

A green chalkboard with a world map in a light fixture above it and a wooden ruler on the left side.

Dr. Peppas Through the Eyes of an Undergrad

By Natalie Wisniewski, PhD

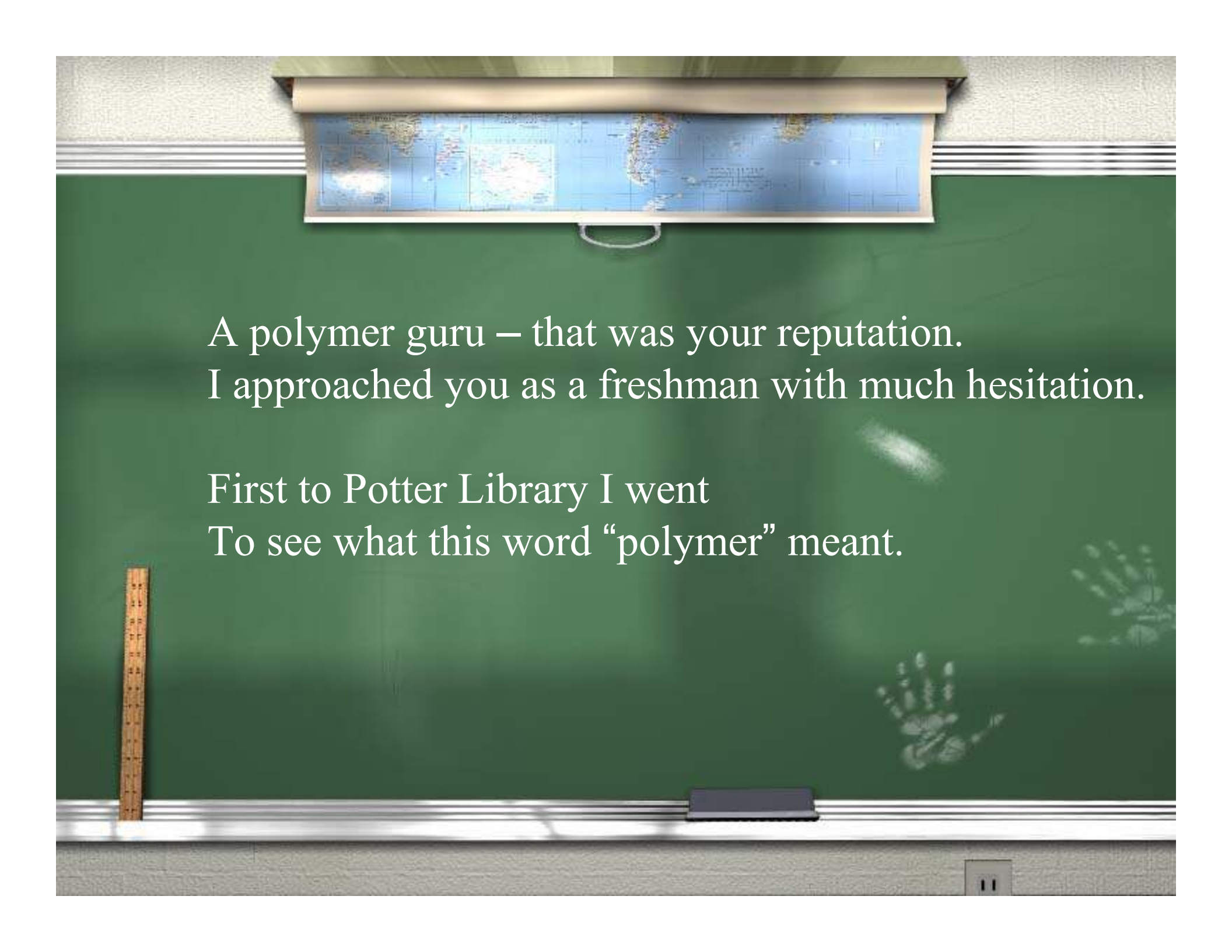


It was the summer of '91 at Ole Purdue
Undergraduate research I sought to do.



