

Physicists are people too

Physicists are dedicated to their work, but it often bleeds into their home and personal lives. Reading this issue of *symmetry* gives me a converse impression—just how human physicists are as they work.

In his commentary, Lee Sawyer talks about physicists in the aftermath of last year's hurricanes. He witnessed the scientific community help displaced physicists and students both to continue their work and to just get by.

I've heard physicists described as "quirky" many times, and the story about what and how physicists pack when they travel highlights what some see as those quirks. Of course, the physicists see themselves as extremely logical, and yet every person interviewed has a distinct approach to their frequent travel. One person's quirk is another's survival technique!

This issue also contains many stories about the human sides of members of our community: Brookhaven's Unity Day emphasizes the diversity of people who work in science; a SLAC engineer created chalk drawings that have survived on a communal blackboard for over a decade, a remarkable feat considering how physicists love to scribble ideas on any available surface; and a theorist who just graduated from Stanford plays and wins professional poker—a new model for funding your way through graduate school.

Sometimes human nature seems to get the better of physicists. As the pentaquark story describes, the desire for discovery might have pushed some scientists to be too optimistic about the significance of their findings. It was a case of intense enthusiasm, but nobody crossed any lines of acceptable scientific behavior. Even though the pentaquark hunt didn't turn up the big prize, it still stimulated a lot of new ideas. And the enthusiasm reflects the excitement among physicists as they pursue new science.

In the day-to-day of pushing the boundaries of science, it is possible to lose sight of the human face of physics. Fortunately, that never lasts long. There is always a fresh story about how a member of our community is so much more than the job they do. Together with the great discoveries ahead of us, the people around us make our scientific adventure fun.

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