

# My Miracle Year, 1968

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## Abstract

Late in 1967, during my fourth year as Assistant Professor of Mathematics at Princeton University, I took LSD for the first time. Within four months, I had accepted a tenure position at UCSC, and more miracles ensued. This account is a supplement to my chapter in *Hip Santa Cruz*, published a year ago.

## My prehistory from 1958

My own story in math started in 1958, when I joined the math department at the University of Michigan. Finishing my PhD in Spring 1960, I was lucky to get my first job in Berkeley. Lucky, because overnight it had become a first-class mathematical center. The governor of California, Pat Brown, had decided that California would follow Detroit into oblivion unless they really pushed science and math education. So with the aid of a large grant, in the fall of 1960 Berkeley became the home of a number of very famous and capable research mathematicians. Miraculously, I happened to be in this special place and time. After two years in Berkeley I went to Columbia, another excellent math department.

In 1964 I went on to Princeton, and again, I found myself at yet another great math center. I was there for four years. In the first year, I was assigned an honors calculus course to teach. It had fifteen students; one was still in high school, the others were all freshman. They were all great students. When I moved on to the sequel course the following year, they all followed. And for four years in a row they were my star pupils, and eventually all got PhDs and became professors.

## Meeting Santa Cruz, March, 1968

The University of California at Santa Cruz, UCSC, opened in 1965, in the ambience of student actions worldwide. Its college-centered plan was to open a new and relatively independent college of about 1000 students every year for 20 years or more.

In my last year at Princeton I received an offer from UCSC, and Phil Bell, the new provost of the fourth college, came to Princeton to interview me. I decided to go and have a look, although I had no intention of accepting the offer. So I went ahead anyway and visited Santa Cruz. I had an interview with Vice Chancellor Clauser; we had a disagreement, and I think that influenced my further history in Santa Cruz in the following years.

I was prepared for Santa Cruz by a couple of experiences I had at Princeton. First of all there was my first LSD trip, in the beginning of that last year, November of 1967. And secondly, there was my initiation into student politics. SDS was active on campuses, not only in California but throughout the East Coast and even in Europe. I joined a group of students who occupied the president's office: The goal of this action was to make Princeton co-ed, and we succeeded.

With this behind me, I came to Santa Cruz just to have a look, and I was surprised by a couple of things. One was the ongoing political activity on campus, mostly around the issue of the Vietnam war. And the other was the Hip subculture which was flourishing in downtown Santa Cruz. Comparing Santa Cruz in the Spring of 1968 with Princeton at the same time, I knew I just had to accept the UCSC offer.

## Berkeley, Summer, 1968

My transition from Princeton to Santa Cruz was punctuated by a summer conference at UC Berkeley. This was a summer-long event on Global Analysis sponsored by the American Mathematical Society. I wanted to go to that conference en route to Santa Cruz, and many of my Princeton students wanted to go also.

With guidance from the I Ching we invented the Eagle Flying project. We proposed to write a series of new math textbooks, sell the idea to a publisher, and use the money to sponsor our trip to Berkeley. The plan was that the Eagle Flying group, mostly students from Princeton, would, in the course of eight weeks in Berkeley, produce twelve new textbooks for a new math program. We rented a large house near the UC Berkeley campus. The Eagles lived there communally while working on these books, and in the daytime we went to the extremely interesting conference at the Berkeley math department.

## **Santa Cruz, Fall, 1968**

At the end of the summer conference I moved to Santa Cruz with my wife, Caroline, and children, Peter, age 4, and John, age 3. We bought a derelict Victorian mansion near Santa Cruz High School on California Street, which soon evolved into a Hippie commune.

From the first day at UCSC I got on the wrong side of the Chancellor, Dean McHenry. First of all, I arrived on campus for my initial day of work on a motorcycle. But McHenry hated motorcycles. In those days there was a kiosk that you had to pass through to get on campus. So my misdemeanor was reported to McHenry.

The next mishap involved a UC Regents meeting. These meetings rotated from campus to campus, and this particular one was on the UCSC campus in October, 1968, shortly after my arrival. Student activists planned a protest march to greet the Regents when they arrived on the UCSC campus. So here's my second misstep, in more detail.

### **The Regents meeting**

The Regents meeting on the Santa Cruz campus was the occasion for a massive student action having several goals: the end of the war in Vietnam, more academic freedom, lower tuition, and civil rights.

Some of the student activists attacked the bus that was carrying the Regents around the UCSC campus. Although they failed, they attempted to roll the bus over by rocking it from side to side, with the Regents inside.

Another part of this protest was a march led by a pig on a leash, and two professors, Paul Lee and me. Figure 1 shows Paul Lee, dressed in his academic robe, and me, in my American flag shirt. Even though that photo was published in the Los Angeles Times, it was just part of my problem.

### **The Bill Moore affair**

At the same time this Regents meeting was happening, we were visited by Bill Moore, who was head of the Black Liberation movement in Santa Cruz County, and associated with the Black Panthers in Oakland.

I had arrived for the opening year of College 4. College 5 was in construction and about to open; College 6 was in the early stages of planning; and no one had any idea yet about College 7.

Except for Bill Moore. He was working in Santa Cruz, and he was aware of the college-by-college growth plan of UCSC. He had an idea for the improvement of the

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Figure 1: Ralph and Paul at the Regents meeting.