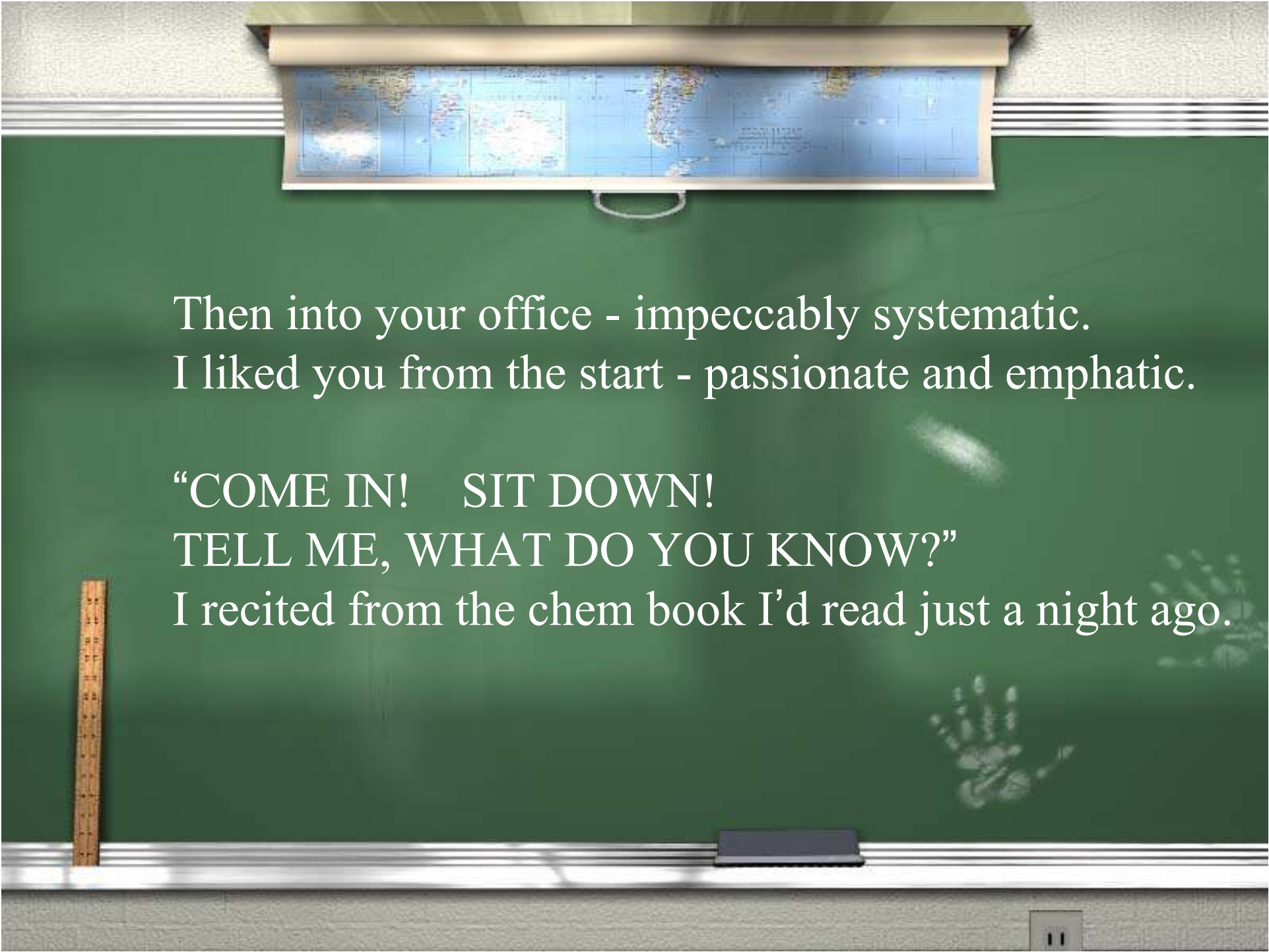
Unto Katie Eckman I did inquire
If any professor might want me to hire.

Through a lot of luck or God's good grace
She pointed me to your office space.

A green chalkboard with a world map in a light fixture above it and a wooden ruler on the left side.

A polymer guru – that was your reputation.
I approached you as a freshman with much hesitation.

