

Profile

Ed Cupp



My father worked for the federal government which meant that our family moved often. After I had completed 6 years of elementary school in Mississippi, Kentucky and Ohio, we moved to Chicago where I finished the 7th and 8th grades and graduated from Goethe Elementary located on the North side near Fullerton and Western Avenue.

We moved to Franklin Park in the summer of 1955 and shortly thereafter I enrolled at Leyden High School. On the first day of class, I didn't know a single person but sports helped me make a number of friends and acquaintances and I still have fond remembrances of team-mates, games, and competition in the former South Suburban League. Not surprisingly, several of my favorite teachers at Leyden were coaches – Marty Schwartz, Joe Thomas, George Cox – but the person who influenced me the most by his demeanor and strong sense of purpose was Coach Farina. I often hitch-hiked to school and he always gave me a ride on his daily commute to Leyden from Melrose Park. This provided the opportunity for some great one-on-one discussions outside of the class room. I also enjoyed Speech (taught by Miss Gailey), having Mrs. Mitchell critique some of my early attempts at writing, and translating "Caesar's Gallic Wars" in Mr. Henne's Latin class with Bob MacDonough, Connie D'Amato ('58) and Joe Kempf.

After graduation, I worked at O'Hare Field for Continental Airlines and attended night school at Elmhurst College. Hugh Wysocki was my commuting partner so driving back and forth was always fun. I entered Murray State College in Murray, Kentucky, as a full-time student in 1961 and graduated in June, 1964 with a B.A. in History and Biology and a minor in German. Two Leydenites, Tom Mohrhusen and George Durakis, were my roommates during most of my stay at Murray. I also

met the woman who would become my wife (Mary) and we were married in August, 1964. We will celebrate our 45th anniversary on August 21.

I went to work for the Tennessee Valley Authority as a biological aide in the Reservoir Ecology program the day after graduation. It was a great job - lots of nature, fresh air and TVA lakes - and it was obvious that this would be a great career choice. I applied to the Ph.D. program in medical entomology at the University of Illinois, began studies there in September, 1965, and graduated four years later in May, 1969. Two Leyden acquaintances also received doctorates at that May graduation – Alan Beals (a football buddy) in Computer Science and George Cox (my coach for sophomore football) in Education. It was a great day for the Leyden Eagles! Our oldest daughter (Eleanor) was also born in Champaign so we left central Illinois feeling very good about our U. of I. experience.

We moved to New Orleans and I began a two-year research appointment at Tulane University Medical Center. After spending 4 years in Champaign-Urbana, being in the Big Easy was glorious. We met some great people, partied at Mardi Gras, and attended the Jazz Funeral for Louis Armstrong (along with 50,000 others!). I established some professional bonds with a Tulane colleague that lasted for decades and Mary continued her studies and received a B.S. in Chemistry at the University of New Orleans. I then began a 35 year career in academia in 1971 that took us briefly to the University of Southern Mississippi and then to Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. We remained there for fourteen years and I progressed through the academic ranks to full professor. Mary entered the Ph.D. program in Nutritional Biochemistry at Cornell after our 2nd/youngest daughter (Rachael) began elementary school, and received her doctorate degree in 1984. We began working together shortly thereafter and continued to do so until we retired.

After fourteen years in Upstate New York (which has two principal seasons – Spring and Winter), the University of Arizona came calling and we moved to Tucson in 1988 where we lived for seven years. Being in the Sonoran Desert was a fascinating change (the climate was great for year-round hiking and biking) and we thoroughly enjoyed the Southwest cultural experience and cuisine. Both of our daughters graduated from the University of Arizona and Rachael still lives in Tucson. We returned to the East in 1995 to be closer to our ageing mothers. I became head of the Entomology Department at Auburn University (Alabama) and later returned to research and teaching.

We retired in May, 2006 and moved to Owensboro, KY (Mary's hometown) where we now reside.

Being in academia was a real privilege and I had more than my share of fun and good luck in classroom teaching and helping train young scientists from the USA, India, Zambia, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Ecuador, United Kingdom, Canada, and Israel. In addition to conducting research in the United States, my field work in tropical public health also took me to several interesting and challenging countries (Guatemala, Colombia, and Liberia) where I investigated the ecology of mosquito-transmitted viruses that cause encephalitis and a parasite that causes blindness in humans.

Some career highlights and trivia include receiving an alumni achievement award from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois and being selected a distinguished alumnus at Murray State University, having my research featured in the Science Section of the New York Times and on CNN, providing "advice" to Ann Landers (she called for information so that she could "zing" a reader who had disparaged one of her columns) and chatting with President Jimmy Carter at a reception in Mexico City. It was a great ride and I remain active professionally but now at my own pace (one of the benefits of retirement). I currently volunteer for two international organizations headquartered in Atlanta, GA – The Carter Center and The Task Force for Global Health – and both keep me very busy. During this year (2009), I have attended scientific meetings and workshops in Burkina Faso (West Africa) and Guatemala and will visit Pondicherry, India later this month and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in November.

I look forward to the Class of 1959 Eagle Reunion and renewing friendships. I would like also to greet my fellow alumni who can't make it to the Reunion and wish them the very best.