

Geometry Lost in Translation

by Henry E. Stone

In retrospect, I think this story is funny, a result of the pressure of veterans entering the university in great numbers. It reminds me of Brokaw's book, *The Greatest Generation*.

I immigrated from Germany prior to World War II and had not finished my studies in a German gymnasium. The New York State Regents reviewed my records and recommended that I take several specific courses in night high school to have the "equivalent of a high school diploma." I did that and finished my courses just prior to induction into the army.

After spending several years in the South Pacific, I returned in early 1946 and applied to the then-private University of Buffalo to begin studies in the summer semester. I was able to earn good grades and took the maximum number of credits.

I believed that I could finish my required courses by the end of the 1948 summer session. When General Electric came to interview a few students in April 1948, I joined the interviews and received an offer the next day for their engineering "test program." I negotiated to start after the summer session and looked forward to starting work in Lynn, Massachusetts.

In August, one month before the end of the session, I received a notice from the UB administration that I could not graduate because I "did not meet the requirements for entry." The problem was that I had "missed high school plane geometry." This was ludicrous, since I had been helping a high school student in that subject and since, in Germany, geometry was included in mathematics. I also had taken lots of math courses at UB, including advanced geometry, calculus, differential equations, etcetera, all with grades of "A."

I pointed this all out to the administration and even pleaded the fact that I had already accepted a position. It took a while—and I believe a special meeting—to resolve the issue satisfactorily in time for me to begin work at GE, where I stayed for 38 years.

After I went to Massachusetts, I kept getting notices about the upcoming graduation in February, 1949, and asked my parents to attend and to collect my diploma. I was not aware of the fact that I was *summa cum laude* until my parents told me. I guess I should have found a way to attend. However, in those days it was expensive and difficult to come back to Buffalo shortly after starting a new job.

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