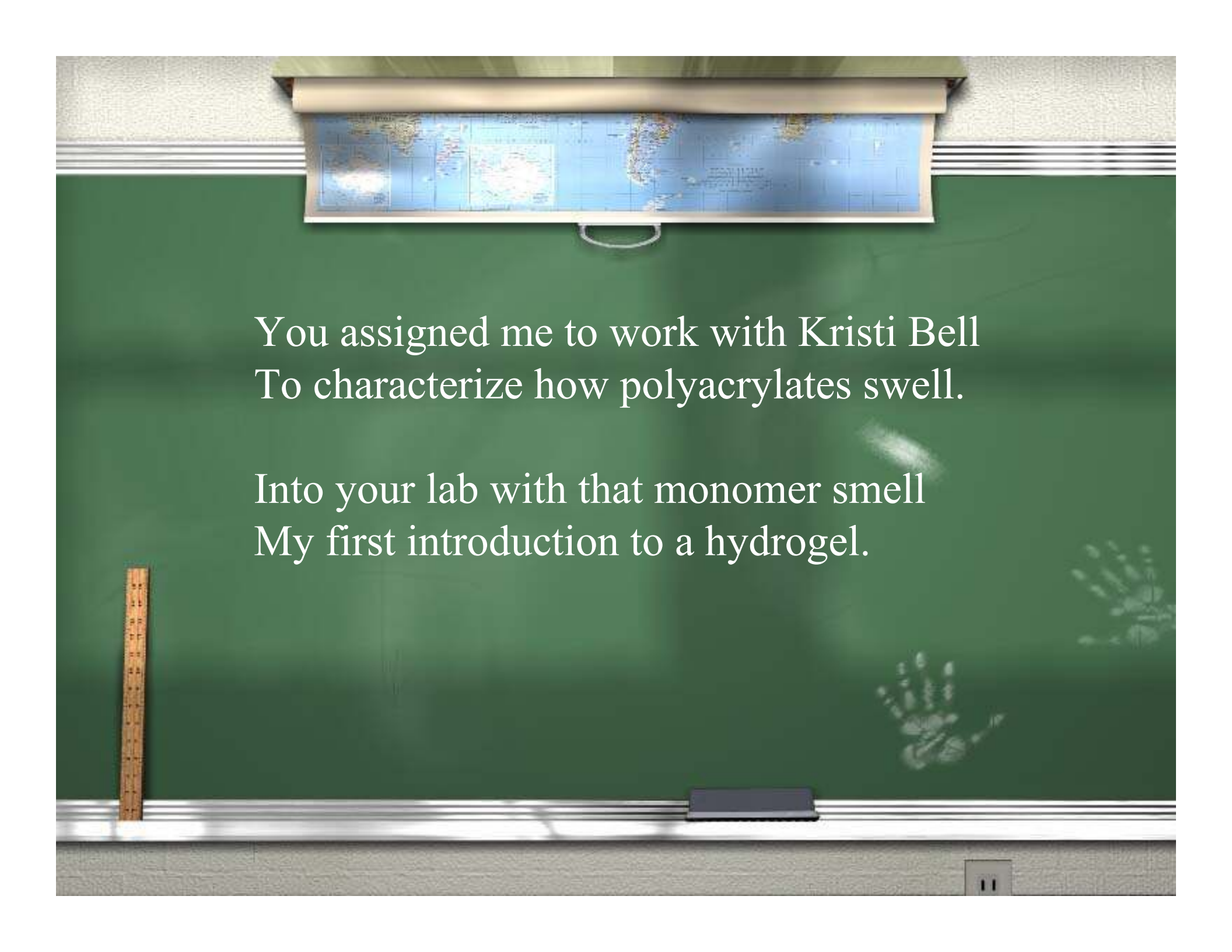
First to Potter Library I went
To see what this word “polymer” meant.



Then into your office - impeccably systematic.
I liked you from the start - passionate and emphatic.

“COME IN! SIT DOWN!
TELL ME, WHAT DO YOU KNOW?”

I recited from the chem book I’d read just a night ago.



You assigned me to work with Kristi Bell
To characterize how polyacrylates swell.

Into your lab with that monomer smell
My first introduction to a hydrogel.

A green chalkboard with a world map mounted at the top. A wooden ruler is on the left side. The text is written in white on the board.

