

Excerpt from the book Irreversible Processes (p. 155 to 158)

Ray Bonn had spent weeks nursing his wife Helen who was dying of cancer, when Helen and his children conjured a way to get him out of town for a few days in Palo Alto.

#13 A few Days on the Farm

Eddie and Lisa met his plane. Ray felt very tired... "an old man," he told them, and they could see it, even in the fact of his saying it.

They went out to eat directly after getting his bags. There were university students at the restaurant; some were obvious about recognizing him. "Oh shit, Eddie, I forgot my sunglasses."

"And your white cane, too," Lisa said. "They won't hurt anything."

Ray grabbed the now outdated and dog-eared second edition copy of *Aberrations of Relativity* that was handed to him expectantly.

It opened onto the page with the reprinted version of his note to Lesa. He realized that he had not talked to her in person since he had dropped her off at Portland. He had not told her about Helen, although they had e-mailed to discuss the Mariners' desire to have him on the playoff roster again, which he had agreed to allow rather than have to discuss why not. He read now what he had written so long ago over slowly and then turned the page to sign.

"What's your name?" he asked the requester.

"My name's not Lesa," she said smiling. "I'm sorry."

He looked up into a charmingly freckled face, somewhat amused. "No, you're definitely not. Does that mean it's Julie then? I'm not as coy as I once was."

"Yes, it is," she responded with delight. "Julie Thompson."

Ray was too jaded to be as charmed as he might have been a year ago. "Julie, why on earth would you like me to sign this book?"

"I love the book," she said, "I'm an under-grad physics student here at Stanford. I've read through it many times and it's a lot of the reason I'm in physics; it's been so helpful in understanding what relativity is about. I like the way you write. Your and Dr. Sorensen's book is outstanding too. We all think you'll get the Nobel Prize for that work. You should."

He turned away from her and wrote,

"Julie,

"I think there's a Nobel Prize awaiting whomever can sort out all the alternative conjectures concerning relativity. My own guess is that gravity doesn't belong in that hodge-podge by the way. Win the Nobel Prize, will you please.

"Thank you for asking for my signature. I needed this today.

"Ray"

He handed the closed book back to this latter-day Julie. She thanked him graciously and walked back to her table where envious friends all noisily read what he had written, sharing her delight.

Ray could tell that Lisa had read what he had read and written. Then after their dinner, she asked, "How is Lesa?"

"I don't know," he said. "I don't hardly think about her any more except that she had me sign a contract the other day. I haven't talked to her by phone in a couple of months."

Eddie grabbed the bill nervously. "If we're done, we should get out of here."

"Let me get it," Ray said.

"Not today, Pop. You're on the hook tomorrow afternoon."

It was invigorating to be with the Eddie Bonns. Ray had not realized how much strain he had been under and how relaxing it was to know that Helen was in good hands without him having to worry about her for a change. He guessed her forcing him to accept this offer was a good thing for both of them.

He thought the presentation on Friday had gone extremely well. Eddie confirmed that he had also thought so. Ray had never presented material to people who all understood what he was saying before. They asked questions that should actually have stimulated future investigations even for him, if he had been into it anymore.

The weekend itself was most relaxing other than Little Eddie being Little Eddie. Ray had several enjoyable conversations with Lisa. Occasionally she got a bit personal, he thought, such as asking what he thought he would do after Helen "passed".

She wouldn't 'pass', he had answered. He despised the use of such euphemisms. She would 'die', and what he would do then, he didn't know, and didn't want to think about it. He couldn't begin to contemplate what he would do without Helen. She had structured his life for him since they were tiny in such a way that he could handle it. The only way he *could* handle it. She knew what he could handle and fixed it so he could.

"You make it sound as though you had some severe handicap," Lisa said cheerfully.

"Yeah, well. Could we talk about something else?" he asked.

"Sure."

They did.

