bowlegged, perhaps due to war-wounds to his lower extremities; when standing straight and walking away from you, he sometimes appeared to be slightly hunched forward and rounded. Dominic was neither thin nor fat; rather he was wide. When viewed from behind, one saw an entire mountain rather than two-shoulders-as-peaks. Dominic was a proud Italian and his features were full; he used clothing to emphasize a weighty importance. Dominic was seldom seen around campus without his signature cloak; Dominic's long topcoat seemed perfectly appropriate to the man. By 1983, his hair had receded into a hauntingly appropriate baldness with a ring of hair around the sides and back that reminded one of ancient Greek philosopher, Chrysippus, or the Roman, Cicero. Not given to uncontrolled displays or quirks, he sometimes rubbed the front of his bald pate, palm down, hand over head and closed eyes, as he contemplated a graduate student's mistake deserving of derision but about to meet, instead, with carefully considered gentle prodding.

Dominic often provided graduate students with what struck us as the ultimate in frustrations. He primarily used two forms for this tactic. In the first, LaRusso included a veiled

reference to an illusory fact, historical character, book or article, or concept in one of his lectures. He presented just enough information that the smartest graduate students caught the inference and sought clarification about how the material connected to the learning objective at hand. At that point Dominic usually reached for the front of his forehead, rubbed a little, and said something totally opaque like “yes it would be interesting to know about, wouldn’t it?”

The second form manifested when students went to Dominic with what they believed to be interesting ideas, especially ideas that connected disparate concepts, people, theories, or aspects of the material we were studying. Despite the fact that he almost always (probably) knew the answer, the Professor gazed off into the distance and mumbled something about “interesting, check on that, get back to me when you. . .” In both cases, graduate students received a clear message that they were expected to trudge over to the library and spend hours looking for whatever it was that Dominic could probably have explained/provided, but was more interested in having students find for themselves. LaRusso’s teaching focused on developing students’ abilities to make connections among concepts, time frames, and other disparate aspects. He was a strong believer in defining teaching as *educāre*: teaching as leading (out of ignorance).

LaRusso was born on the East Coast in 1924. He told us that during his youth he delivered newspapers to famous neighbors: Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig received their daily news from Dominic’s youthful tosses. The Babe and the Iron Horse were not the only famous historical figures in Dominic’s past. During World War II, LaRusso served as a communications officer under General Douglas MacArthur in the Pacific. Later in life I wondered whether Dom was with MacArthur when the General left Noel and fellow soldiers with an empty promise to return.

After the war LaRusso attended graduate school and received a Ph.D. from Northwestern University. He spent time teaching at the University of Washington and eventually ended up in Eugene. He maintained contact with his Veterans affiliation by often serving as a communications consultant and trainer for the U.S. Army and US Forest Service. Dominic had a unique deal with the US government: He would go anywhere in the country or world and provide training seminars for the Army and/or Forest Service without charging for his services. However, in return the government provided free transportation to and from the location for Dominic and his wife, Carol, as well as full accommodations during the week or two-week stay. The LaRussos saw the country and world together in this fashion and the government was often willing to provide his excellent instruction to their employees and soldiers.

LaRusso was not on my committee and I wasn't specializing in rhetorical theory or history. Also, there were graduate students with whom he had closer relations (co-GTF and basketball buddy Sean O'Rourke for example). Nevertheless, toward the end of my time at the University our teacher/mentor-student relationship intensified as I came to realize and appreciate the value of his work. In the end, I asked Dominic to place the Ph.D. hood over my shoulders on graduation day. I probably should have offered that honor to my committee chair, Carl Carmichael. While Carl and I had played a lot of golf and a lot of poker together, I felt that I owed LaRusso a special honor to thank him for helping me find my place and way in higher education. Through Dominic, I became committed to teaching and learning, and especially, to living as a more valid academic than I had previously been. Through LaRusso, I discovered my calling.

Fifteen years later, barely two years before Dominic died, Cheryl and I made a trip to Eugene and the Oregon coast. Although I was unaware of specifics about his health, I had a distant foreboding that I wanted to see him; he was getting on in years. We included a visit to the Oregon coast to the trip, but the primary purpose of going to Oregon was to see Dominic. We arranged a simple lunch at a local restaurant. Dominic had not met Cheryl during our time in Eugene; we had not socialized with the LaRussos and neither Dominic nor Cheryl attended any of the departmental parties or social events. Dominic spent the entire lunch doting on Cheryl, making her feel special and appreciated. Just before we left the restaurant Cheryl headed off to the ladies' room and while she was gone Dominic reached into his pocket and thrust two \$20.00 bills into my hand. As I started to resist he placed his other hand over mine and pressed it closed over the money saying "go to the bookstore and buy something nice for Cheryl." I struggled against breaking into tears right then and there. I loved him dearly before that moment but, of course, that transaction only deepened my feelings. Dominic LaRusso knew the secret of how to transform human relationships into humane achievements and I am grateful to have learned at his feet and used his broad Italian shoulders as the base for my academic career.

