

LARRY KAUVAR

Irwin was an enthusiastic math teacher, and pioneered bringing computer literacy into the high school curriculum (which sounds trite today, but was quite forward looking back in 1969). He sponsored an after school computer club, at which several generations of students developed a package of learning materials that got handed on to the next generation each year. The year that I was involved was a big one. Irwin had convinced the Denver school system to let him convert the learning materials from the club into an experimental course. I was one of the group (including David Zuckerman, Randy Guber, Larry Rothman, Laurel Puck, Sharon Long, and others) that helped him write the textbook for this course. He was subsequently awarded a well-deserved PhD from DU for this pioneering effort.

Irwin was also the tennis coach, and was quite emphatic about the importance of egghead students participating in sports. I didn't make the tennis team, but did make the swim team my senior year (just barely). In retrospect, I understand much better why he considered this kind of activity to be so important. After GW, I spent 15 years at elite universities (Harvard - BA in Math, Yale - PhD in Molecular Biology, Caltech, UC San Francisco) before launching my career as a biotechnology entrepreneur (Telik, Trellis, Promedior). Within the academic environment, it became pretty clear to me that social skills were as important as technical skills. In the business world, social skills are even more important. Irwin's focus on sports was a vehicle for learning those social skills, most notably how to be a graceful winner (and loser), how to get along with people with very different personalities, and how your own internal mind games can boost or cripple your performance.

GW was a relatively new school when I was there, and blessed with a quite a few excellent teachers, with Irwin certainly standing out among that talented group. I am grateful for the education I received there which provided a good foundation for my subsequent adventures.

Larry Kauvar
1438 Green St. #7A
San Francisco, CA 94109
kauvarlm@earthlink.net
2/27/13