

In Memory of Dr. Edward Riseman
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I was greatly saddened to hear that my Ph.D. advisor, mentor, and friend, Ed Riseman, passed away last weekend. I have many fond memories of Ed and I learned a great deal from him over the years. I will always be grateful to him for the opportunities he afforded me and his wonderful and generous, good heart.

Over the past 35 years Ed (along with Al Hanson) nurtured and developed a cadre (at least 7 generations) of graduate students, referred to as the VISIONS group (including Ed Fisher, Elliott Soloway, Paul Nagin, Tom Williams, John Lowrance, Leonard Wesley, and Daryl Lawton from generation 0). This is an enormous legacy. Ed and Al taught us how to do research, write papers and grant proposals; they brought famous researchers to UMASS to review our work (Nils Nilsson, Ruzena Bajcsy, Azriel Rosenfeld, and David Marr to name just a few); they got us job interviews at prestigious labs (Xerox PARC, SRI, IBM Research, Rand ...); they knew when to apply pressure and when to let up; they took us rock climbing and rafting.

I have many personal, wonderful and sometimes humorous Ed Riseman stories; here are a few of my favorites.

Around 1977 or so Ed moved into the Cliffside Apartments in Sunderland. I had been living there for a couple of years already. Shortly after he moved in, I would see Ed in the mornings and he would offer me a ride to school. In those days, Ed had a rule: “Never pay more than \$100.00 for a car.” He adhered to this rule religiously. On the first ride to school, Ed’s car broke down about half way. We were on a route 116 so it was not a good idea to leave the car on the side of the road. We decided to push the car to the turnoff road for North Amherst (about one mile away). Of course, I did the pushing and Ed did the steering. Every few days Ed would get the car fixed and the following morning he would offer me a ride again. Every third or fourth trip the car would break down about half way and I would do the pushing. So, why did I continue to accept Ed’s ride offer. We had some of the best research discussions in the car on those mornings. Ed’s mind was always open and active. He never discarded unusual ideas until they were proven infeasible. So, for me pushing Ed’s car for a mile was an easy tradeoff I was more than willing to make.

During this same period of time, Ed decided that I could be more productive if I had a computer at home. Since I was working on Bspline surface modeling and shape representations, Ed allowed me to keep the group’s Tektronix 4014 vector graphics machine at home. He would sometimes drop by my apartment to work on the research with me. The standard mode was that he would make suggestions and I would code the visualizations. During one of these sessions, Ed became so excited about the line of research that we were following that he unconsciously began to tear stuffing out of the vinyl-covered, padded seat of the 1950s style kitchen chair on which he was sitting. After every little success at the keyboard he would pull out another small chunk of stuffing and toss it as the next thought rushed into his head. Neither of us was aware of what was happening until we reached a stopping point after a couple of hours. As we both leaned back with that feeling of accomplishment that comes with the tiniest progress on a difficult research problem, we looked around and noticed that the room was covered with stuffing. Ed looked at me and said, “Hey, it snowed in here while we were working!”

In January of 1979 my mother called me and my siblings together in Boston to tell us that she had lung cancer and that doctors had given her three months to live. I was scheduled to finish my dissertation and defend before June 1979. I had already accepted a position at IBM Research and they were anxious for

me to start. For several days I tried to hide the fact that my mother's condition was affecting my ability to concentrate. Finally, Ed called me to his office and extracted my secret. I explained that my mother had instructed me to return to Amherst and continue working on my dissertation. Despite the fact that he was under tremendous pressure from his funding agents and he was periodically being hospitalized for phlebitis, he urged me, "Go home and take care of your mom. You can always finish a dissertation later." Ed's blessing freed me mentally to care for my mother during her terminal phase. I subsequently went to work for IBM Research in San Jose California. Ed never cut the tether and continued to pull me back to Amherst until I finished two years later. I am so grateful.

There are hundreds of Ed stories. These are just a few, but all are indicative of his desire to help people, his innate curiosity, his ability to become totally engrossed in an idea, his enormous energy, his unusual insights into problems, his boundless humor, and his big heart.

Ed, I for one will really miss you. Rest in Peace!

Your student and your friend,

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