The experience that I gained as a teacher of oral interpretation while at Washington State University was a useful first step. Teaching public speaking at the University of Idaho added depth to my profile. However, I learned a lot more about teaching at the University of Oregon. First of all, I had not previously received any teacher training. WSU did not provide orientation and training to its graduate teaching assistants; as a member of the faculty at the University of Idaho, I had been on my own as well. Before classes began the University of Oregon, Professor #1 led an insightful and useful teacher training session.

In many ways, the fact that I studied Speech Communication provided significant advantages, especially at graduate school. Most American universities, then and now, require at least three basic courses of all of their undergraduate students prior to graduation: basic Math, English, and Speech classes.

At large, research-oriented, institutions those required courses are, at least partially, taught by graduate teaching assistants/fellows. This means that there are many opportunities for graduate students studying in the communication arts to receive financial support while navigating advanced degrees. Midsize universities might offer thirty sections of the course each term; large universities sometimes offer as many as sixty sections in each of the terms of a first-year student's program.

At large schools, introductory classes are often delivered via lectures or lectures augmented by "lab" sessions. The basic speech class at the University of Oregon generally enrolled just over sixty sections each term in a lecture-lab format. The class met for fifty minutes, three days a week, with one session dedicated to the "mass lecture" delivered in a lecture hall holding just under 1000 students. The other two days were spent meeting in twenty-person "sections" led by a graduate student. At Oregon, this arrangement supported at least thirty of us teaching two sections of the basic course each term.

Additionally, at UO, the faculty member tasked with organizing and supervising the basic course did not teach in the program. This was an atypical arrangement that provided select graduate students with unique opportunities. The course was managed by an advanced member of the Ph.D.-seeking cohort especially selected for their organizational skills and their ability to write and deliver the weekly mass lecture.

The first year that I taught in the program, a two-person team, one male one female, ran the basic course. Second year, Carol Shuherk, Professor #1's featured Ph.D. candidate, was in charge of the program. As Carol transitioned out of the role and my third year approached, no clear successor emerged. I was interviewed for the position of basic course director but the faculty member who made these decisions thought that I was not quite ready for the full responsibility. Additionally, I think that Prof. Charlie Leistner was wise enough to recognize that I needed more supervision than he was willing to prioritize and that it would be better if constraints to my behavior came from peers rather than from faculty. And so, married student housing buddies David and I were selected as co-directors. David was tasked with doing the majority of the mass lectures and I was responsible for organizing the course details. I was also allowed to teach two of the mass lectures in preparation for the following year when I would take over the course on my own as David was a year ahead of me in the program.

And so, by the time I completed the degree and left the University of Oregon, I had served one year as basic speech course co-director and one as basic speech course director. Given the fact that basic speech course programs are a necessity at most American universities, experience serving as basic course director was tantamount to a guarantee of initial employment after graduation. Most assuredly, the experience of authoring and delivering the mass lectures, organizing 60-plus sections of the course, and coordinating more than 30 graduate student teachers was an asset to my profile as a teacher and academic.

The final two years in the doctoral program in Eugene presented a myriad of interesting developments. Co-directing and then directing the basic course was challenging and time-consuming. During the third year, I began a job search in hopes of sewing up a position before

fully completing the program. It is not uncommon for Ph.D. candidates to take faculty jobs while they are writing the doctoral dissertation. Since required courses and the written examination are completed when one becomes a Ph.D. candidate, residence at the University is not required. Further, since many teach as graduate students anyway, it seems as though taking an early job at full pay kills two birds with one stone: candidates aren't engaged in a job search that distracts from writing the dissertation and their income increases exponentially while they do the same work they would do anyway (teach 2 or 3 classes).

