Preface

The AMS arranges a Summer institute devoted to some subject in mathematics every summer. About every ten years the turn goes to Algebraic geometry. In fact the sequence of Algebraic Summer institutes is quite classical. Boulder 1954, Woods Hole 1964, the famed Arcata in 1974 and then Bowdoin 1985 and now Santa Cruz 1995. This was my third attendence, while there are a few others who have been to four. No one in the Universe has attended all five.

Those Summer Institutes have been a must. I was quite impressed by Arcata, less so with Bowdoin, still I felt that I ought to attend Santa Cruz, if for no other good reasons than to have an excuse to return to the States after six years.

What follows is a fairly detailed blow-by-blow account of my two-week long visit to the States. In addition to the attendence at the first two weeks I also stopped by an extended weekend in Manhattan on my way back. About a third of the narrative is devoted to those last days.

My overriding ambition has been to produce a booklength narrative. In so far the report involves more than one hundred pages, and about half a million keystrokes, I must admit that this has been succesfully accomplished. Whether the narrative has any other redeeming features I leave to the reader to assess.

As usual I have tried to be as outrageous as possible in depicting the weakness, foibles and antics of my fellow mathematicians. I fear that much of the potential enjoyment is bound up with the degree to which I have succeeded in being nasty. Some people reading this may be offended as well as amused. My hope is that that amusement will in the end dominate over offence.

There are some longwinded descriptions of nature and visits to museums, along with the tedious documentation of everyday chores. The reader, bogged down by such passages, is naturally invited to skim.

Göteborg

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