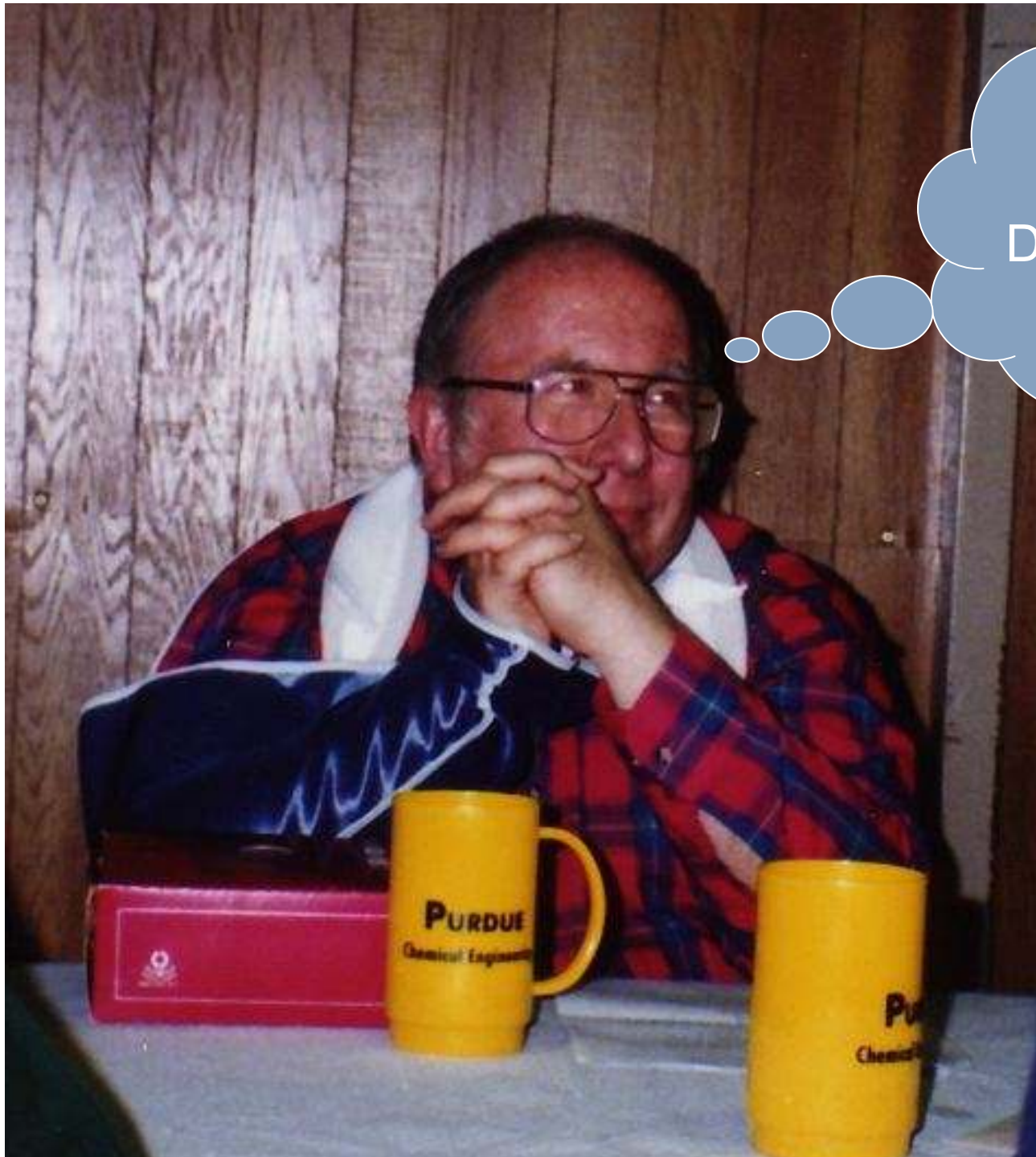
Then you taught my class on Reactor Design.
To students who where lazy – you were not benign.

Wagging your finger, you would forcefully say,
“AT M.I.T..... IT IS NOT THIS WAY!”

A classroom scene featuring a green chalkboard. At the top, a world map is mounted on the wall. On the left side of the chalkboard, a wooden ruler is leaning against the wall. The text is written in white on the chalkboard.

In your double-breasted suit, into class you would strut.
“YOU MUST LEARN THE BASICS!
NO IF, ANDS OR BUTS!”

“SIMPLE MASS BALANCES, YOU MUST KNOW.”
“IF YOU CAN’T UNDERSTAND THAT,
BACK TO KESSLER YOU GO.”