There are downsides to taking an early job: this is one of the principal reasons that the system creates so many A.B.D.s. Unfortunately, when some Ph.D. candidates take teaching jobs before they finish the dissertation, the workload at the new school gets in the way and they complete neither the dissertation nor the degree. I was willing to take that risk if I could secure a choice job, so I engaged in a medium-range job search. The results scared the crap out of me. I did not receive a single invitation for interview. Had this been the "real" job search at the end of the Ph.D. program, we would have been in serious trouble; after I earned the degree, we would no longer have either graduate student housing or income. Going through the process once served as a tune-up for the real thing to come, but nevertheless, the negative outcome was worrisome and belied the idea that directing the basic course provided a guarantee of future employment. I'd been in that perilous situation at WSU after the Ph.D. folded; I was not about to go that direction again.

Teaching and basic course direction notwithstanding, the dissertation was the principal job during the final year. I laid out a field-based research project investigating conversation between sellers and customers in retail merchandise environments. I spent a few months

collecting audio recordings of, and notes about, sales encounters in a variety of retail settings. Research of this nature could not be accomplished under post-2000 legal regimes, but in 1984 and 1985, collecting random and anonymous audio recordings of unidentified strangers in public settings in the state of Washington was legal. I collected the data for my Ph.D. dissertation in the stores, shops, and restaurants in the Seattle area. Pop culture contributed mightily to my efforts: the *Sony Walkman* had recently become exceedingly popular; it seemed as though nearly everyone had *Walkman* earphones on in public. I purchased and wore a **recording** *Walkman* so I could collect public, random and anonymous data without having to whip out an obtrusive recording device. Instead, I simply turned the machine on and wore it in full view. I only recorded talk that subjects delivered knowing that I was close enough to over-hear them. I collected most of the data that I needed before, or soon after, Thanksgiving so that there was time left in the year to write the dissertation and search for a teaching job

I promised a story about the laundry room at *Westmoreland Village*; that story is especially relevant to my late-career work in digital communication. While there's nothing remarkable about the provision of a common laundry room for 200 or so families living in student housing, this particular laundry room had a unique feature (in addition to the fact that it was free, rather than coin-operated, thereby helping us survive on reduced incomes).

The University of Oregon was technologically progressive; its computer science department and computing services were both on the cutting edge. Because a number of the students in married student housing majored in technical areas, the University provided *Westmoreland Village* with networked computational resources.

At this point in digital-communication-technology history, provision of networked resources sometimes meant a “dumb terminal” attached to the University network. The set-up consisted of a video monitor, keyboard, electrical connections, and connection to the University’s computer network via a



*Westmoreland Place
Laundry Room*

dedicated telephone line. In this case, the equipment was placed in the laundry room as it was the only common area in the complex. Users dialed in and logged onto the University’s mainframe. Data input was via typed line-code commands. Commands were typed one line at a time; after hitting return, the previous line disappeared from the screen. A line of text constituted a particular sort of code, so paragraphs could be built by entering consecutive lines of sentences. Users then picked up the output—printed on wide sheets of “green-bar” with perforated holes on the right and left sides—at the computer center on campus, the next day.

I had only taken one computer course, programming in *BASIC*, at CSULB to this point and knew virtually nothing about programming or about networked computers. But I had a dire need: The University followed strict guidelines for the production of the finished dissertation. Advanced degree candidates were virtually required to hire a professional typist whose work was approved by the director of the graduate school. Typing one’s own dissertation, or hiring from outside the system, ran afoul of the editorial review process and could delay or derail degree completion. On the one hand, this arrangement seemed like a racket between the graduate school and approved typists. On the other, the process helped make dissertations stylistically consistent according to approved quality and standards. Unfortunately, typists were expensive and I could not afford to hire one for both the rough draft of my dissertation and the final version.

I owned an *IBM Correcting-Selectric* typewriter and had typed my own Master's thesis. Since Evangeline had done such a wonderful job teaching me how to type, in addition to my taking the standard typing course in high school, I was a much better typist than most graduate students so could take advantage of the ease and speed provided by the *Correcting-Selectric*. However, as advanced as that machine was at the time, it did not record a file of any type. Once one removed the page from the machine, corrections had to be made by retyping the page (or using a lot of *White Out* and retyping whole sections). Alternatively, entering data into computers produced correctable files. Unfortunately, because of the nature of the dumb terminal in our laundry room, I could not edit the files in real time. Nevertheless, if major corrections had to be made, I could call up the file and make the necessary corrections one line at a time. This was far preferable to typing with the *IBM* typewriter.

