

June 16, 2009

When I heard of Krzysz's accident, I was shaken; I always remembered him full of life, one black eyebrow raised, highlighting a slanted smile that often gave way to a laughing growl. Many friends and colleagues, Jose Figueroa, Takishi Kimura, Claude Lebrun, immediately got in touch, and we tried to keep each other updated on his condition.

Krzysz touched many people in many ways; quantifiably, in this digital age, at the time of his accident, Google had him almost 20000 times, and on my own computer, his name appeared 252 times; of course, since then, both numbers have increased—he is not forgotten. One way that he will be remembered is his through his mathematical library—generously donated by his widow, Rowan Wymark Galicki to the new Simons Center for Geometry and Physics.

One of those items on my computer is a letter that I wrote for him about ten years ago. I hope that you won't mind if I quote from it:

...[Krzysz] was my graduate student from 1984 to 1987; he was one of the best students that I have seen in my fifteen years at Stony Brook, and one of the three most mathematically talented. He is now a well established mathematician of the first order.

The work that I know best concerns moment maps on quaternion Kähler manifolds...This work illustrates his unique talents well...I suggested ... a naive physicist's idea. Krzysz realized that it involved new and very interesting mathematics. He worked out both the physics and the mathematical ideas...His work impressed Blaine Lawson in the mathematics department so much that Blaine became his *de facto* second thesis advisor...[Blaine told me that whereas my] work ... was a rather straightforward generalization of known results...[Krzysz's] results ... were surprising and unexpected.

[The letter goes on to mention a few of Krzysz's many contributions to mathematics and ends:] his CV clearly attests to the high regard that his peers have for him: He has had many invitations to prestigious institutions, has been asked to organize workshops, been invited to numerous conferences, and has enviable grant support.

When Krzysz was leaving Stony Brook, he introduced me to someone in his life outside of mathematics: his wife Rowan. We talked about the theater—specifically, Samuel Beckett; I think I never saw him happier: It was even better than proving a theorem.

My most recent memories of Krzysz were from here in Rome, at a conference that he co-organized in September 1999. It was the right time of the year, and he introduced me to his favorite dish: lightly fried fresh porcini mushrooms.

He loved mathematics and he loved the mountains, and though we all miss him and will continue to miss him, he died doing what he loved, and that is not the worst thing in the world.