Oh please,
Oh please,
Don't send them
back to me



“YOU DON’T KNOW THERMO?
HOW CAN THAT BE?

“I NEVER SAW SUCH NONSENSE AT M.I.T.!?!”

“JANITORS WERE GRATEFUL TO SWEEP
M.I.T. FLOORS”

“TAKE ADVANTAGE OF BEING HERE – YOU
MUST LEARN MORE!”



Each night after your class, I'd go to bed
With visions of rate constants filling my head

1st order, 2nd order, 3rd order – Oh my!
My goodness, I've got it –
Langmuir adsorption, I'd cry!

You think I'd be dreaming of boys – Oh no!
CSTRs, batch reactors, maybe plug flow.



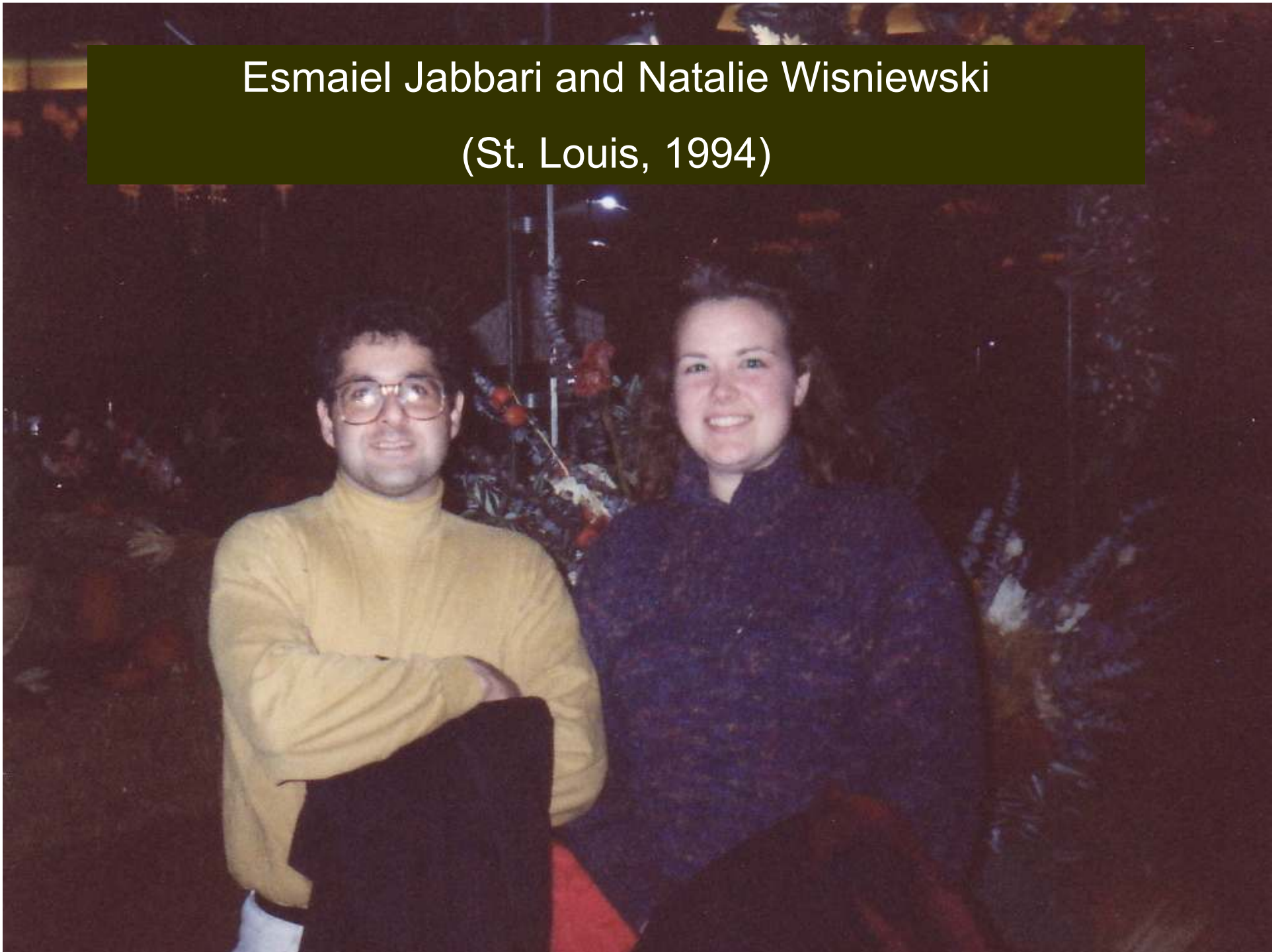
Then you pointed me to Esmaiel, a Persian star.
Countless hours we spent at the FTIR

