

Greetings! This is intended to introduce you to me, Claudia Dempsey. I graduated from Texas A& M University in 1975. Since then I have taught in the public school system. That means 24 years of teaching experience, 22 of which have been in mathematics (the other two were in English). I didn't work the year my youngest son was born, and that year was terrific as I was able to stay home with my three preschool boys. And I have not worked the last year.

I live in a small town in West Texas named Sonora. My three sons are now all undergraduate students at TAMU. My husband (also an A & M graduate and a teacher) and I are very proud of all of them. I enjoy family, learning, camping, crafts, ice cream, and chocolate of any kind. My parents have a cabin in the beautiful mountains of Colorado and we love to visit there and drink in the peace. But the coast also has its own special appeal. Probably the defining aspect of my life is that I am a Christian.

July 10, 2000, I was life-flighted to University Hospital in Denver while vacationing in southern Colorado with my husband. I went into systemic shock due to complications from systemic lupus and medications, and was given less than a 5% chance to live and no chance of being "normal". I spent 106 days in Medical ICU and about 120 more days in other hospitals getting off various life-supports. I had several operations. I had to learn how to breathe, swallow food and water, talk, write, walk...basically, I had to learn how to live again. I had my last surgery on Aug 2 of this year (I hope it is the last!)

I am now completely out of a wheelchair, off the walker and cane; I can cook a meal, drive, type on this computer, give thanks for being able to see my sons enter their adult stage. I can attempt this course. I totally believe a miracle happened and my wonderful medical personnel agrees. I had unbelievable support from my family, my birth family, my church, my friends, my community, and—you guessed it—Aggies. The Spirit of Aggieland is so bright. I have been very blessed.

Sometimes we don't realize how special some people are until we almost don't get another shot at being with them. Sometimes we don't appreciate a place as special as Texas A & M until shown intimately how special that place is. I encourage all of you to reach out to those you care about as soon as possible; I encourage you to look around at the world you live in and find the special blessings, not the faults; I encourage you to embrace the wonderful opportunity we have to learn and enrich our minds; I encourage you to just Gig 'em. Finally, make the world better for having lived this day.

I was in a coma when the school year started in the fall of 2000, so my husband had to apply for disability retirement for me. Even though I am stronger now, still the work which I have always done and which I love has had to be abandoned, at least for the current time. I do not know exactly what the future holds for me, but I feel that I have been led to participate in this learning experience. I can learn, hopefully, to become comfortable with computers. The physical challenge of attending class on campus is still daunting, but I am told that I can be successful this way. Once more, I have been blessed.

I have always been interested in mathematics. The puzzles, the patterns, the thinking required draw me to investigate. I also obtained a teaching certification in physics because that required that I apply the higher level math I was learning while an undergraduate student. Unfortunately, I have never had the opportunity to teach physics, and most of the knowledge gleaned has just gone. I have another teaching field in English. But math is one of the main fields that needs attention in our schools. Too many students are unsuccessful in math and end up avoiding it. And math is so critical in the challenges of life as well in the work place today. I have tried not only to teach the skills in math, but also to instill in my students an appreciation, if not a love for, this discipline. I want them to know that math can be mastered and at some level be enjoyed.

At this juncture in my personal life, I do not truly know if I can return to teaching. But I want my mind to sharpen, and what better way than the study of math. And if I do return to teaching math, I will be able to offer more. Additionally, I hope a Masters in Mathematics will open other possible avenues for me to consider and make me more marketable as I approach the mid-century mark.

I am older than Dr. Boas, evidently, from the birth year he posted in our assignment. I will need lots of help from all of you young 'ens; I hope that I can likewise be a contributor to your learning. I know once again that I have been blessed to be a part of this class. So, once again I encourage you to just Gig 'em, and make the world better for having lived this day.