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(interviewed by Kenneth A. Ross)

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in the country near LaPaz, Indiana. Our family of five lived in a four-room house with neither running water nor indoor toilet. My father died before I was born, so the breadwinners in the family were my grandfather and my mother. My mother was a secretary in a box-making factory. When I was 7 1/2, my mother remarried, we moved to a farm a little over a mile from our previous home, and she became a farmer's wife. I was an only child, but had one step-brother and two step-sisters.

Where did you go to school?

I went to LaPaz public school, grades 1-12. There were about 600 students in the entire school, and there were 42 in my graduating class, which was the largest graduating class up to that time. I was the valedictorian.

I went directly to Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, though I was tempted by a \$1000 scholarship to Purdue University – I felt it would be too big a jump from LaPaz to such a large university. Earlham was a Quaker college with about 2000 students. My step-father had died in the spring of my junior year in high school, but my mother was determined that I go to college. She moved to Richmond, so that we could live together and minimize expenses, and there she obtained a secretarial job in a phonograph record pressing plant.

In addition to Earlham, my brief experience with the U.S. Marine Corps was an important part of my education. Earlham did not participate in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, and I thought I would like to be a pilot. So I joined the Platoon Leaders Class and attended basic training at Quantico for six weeks in the summer of 1962. I really disliked the training, but it taught me that with desire and focus I could do things that I would have thought impossible. When I returned for the second summer training, my blood pressure was higher than allowed for an officer and so I was given an honorable discharge – but remained subject to the draft throughout the Vietnam war period.

When did you get interested in mathematics? What was the special attraction?

I was inspired by my high school course on plane and solid trigonometry, which was a blend of algebra and geometry. It was taught by a shy, but very good, teacher who also taught physics. My goal was to become a high school teacher. Growing up on a farm was a good life, but I needed something new and different. At Earlham, I majored in mathematics while minoring in physics and education. I

did practice teaching and left Earlham with an Indiana secondary teacher's license.

I see that you got your Ph.D. at the University of Illinois and that your advisor was Michael Barr. Is there anything to report about your years in graduate school or your work with Barr?

Since I knew that I would need an MS as a high school teacher, I went directly to graduate school after Earlham. I applied to five graduate schools in 1964, including Dartmouth and New Mexico State, but none of them offered financial support. At that point the Earlham mathematics faculty got proactive – I don't know the details – and I was offered a teaching assistantship at the University of Illinois at Urbana.

Graduate school was a difficult transition, both because of the number of students and the level of competition, but I continued to like mathematics. I got my MS after two years and decided to pursue a Ph.D. Since I had taken a course on cohomology of groups from Joe Rotman and one on homological algebra from Irving Reiner, both of which I thoroughly enjoyed, I asked Rotman if he would be my Ph.D. advisor in the cohomology of groups, but he suggested Michael Barr and contacted him about me. Barr agreed to take me on, and I ended up working on sheaf theory, cohomology, and category theory. As a mentor, Barr was a minimalist but this suited me well and we turned out to be a good match.

When Barr moved to McGill in 1968, I was fortunate to be one of three of his students who went there with him. Illinois provided some funds, and McGill gave me a $\frac{1}{4}$ -time visiting appointment. Living in Montreal during that "Quebec libre" period was an interesting and expanding experience.

My first faculty appointment was at Wilkes College in 1969, which was fun, but I wanted to give myself a better chance to do research. In 1970 I was hired by M. E. Munroe at the University of New Hampshire (UNH). From 1966 to 1981, I was married to Susan (Alexander); she was an aspiring author of fiction but worked as a social worker. I met my current wife, Marie Gaudard, a statistician, when she interviewed for a position at New Hampshire; we were married in 1983.

How did you get involved in the MAA?

My involvement with the MAA leadership came relatively late in my career, so let me give some background. In 1986, the chair and his wife at UNH were killed in an automobile accident; I was asked by the dean to chair the Department and served for five semesters. In the fall of 1988, I applied for an open Associate Executive Director position at the AMS. William (Bus) Jaco was the Executive Director at the time. I obtained the job, which involved editing the Notices and working on membership and publication productions. I worked at the AMS from

June, 1989, through August, 1990, and enjoyed it a lot, but Marie, who also had taken a leave from her UNH position, was not happy professionally. I did some sincere soul searching about what to do and found the AMS Secretary, Robert Fossum, to be especially helpful in sorting through my priorities relative to my family and my profession.

Ultimately I resigned as AMS Associate Executive Director, but continued to work half-time for AMS for another year, spending one or two nights a week in Providence. This was followed by a two-year appointment as chair at UNH again, during which time I led a serious review of the department, both internally and externally.

