



Jurek  
Lewandowski

- \* Brilliant Postdoc
- \* Inspiring Colleague
- \* Dear Friend

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My 30+ year collaboration with Jurek began when he joined my Syracuse group as a postdoc. We published our first paper in 1993 and had just begun to work on a joint review article (with Maciej Kolanowski), commissioned by the British IoP, at the time of Jurek's untimely death.

When I heard the news from Elzbieta, I was in a total shock. My mind is still flooded by innumerable memories. In the limited time I have, the best way to express my emotions is to recall what David Hilbert said at the untimely loss of his junior colleague and dear friend Hermann Minkowski. Hilbert's thoughts capture my sentiments succinctly.

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## Hilbert on the untimely passing of Minkowski:

“Our science, which we loved, had brought us together. It appeared as a flowering garden. In that garden there were well-worn paths where one might look around at leisure and enjoy oneself without effort, especially at the side of a congenial companion. But we also liked to seek out hidden trails and discovered many an unexpected view which was pleasing to our eyes; and when one pointed it to the other and we admired it together, our joy was complete.”

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Some of the many hidden trails we had the good fortune to discover together:

## 1. GR as a theory of connections

(Space  $\mathcal{A}$  of generalized connections and Diff invariant measure and differential geometry on  $\mathcal{A}$ ; Quantum Riemannian geometry; Area & Volume operators and their detailed properties.)

## 2. Background independent Gauge Theories.

(The ALMMT collaboration)

## 3. Loop quantum Cosmology

(Foundations, and QFT on LQC backgrounds)

## 4. Classical GR:

(Geometry of NEHs & the first law of WIH mechanics)



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Jurek made many other pioneering contributions with members of his group to: The problem of BH entropy; Spin foams; Near horizon geometries; Asymptotically de Sitter space-times; Algebraically special solutions, ...

These were recognized by a number of international honors:

- Chair, LOC for GR20 and Amaldi 10.
- The Senior Forschungspreis of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.
- Election to Fellowship of ISGRG.
- Visiting Professorships at BNU, FAU, PSU.
- .....



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Jurek cared deeply for his students and postdocs and younger colleagues elsewhere; discussing science passionately with them everywhere he went: Mountain hikes; Beach; Ski slopes, ...



Again, as Hilbert said about Minkowski:

“Science was at all times interesting to him and in no part fatigued him, whether on an excursion or on during the summer holiday, in an art gallery or a railway carriage or on the sidewalks of a big city.”

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# Jurek: A Dear Friend

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Through our close interactions, Jurek quickly transitioned from a brilliant postdoc to an inspiring colleague in the 90s, and soon a close family friend.

To me he was like a younger brother. To our son, Neil, he was “uncle Jurek”. The delightful polish wooden St. Nicholas he gave us still graces our fireplace mantle during Xmas. And the husky puppy he gave our then 4-year-old Neil is still with us some 22 years later!!



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I miss you dearly, Jurek! I carry vivid memories of the time we spent together, always intense, sometimes fighting, and above all I miss the joy we shared while admiring the new vistas that emerged from our calculations on black boards!

I also carry fond memories of the time I spent with you in the company of Elzbieta and Pawel. They have been in my thoughts constantly.

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