Ray called Helen a couple of times each day and each time she was cheery and seemed to have much more energy than she had seemed to have possessed when he had left. It was such that he began to think that maybe she really had needed to get his morbidity out of there for a bit. He knew now that it was a good break for him as well.

Once when he called, he thought he heard a couple of voices laughing in the background and asked who all was there. Helen said, "Oh, you know Allie." Would you like to talk to her? And whether he wanted it or not, it happened.

Allie was cheerful with her 'Daddy', saying that she was very happy for an opportunity like this, but that her Mom was missing him.

The Monday presentation was a little different than the one had been on Friday, a considerably smaller audience and each attendee 'into' relativity. He explained in detail why the usual interpretation of energy level decay rates as constituting clock time dilation did not work. Most of those present had copies of *Aberrations of Relativity* opened to the pertinent sections. Ray followed the discussion as presented in his book but gave supplementary considerations he had gotten from discussions with Lesa, where he thought appropriate. Decay involved interactions between material entities with photon or other particle exchanges being involved. The temporal units were statistical. With which frame should the statistics be associated? How can statistics pertinent to a set of phenomena be relative? All this he related to the irreversibility problem addressed in the newer book, *Origins of Irreversibility*. He also went into the appearance of clocks from two perspectives describing associated antinomies, a diagram of which was in the book.

He purposely allowed a lengthy period of questions and answers at the end. That period was very enjoyable, with the discussions almost getting out of control occasionally with various members of the audience disagreeing vocally with each other. Edna Robinson's advice came to mind. Near the end of the time he saw that Julie whose book he had signed at the restaurant, stood up. He said, "Yes, Julie," which flustered her and others a bit. But everyone laughed.

Nervously she said, "You said you didn't think gravity belonged in the 'hodge-podge' of relativity. Could you explain what you meant?"

"Julie Thompson, didn't your mother ever teach you not to kiss and tell?" Everyone laughed uproariously but as soon as he had said it Ray knew it was very inappropriate, not the slightest bit funny, or at all nice. It was awful.

Julie rose again to say, "I am very sorry."

"Don't be. My response was terribly rude, I am so sorry. But I wrote that comment about gravity in your book to give you an advantage over all these other students." More laughter.

"Actually, I've had problems with gravity all my life. Anything that's ten to the minus fortieth the size of something else doesn't seem to me to be a prime mover, does it to you?"

More laughter.

"I had a friend at work who was into 'The Far Side' cartoons. Remember them? Anyway, he got me this postcard that I had on my wall at work until somebody stole it. It was this depiction of a bunch of pink pigs flying around over a green earth, and it read, 'the pigs that don't believe in gravity.' Clearly, I was one of *them*. I still am. If an electron's charge can't warp space, then don't expect me to believe its mass can. After we got rid of action at a distance that I discussed in the article of the similar title in *Aberrations*, we had already accounted for the precession of the perihelion of Mercury's orbit. Read the article and think about it. That's just a tip from an old punter. There may be nothing to it."

"Thank you all," Ray said. "You've been a great audience and even better to interact with. You cannot imagine what a lift you have been to my spirits."

Then someone yelled out, "Aren't you going to sign our books?"

Eddie was there for him with Lisa and Little Eddie then and waited patiently as he signed way too many books.

"Were you there the whole time?" Ray asked Lisa. She held Little Eddie, who now reached out for Ray to take him, which he did.

"Yes, I was. I heard it all, and so did Little Eddie, and let me tell you, he was no little bit impressed with Grumps."

Julie came running down the steep aisle way to say, "Excuse me. I am so sorry, Dr. Bonn. But honestly, I'm really glad I asked."

"Me too, Julie. Figure it out for me, would you? It really bugs me. I think gravity is a residue of E and M." He paused briefly. "It's *Mr.* Bonn by the way, not doctor; I don't have a PhD. Didn't I sign your book as Ray?"

"Yes, yes you did," she said waving as they walked away. "Thanks Ray."