

## EDITOR'S CORNER

### How Do You Say "Good-bye"

In life, we say "Hello" to many people and we say "Good-bye" to many people as well. It seems like saying "Hello" is more simple than saying "Good-bye". By nature I am a sentimental person and always have a hard time saying "Good-bye" to those I truly care for. There are, of course, many forms of saying "Good-bye" – with a telephone call, a simple note, an e-mail, a letter, a hand shake, a wave of the hand and arm, a wink of the eye, a hug, a pat on the shoulder, a glance from afar, a smile, a song, a poem, a rose, a gift, a tear, and, maybe even a kiss. Yet every positive "Good-bye" carries a degree of love and nostalgia for the object of your farewell, who may or may not reappear in your life ever again.

Nowadays, people travel a lot by plane. There is not much romance in saying "Good-bye" in modern airports. Passengers just check in at the counter, get their boarding passes, send the luggage to the right place (hopefully), go through the security check points where you leave friends, family members, etc., behind and then wait for the plane to arrive, board the plane and off you go to a far off place in a couple of hours.

Travel by ship is far more romantic and memorable.

When I was a young man I left Hong Kong on the ocean liner "Vietnam" to go to Japan to attend college. It was quite an experience to say "Good-bye" when leaving by a ship. First, my family and friends took me to the ship with all my luggage and went with me to the check-in place to find my cabin. Usually on a ship one enters at the First Class level. I was not in First Class and was politely asked to go two levels down to Third Class. After negotiating down the narrow steps and wandering around, rubbing shoulders with a lot of people while making sure my family and friends still had my belongings, I finally found the cabin. The cabin was very small and my luggage took up a great deal of the sleeping space!!

Next, everybody went back up to the lounge in the ship to say good-bye. Soon, everyone except the passengers, was asked to leave the ship and the ship prepared to set sail. On the deck, passengers were given rolls of paper ribbons in all colors so that they could throw them to their loved ones who were standing on the pier. Suddenly, hundreds of paper strips were flying in the air and people on the pier were scrambling to pick up the ones linked to their loved ones on the ship. It was such a lovely sight. Soon the steam horn sounded loud bellows to announce the departure. Tears started to flow, arms started to wave and the ship slowly moved away from the pier. People on the pier moved in the direction of the departing ship and colorful paper ribbons started to break. More

tears from the ship and the pier. Finally, all the paper ribbons were broken, even the longest ribbon in my hand. The ship moved agonizingly slowly away. The faces of my mother, sisters, and friends slowly grew smaller and smaller and, eventually, disappeared in the crowd. People at the pier looked on with final teardrops and, the final wave of hand in love and/or sorrow. Eventually, the ship pulled out of sight. Some people on the pier still jumping up and down to get a final look at the departing ship, to say a prayer, and wave a last farewell. Soon, one by one, group by group, people left the pier and went back to their lives with an emptiness of hearts for the one less person to talk with, smile at, listen to, and, maybe to love in a variety of ways.

People on the ship stared at the distant landscape and, finally, settled down on the deck or went back to their cabins to start the journey away from loved ones and home. I leaned against the metal railing on the deck for two hours before I left the deck in nostalgic recollections of farewell. It was quite an experience, because in those days, forty years ago, leaving home was like leaving forever. It took me three days to go from Hong Kong to Tokyo on that trip. Nowadays, people simply jump onto a jet plane and can see anyone in a matter of hours. I did mention in another article that I took the Concorde from New York to London in only three and one half hours. That was too fast for romanticism in departures!

Physical separation in farewell is hard enough. Emotional separation between good friends is even harder. How do you say "Good-bye" emotionally? Emotional departure is truly a bitter and sweet experience. For sentimental souls like myself maybe there will never be emotional "Good-bye"s. Maybe I can store friendship, love, relationships in my brain like in a computer and on command click the right box and those memories will come back and my friends and I can relive those moments which happened so long ago.

As a professor, I interact with colleagues, students, and other people quite intensively in my daily life and, especially, in theses defenses, counseling sessions, and many issues of human interactions. When a truly beloved person leaves my environment I invariably feel sad and nostalgic. In the past three months, several of my close graduate students, post-Docs, and colleagues have left my environment which creates a serious void in my heart. I have no good formula to say "Good-bye". I wish all of them well and I bury myself in work and dream that one day we will all be together again to relive the joyful moments of our interactions.

Maybe I will go out and recruit a bunch of new students and start the whole cycle again!! Yes, that is what I will do.

"Good-bye" for now.

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