

What Ike brought about and took away: a hurricane and Doug Klein

This is a personal account of few months of mathematical chemistry, a hurricane and the luck of having shared a few months with Douglas Jay Klein (Doug).

After having read several Doug's scientific papers on partial orders (posets) in chemistry and their uses, being in touch with him by email, I finally met him in a scientific conference. I followed his advice to work for a PhD on posets and I have conducted a quite short postdoc internship with him. Then hurricane Ike hit Galveston and Doug's living place. This event offered me the unique opportunity of meeting Doug not only as the leading scientist (and master that he is) but as a real person, resilient against the power of nature and of human condition.

After getting to Galveston for starting a postdoc with Doug, I received all the attention Doug & Janet (Doug's wife) used to have with Doug's postdocs, *i.e.* taking care of the living place, the bed, the pillow, the lamp, the best way to go to the supermarket; I also had the opportunity of fixing a forgotten Doug's child bike to ride during my stay (unfortunately it was stolen from my apartment's parking lot!). At the start of my time in Texas I also spent some weeks in Doug & Janet's house while they helped me to find the best place to stay. That was how I met their cats, their personal library with classics of mathematics, chemistry and physics and how I could share several beers chatting about the possibility of getting Obama as president, molecular symmetry and its effects on materials, of course partial orders and the marvels of D'Arcy Thompson. That was how I came to know our common interest of buying second hand scientific books. I do not forget eating fast food in a very fast manner to be able to go to book stores and enjoy selecting interesting books.

Knowing that Hurricane Ike was heading for Galveston, I evacuated to Texas A&M University College Station campus, while Doug & Janet got ready everything to go to Tyler. Doug had difficult times taking care of his classes in chemistry and physics, of his postdocs, his research, all combined with the fear of Ike coming to Galveston. He was, as always, looking after his beloved Janet, who was ill but I am sure was a source of strength to keep working in the organized and imaginative manner he does. Doug commuted between Tyler, College Station and

Galveston during those hectic days. Finally, Ike impacted Galveston on September 13, 2008 devastating a big part of the city and flooding Doug & Janet's house, a couple of blocks far from the beach. Some days after Ike, I had the opportunity to ride shotgun with Doug at dawn from College Station to Galveston and we felt the power of nature that played like a child in a swimming pool with his boats, which we found crushing dwellings and laying debris all over the roads. In such a mess of boats, trees and debris we were able to make our way to our respective living places. I had the misfortune to see Doug & Janet house still flooded, with books and cat's food all mixed together. It was a pity to decide to trash Doug's copy of his PhD dissertation and some other wet books. That was how I met Doug as a pedestrian, carrying out over his shoulders the debris of his house, trashing a piano corrupted by the salty water.

It was in those trips between College Station and Galveston that I came to know that Doug knew since his high school times that he wanted to be a theoretical chemist and that he made an exhaustive search of the best professors in the field to pursue those studies. We had quite vivid discussions about mathematics, chemistry, mathematical chemistry, their histories, the role of several scientists in shaping them up,... until we listen the police siren and we saw the blue and red lights right behind us. Yes, we got a ticket because of the extra fuel mathematical chemistry impelled to Doug's car.

Shortly after Ike came; I had to leave my privileged position as Doug's postdoc because of several duties with my university in Colombia. The very day of my departure, last Ike's winds took away Janet from Doug's arms.

With the first rays of light in our trips I was totally convinced of Doug's strength as a scientist but mainly as a human being to whom I owe too much and who not only showed me the most beautiful flowers of the mathematical chemistry garden, but who gave me lessons of life, I will never forget.

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