I approached staff at the computing center and asked if they could teach me to logon and use the line editor; gratefully they agreed. Soon I was sweating, late at night in the laundry room, loads of laundry in the dryers running behind me, typing words that I had written (typed or long-hand) during the day into the dumb terminal so that I could pick up the output at the computer center the next morning. The typist I hired for the final draft was shocked when I delivered the rough draft of my dissertation printed on 15-inch-wide, folded, "green bar," the standard printed output media at the computing center. She had never before typed a dissertation from green bar.

Learning to use computers came in handy as academia would soon more fully enter the computer age. Working with the dumb terminal, the line editing program, and the computing center pushed me a technological step ahead of many non-computer-science-colleagues.

Completion of the dissertation moved along as planned, so I re-entered the job market prior to the annual Speech Communication Association (now known as the National Communication Association) convention in mid-November. Gratefully, I received a positive response a couple of weeks before Easter break, spring 1985. Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois offered an interview. Of course, I'd been to Peoria and still had family living in town, facts that increased my interest in the position. I eagerly accepted the offer to interview.

The interview was completed over UO's Easter break; Since the Oregon break covered the entire week, whereas Bradley was only out-of-session Thursday and Friday of Easter week, classes were in session at Bradley during my two-day visit. Long before the end of the semester and the completion of the dissertation, I was hired in Peoria to serve as the Director of the Basic Speech Program in the Department of Communication at Bradley. We were ecstatic. Not only was I offered a good job, the offer came early enough that I was able to accept it and curtail my job search thereby enabling me to focus on completing the dissertation before the end of the term. I graduated at the end of May rather than dragging the process out, or worse, taking it along to the new job.

I briefly contemplated continuing the job search by turning down Bradley's offer; we wanted to stay in the West and I had other applications still in the hopper. However, something about "a bird in the hand" being "worth more than another failed job-search" appealed strongly to a young couple who were about to be thrown out of their apartment. We faced living on the single salary of a retail sales clerk in a city with a relatively high cost of living so we made plans for our move to Peoria after graduation. However, a bit of good fortune delayed our departure.



*Evangeline, new
Dr. Ed, Cheryl*



*Rog and new Dr. Ed. This image took on additional
significance in October, 1985. It's the last picture of my
father and I together*

Since leaving Long Beach in 1975, I had not been employed by a University, as a teacher, over a summer. I was always forced to find three months' worth of part-time work. In fact, summers were the only times that I took out student loans: Twice I borrowed \$1,800 from WSU in order to bridge spring and fall terms. I also applied for, and received, food stamps, wrote sports information, worked as a census taker, and painted every apartment wall in need, for money during summers. In Eugene, we survived on Cheryl's income and reductions in our spending. This feature changed over the summer of '85.

Toward the end of the spring term, the Department at UO asked me to teach a summer section of "Argumentation." A senior member of the faculty, Robert Friedman, usually taught the course. There were a number of students who needed the class to graduate before the end of the summer and Bob did not want to teach it in the summer. As I was the senior member of the Ph.D. cohort and had already received the degree just prior to the beginning of the summer session, I was offered the assignment. Sean O'Rourke would have been a much better choice as he would, the next fall, enter his final year in law school and had been a competitive debater in high school and college. However, gratefully, Sean was simply too busy with his law studies to teach the course.

There was a major drawback: I had no practical experience in argumentation or debate. I had not been a member of a debate team, had neither served as a debate nor forensics coach, nor had I taught Argumentation. In short, my only “experience” was the Argumentation class that I took from Bob while at the University of Oregon; the very course I was to teach. Nevertheless, leadership in the department thought a lot of Bob’s class and so assumed that I would be adequately trained for re-presenting the material. I pulled out my class notes, spent a couple of weeks cramming, and did a competent job teaching the class. Most importantly, I earned enough money that we were able to move to Peoria without cutting corners. Bradley University offered a modest reimbursement for moving expenses but we had to front the costs and so the extra money from the Argumentation course came in very handy. Not to mention the fact that I put one additional course under my teaching belt prior to heading off to my first real job. Eventually, I taught Argumentation and Debate at BU, once.

As we climbed up into the cab of the *UHaul* rental truck that we used to move our belongings and tow our Buick, I told Cheryl that I would soon show her corn growing as high as the top of the cab. Raised near the Palouse wheat fields, she looked down at the ground far below, gave me a look of disbelief, and said “no way.” “Yes, it will be.” “A nickel says that it will definitely not.” “That’s a bet you’ll regret!”

I suspect you already know how that one turned out and how far that nickel didn’t go.

And, of course, I headed toward the Midwest under yet another name-change: Dr. Edward Lee Lamoureux, Ph. D.

[To Table of Contents](#)