

For George's 80th birthday

Welcome and greetings from Okinawa, where I am currently Dean of Faculty Affairs at the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University. Incidentally, this is one of the few positions that I have held in the last 20 years that George has not held before me ... perhaps only because the University is less than 4 years old.

Anyway, I am sorry that I can't be there – as you know only too well, George, jobs like this consist mostly of solving problems that you did not create, and these have a habit of popping up at inconvenient times.

We have known each other, as colleagues and friends, since you returned to the UK in the early 1970s, fresh from Berkeley. At the time, I was involved in a bubble chamber experiment, proposed by Trevor Bacon, to expose the CERN 2m chamber to a narrow-band neutral kaon beam, to study the $\pi^+\pi^-\pi^0$ decay mode, then a subject of controversy, now largely forgotten. With your arrival, the focus changed to what had been the second aim of the experiment – the $I=1$ $\Sigma\pi$ phase shifts, again something that was then a hot topic and now largely forgotten. This was great for me, because it allowed me to concentrate on the $K_{3\pi}$ decays; however, I also provided an absolute normalization for the $\Lambda\pi$ channel as a check ...

While we were taking data at CERN, probably in 1972 but maybe 1974, I remember going to visit Robert Sekulin in his chalet somewhere behind Thonon. You, Anne, me and the three girls piled into your Austin Maxi and, armed with nothing more than a map and directions, successfully arrived (another skill that has been largely forgotten in this age of the satnav). A splendid day out.

Later, as I rose through the old SERC ranks from the Selection Panel, through the PPC and finally to the Nuclear Physics Board, you were always at the end of the table, providing advice, guidance and discrete leadership. These were valuable lessons for when I eventually succeeded you as Director of Particle Physics at RAL. One thing that I learnt from you during these years is the importance of the art of telling stories – not jokes exactly, but amusing stories with a purpose – in a different domain they would be called parables.

So George, I send you my very best wishes. As part of my duties here (and as you will remember, attending official functions is an important part of these jobs) I am just off to attend the banquet for the Computing in High Energy Physics conference which is being held this year in OIST. Some old friends are there, including Dave Kelsey.

So, since it is 7pm here, I can raise a glass without appearing a complete alcoholic – you will have to wait a few hours ...

Cheers ...