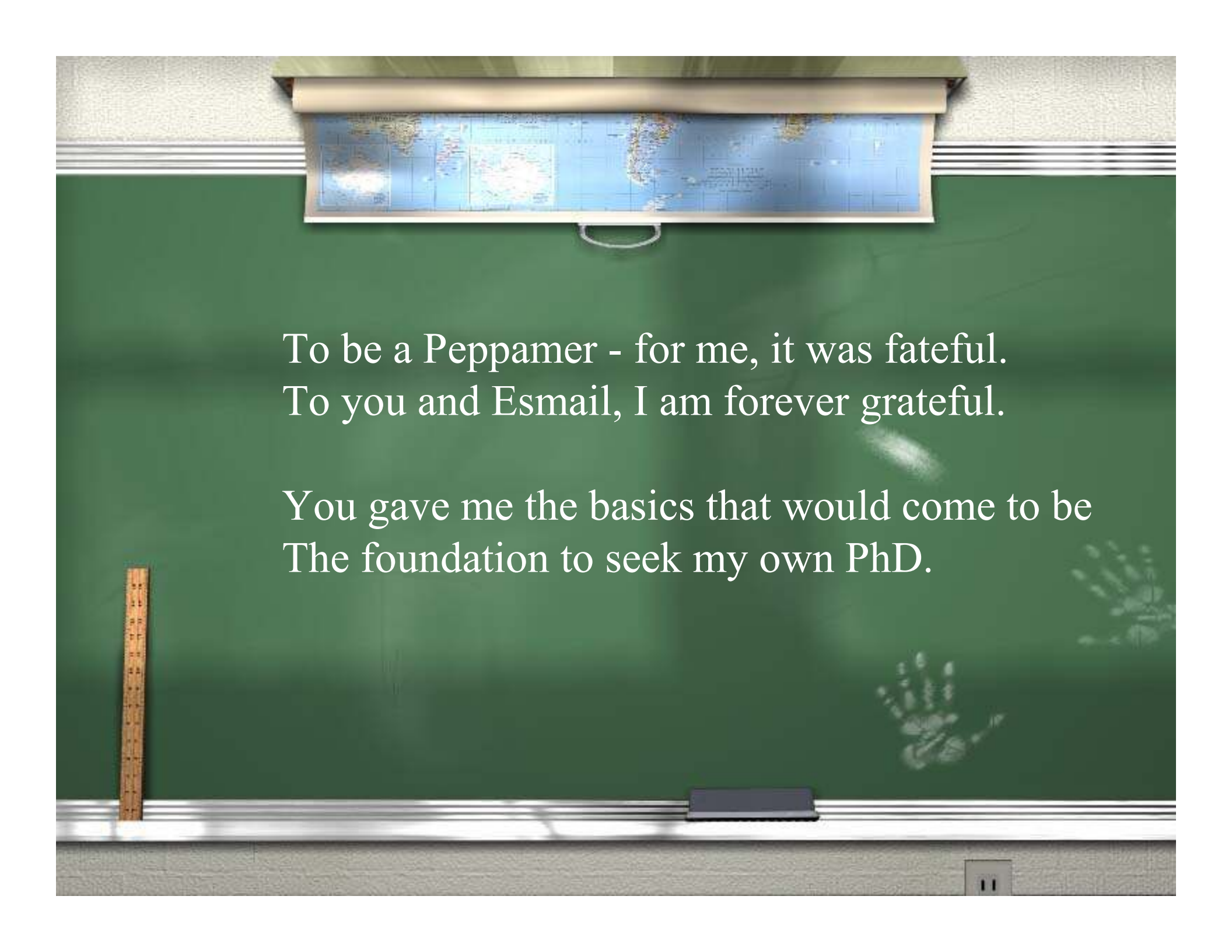
Looking at mucin as it interpenetrates
On spin coated layers of polyacrylates.

