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Anneli Lax: In Memoriam

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Anneli Lax: In Memoriam

Anneli was a beloved friend and mentor. I first met her when I was studying for my Ph.D. at New York University in the 1980's. I was fortunate that she agreed to be my thesis advisor, and I benefited from her interest in my research—then and thereafter. I know I speak for many when I say that my mathematical life was deeply enriched by countless stimulating conversations with her. Her view of mathematics profoundly influenced my approach to the subject as well as how I teach it. She made me ever-conscious of connections with analysis in my investigations of geometry. She taught me how to capture the imagination of students, encouraging them to experience the rewards of doing mathematics. Her mathematical company for 20 years empowered me to make the transition from being her student to being her colleague.

Here, however, I would like to share some (more personal) images of our friendship.

My memories of Anneli are vivid with pictures. When I think of her, the first thing I see is her smile. With that smile, Anneli invited you to talk, to share ideas, to reveal concerns. She was a great listener and a great problem solver.

My second image is of her strength—not only intellectually, but physically. I picture her carrying logs at Prince Camp, swimming in the ocean in Malibu during the winter, hiking in Colorado.

I have many memories of times shared with Anneli, for which I am very grateful. I'd like to share one re-

cent experience with you that is very dear to me. I spent some time with Anneli and Peter in the Adirondacks the summer before last—Peter calls it “a little bit of heaven on earth.” Anneli was already stricken with cancer, but she was (thankfully!) the picture of good health and cheer. She swam in the lake ever morning (too cold for me!), canoed, hiked, and baked bread (from scratch!). One evening, Anneli suggested we go to pick some berries. I am a city person. I had visions of strolling down a lane with a white



basket daintly selecting the delicate fruit. We set out, and Anneli drove us deep into the woods. We then walked down bug-infested paths to the berry bushes. In order to retrieve the fruit, we had to be up front and personal with these prickly growths. Anneli dove right in and filled her bucket to the brim. I, however, spent my time engaged in fending off the pesty bugs and avoiding the thorns. Still, I was invited to reap the fruits of everyone's labor and was not denied a delicious dessert which Anneli prepared that evening. When I think of that

day, I carry in my heart many of the things I loved about Anneli—her quiet determination, her openness and acceptance of the weaknesses of others, and her joy in simple pleasures.

Anneli was an extraordinary person, and it was a privilege to know her and to love her. I miss her very much.

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