In 1993-1994 I was on sabbatical leave at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. At that time, I was approached by Jerry Alexanderson concerning the Associate Secretary job in the MAA. This idea came out of the blue, especially since I had attended only two national meetings up to that time! I suspect – but do not know – that Hope Daly, Director of the AMS Meetings Department, had recommended me. I served as MAA Associate Secretary from 1994 to 1998.

How did that go?

In spite of exceptional mentoring by my predecessor, Ken Ross, it was difficult. My tenure began at precisely the time that AMS was deciding to end its agreement with MAA on hosting joint summer MathFests. This they did, leaving precious little time for MAA to decide what to do about the decision. I felt that the MAA was fearful that it couldn't organize and sustain MathFests on its own. But the organization set up the formal apparatus to "give it a go" anyway.

There was an early Board resolution that MathFests must be self-supporting or die, so I was under a constant financial cloud. We obtained bids from three professional meeting-planning organizations, including the AMS; the lowest bid was from the Windsor Group. Though the AMS meetings people knew us, that was both an advantage and a disadvantage. My concern was that the AMS Meetings Department was so used to not saying "no" to attendees, that it would be difficult for the MAA to break even on the MathFests (which, even as joint meetings, had been losing money for years). Thus, although it was tempting to go with AMS, we ended up choosing the low bidder.

The first site-selection committee consisted of Carolyn Mahoney, David Smith, and me. We had to consider three or four sites in a very short time, and we had to deal with another constraint because the NEXt Project insisted that the meeting be at least partly a campus meeting, in order to hold down their expenses. These and other considerations led to MAA's first "stand alone" MathFest, in August 1997, being held in Atlanta. Despite the fact that the MAA Board approved the site, it was not well-received by the leadership. We were told to plan on 600 attendees, but in fact over 850 people registered. This was in no

small part due to the vigorous support of the Southeastern section. It is an unfortunate fact that the MAA President, Jerry Alexanderson, was unable to attend this historic summer meeting. I should mention that the Program Committee, especially its chair Barbara Osofsky, was very helpful, as was Dan Kalman at the MAA headquarters.

The next MathFest in 1998 was equally – or perhaps even more – problematical. I was under pressure to make this a joint meeting with the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics (SIAM) in Toronto, in my view because the MAA still didn't think it could run its own MathFests successfully. Trying to run a "joint" meeting with SIAM, in a way similar to the way MAA had done with AMS in the past, was difficult and in the end proved impossible to carry out. The meeting was barely a joint meeting, as few members attended both MAA and SIAM sessions. SIAM did recommend the use of the Ryerson University site, and that worked very well.

I can see why you didn't opt for a second term as Associate Secretary. What other MAA activities have you been involved with?

Currently I'm a book acquisitions editor. Earlier, I served on the Publications Management Committee. I chaired the first MAA Web Policy Committee and the search committee that recommended Martha Siegel as MAA Secretary. I also served on the most recent search committee for Associate Secretary.

What changes have you seen in the MAA since you first became involved?

I've been an MAA member since the early 1960s, and the biggest change of which I'm aware is the extent of the MAA's involvement with external grant funding; for me, that's a mixed blessing. In addition, and partly because of administration of funding, the number of employees at the DC headquarters has increased appreciably. Until recently, the MAA did not have its own meetings department; the fact that it now does surely grew out of its successful sole sponsorship of MathFests, as well as its acquisition of the Carriage House and its intended use. Finally, I'll mention that the organization as a whole has become more confident in its abilities to chart and manage the development of areas relevant to its mission and not already under its purview.

Have you been active in any mathematics organizations other than the MAA and AMS?

Not formally, although my efforts as book acquisitions editor for MAA keep me in contact with many areas of the mathematics community. There is also an informal category theory group that meets randomly but regularly around the world and I have maintained contact with them. I also have done some fairly serious editing for The Theory and Applications of Categories electronic "reprint" series.

Which personalities have stood out in the mathematical community, in the MAA and elsewhere?

This is fraught with peril because I can't name everyone, and I'll surely forget some that I should mention. But you asked, so:

In my research: Saunders Mac Lane and Sammy Eilenberg, two giants of mathematics who were wonderful role models.

In my teaching and academic administration: my favorite undergraduate mathematics professor and friend, Harold B. Hanes; good friend and colleague at UNH, Richard Balomenos; and the dean while I was department chair, Otis Sproul.

In my Society and Association dealings: AMS colleagues Bus Jaco, Bill Woolf, and Robert Fossum; MAA associates Don Albers, Ken Ross, Jerry Porter, and Dan Kalman; and Serge Lang, who through example helped teach me how to deal straightforwardly with exceptional personalities.

Elsewhere: My step-brother-in-law, Joseph J. Kleiner; he was truly an exceptional man and served as a role model in many areas of my life. The "first lady of swing", Skippy Blair; she inspires one to be the best one can be at the current moment, and is perhaps the best teacher with whom I have studied.

Thanks for an interesting interview. It was nice to learn your story.