The spectra had to go through deconvolution,
Which threw me into mathematical confusion.

Esmael Jabbari and Natalie Wisniewski

(St. Louis, 1994)



A green chalkboard with a world map mounted at the top, a wooden ruler on the left, and a chalk tray at the bottom.

To be a Peppamer - for me, it was fateful.
To you and Esmail, I am forever grateful.

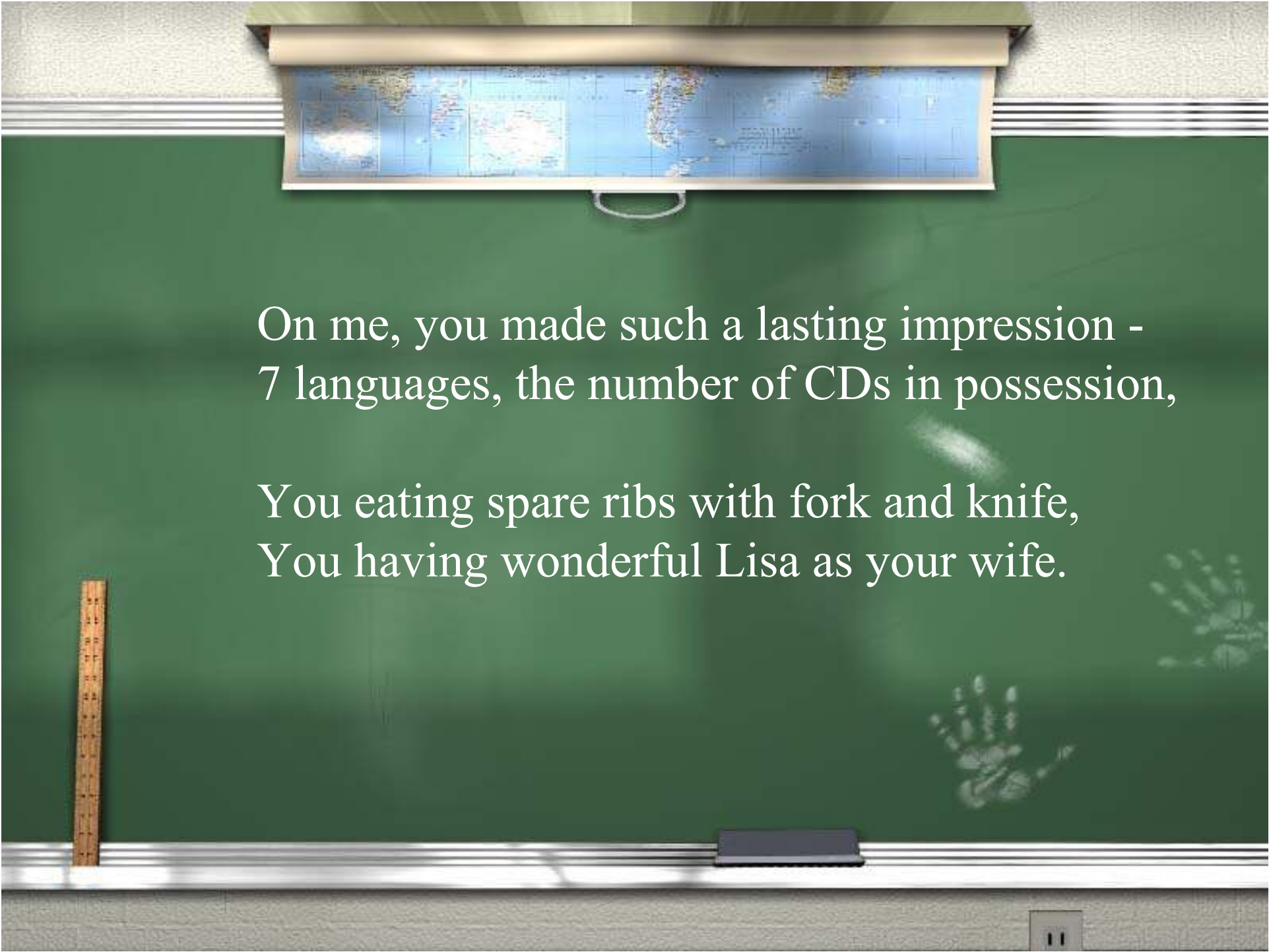
You gave me the basics that would come to be
The foundation to seek my own PhD.



