

Thanks

Denis

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When you get 59, you begin to suspect your former students, and your wife or husband too. They could be plotting something in secret, on the occasion of your 60th birthday. Because you have been invited to analogous parties organized in honour to your elder colleagues, you cannot be surprized when a student of yours, now a highly respected colleague, comes to you and asks if you don't mind to be, for a once, the center of a small world. Then you ask yourself whether this is a good idea. There are actually several good or bad reasons to refuse, and several others to accept.

- Perhaps you don't enjoy the idea of getting older. I remember that, when I was a child, sixty-years old persons looked really very old to me. In many countries, one celebrates 60 because this is the last occasion before retirement. After what a mathematician turns into a Gran'pa.
- Or you might think that you did not achieve much. Your merit is quite low. You didn't do your best. You were not always, even not often a nice person to your colleagues and doctoral students. Were you at least a good teacher ? No merit, no celebration ! You feel that you should not be honored in any way. Even if the picture is not that dark, who can pretend to have behaved at best ?
- On the opposite, you accept because you were clearly one of the most important scientist of your generation. Why didn't they organize a celebration of your 40th birthday ? You are anxious that the panel of speakers be more prestigious than those in similar events. And you strongly expect to have another fest for your 70th and 80th anniversary.
- Maybe you keep quite bad souvenirs of your professional life. You have been stolen a bunch of theorems ; you were not cited properly ; you were not awarded the prizes that you deserved. Even your former students were not grateful to you. Therefore why smile and be a character in a play that bothers you ?

- Finally, you may think that 60 a very nice number. After all, it is the smallest order of a non-cyclic simple group, and the next one is so far away (168)! Your professional life brought you a quantity of friends ; your students were your best publications, after your children of course. Then you accept and praise them for their kindness. You still have plenty of time ahead to inspect whether the good things balance the bad ones in your career.

I am indebted to those of you who taught me and made me a mathematician. Some of you are present, others could not come ; we now miss Jean Giraud and Michelle Schatzman.

Let me thank you, my former Students. You who, by Sylvie's voice, offered to me this friendly moment. Each time you have a professional success, I feel proud, even though I have no role any more, if I had any. In turn, you do have doctoral students, among them the older ones are now standing on their own two feet.

Warm thanks to you, my Collaborators. I know that working with me can be stressful. My natural difficulty to argue calmly combines with my hesitating English. But you made a great effort not to give up. You knew that by joining our efforts, we should arrive to interesting results. I am proud to have associated my name with yours.

Thankful wishes to you, my Friends, for the nice words you had for me in the good times, and also in the hard times. You kept faithful ; I have known some of you for thirty years or more. You are not just colleagues. You are a lot more. I thank God who gave me the opportunity to meet you and to weave close ties with you.

Finally, thanks to you Pascale, who supported me, in both the French and English senses of the verb, all these years. I am gifted to have you next to me.

Gracias, grazie, danke, dag, spassibo, arigato, obrigado, epharisto, chokrane, toda, mulțumesc, xièxie, thank you, merci !