UC System, an idea he called *The College of Malcolm X*.

I heard about it off campus. My house was next door to Santa Cruz High School. Walking home one night, I heard a commotion going on in the high school. There were some black people wearing red berets, and Bill Moore was speaking.

He said that College 7 should be a place that would be home for minority students, which would reflect their culture, their food, their religion, their play, their color schemes, their everything. It would aid attracting and retaining minority students. It should be called the College of Malcolm X, because Malcolm X was a hugely popular leader of minorities, he was brilliant, and he was adequately non-passive.

From the stage of the school auditorium, Bill Moore said he had this idea for College 7 but they would not let him speak on the campus. I went up to him after his talk and told him that I was a professor at UCSC and a fellow of Merrill College. We have academic freedom, I said. Anyone can speak on campus. And I invited him to speak at Merrill.

But when he arrived at Merrill College to speak, at my invitation, he was escorted

off campus by police.

So I got rather in trouble again over my support of Bill Moore, academic freedom, and so on. UCSC tried to fire me. I got a lawyer, who saved me. Many professors came to my support, because I had tenure: if they could fire me with tenure, everybody was unsafe. Later on, McHenry announced that I had won the war with him, and he resigned.

There was an interview with McHenry in the library. It had been transcribed and was online. He was interviewed by Elizabeth Calciano in January of 1969, just two or three months after these events. So I consulted it, and discovered that McHenry had been annoyed by two math professors. Me for my politics, and Bob Herman for his beard.

## Conclusion

In the three years following my first year at the University, there were no hires in the UCSC math department. There was a theory for that.

*Since I had misbehaved, annoying Chancellor McHenry to the point that he could not sleep and suffered severe depression, and since I was in the math department, therefore the math department must be punished. Math could never grow at UCSC, because of me.*

Some colleagues believed this theory. And I kind of believed it myself at the time. And McHenry was not the only one annoyed, as Figure 2 shows. It was my political activity, rather than my Hip Culture affiliation, that caused the problem. This is my memory of 1968.

My move from Princeton to Santa Cruz was among the greatest bifurcations of my life, and LSD was an essential trigger.

I have never regretted it.

# KNOW THE CANDIDATES

FOR

## Santa Cruz School Board

- **SARA BUNNETT:** WIFE OF U.C. PROFESSOR, Joseph M. Bunnett, Graduate of REED College.
- **REV. HERBERT SCHMIDT:** U.C. CAMPUS PASTOR, one of the supporters of the SEX EDUCATION PROGRAM "Time of Your Life." Active in Federal war on Poverty and GRAPE BOYCOTT.
- **CHARLES OLIVER:** U.C. ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN: Registered PEACE AND FREEDOM PARTY.

## IS THIS WHAT YOU WANT FOR YOUR SCHOOL BOARD?

Mr. McCallie, I'm MRS. JOSEPH M. BUNNETT . . . I really haven't known what to think as I was sitting here, because listening to your resolution that you passed, I really was crushed. I feel that, much more properly, if you had really known the circumstances, you would have been passing a resolution commending the students at UCSC for resisting the derision and abuse which many of them received from visitors from outside, because of their reasonably calm approach to all the thing that were going on on the campus in these two days. I think, if you would look at the whole picture and I'm including asking Mrs. Lans to do this too, the new media, the people of Santa Cruz, public opinion has come to expect to encourage the certain attitudes on the part of our students today. And I must say that when you worry about professors marching with students, they were marching with students for very good reason. The communication between students and professors you can't count the . . . if no one talks to you or listens to you, and the best way to cope with this is to be all together, I know that on Thursday I was there. I was there both days. In the courtyard of Crown College there were many professors mixing with the students, talking with the students, there were long conversations. At the end of these two days, I was just proud of our students, that nothing violent occurred and I know that from talking to them, that many of them were abused and derided by visitors because they would not resort to violence, and I would strongly urge you, if you don't care to rescind the resolution you have just passed, that you pass another one commending our students for resisting temptation. Thank you.

● **NOTE:** one professor involved in the above demonstration was **Ralph Abraham**. Professor Abraham spoke to Santa Cruz High School students March 4, 1969. ("Trident" 3-21-'69) WITHOUT ANY ACTION BY THE PRESENT BOARD.

"Professor Abraham stated that THE MAIN ISSUES WHICH ARE PRESENTLY BRINGING SOME FORM OF UNREST AT UCSC ARE THE MALCOLM X COLLEGE CONTROVERSY, AND THE CHANCELLORS REFUSAL TO ALLOW SPEAKERS TO COME TO THE UNIVERSITY, SUCH AS BILL MOORE FROM THE BLACK LIBERATION COMMITTEE IN SANTA CRUZ, JOAN BAEZ AND DAVID HARRIS, AND ALSO TIMOTHY LEARY.

**DON'T BRING U.C. UNREST TO SANTA CRUZ SCHOOLS**

A picture of Profesesor Abraham appeared in The Sentinel Oct. 18, 1969, page 15, showing a bushy-haired individual who was dressed in a replica of the American flag shirt and beads.

Sponsored by the Committee ff Parents For Better Schools  
DICK DOGHERRA, JR., Chairman

Figure 2: From the Santa Cruz Sentinal, October 18, 1969, thanks to Evan Schaffer.