

Remembering Gene

Gilbert Strang, March 1 2008 at Stanford

Place is an important part of memory. For me, driving south on Route 280 is always special. That freeway is beautiful. I turn on Alpine, then on Junipero Serra and Campus Drive -- then I get lost and I feel great. I owe all that to Gene -- the mind collects events, visits to him and his seminar and this campus. I think you understand.

The memories of Gene yesterday were so touching, and Mike Saunders with the GPS lady was so hilarious -- Gene would have loved being here. When you think that he talked to Mike just hours before leaving us, it's wonderful.

I want to remember parts of his life that weren't mentioned, the SIAM part and the ICIAM part and the saddle-point part. Gene saw the importance of the saddle-point structure. Of all the times I heard him speak, that lecture influenced me the most. Journals are a lifeblood of SIAM, he founded two major ones. And he was the key to the start of ICIAM -- how far-reaching is that! I thought the scientific content in Zurich last summer was just exciting -- applied math came of age and Gene was in his element there. There and always, he was at his best with students. I think his will has provided for them in a significant way.

We know too that Gene could get mad and stay mad. A great regret was that I couldn't reconcile him to a decision that SIAM took -- my instinct is to accept and move on and leave yourself out of it. Not Gene! He wasn't out of it, he was in the middle of everything -- our work, our lives, and now our thoughts. Which are very happy thoughts -- happy for him and for each other. He has brought our world together, especially today. Thank you Gene.