Then came your advice on graduate school,
“GO TO M.I.T., DON’T BE A FOOL.”

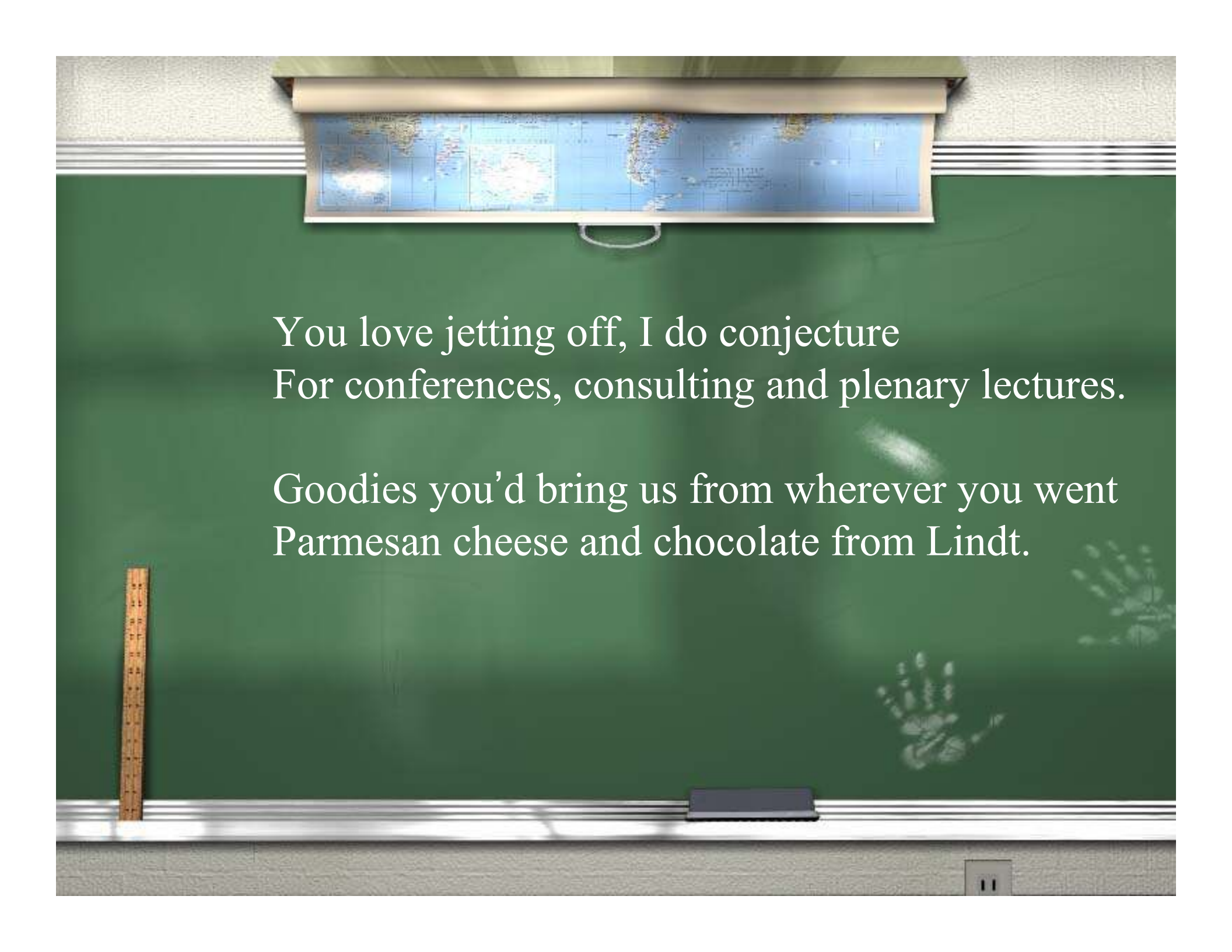
“WHAT?!? – TO DUKE? - IN BME???”

“AT LEAST WORK WITH TRUSKEY – AN
M.I.T. CHEM-E!”

A green chalkboard with a world map mounted at the top. A wooden ruler is on the left side. The text is written in white on the board.

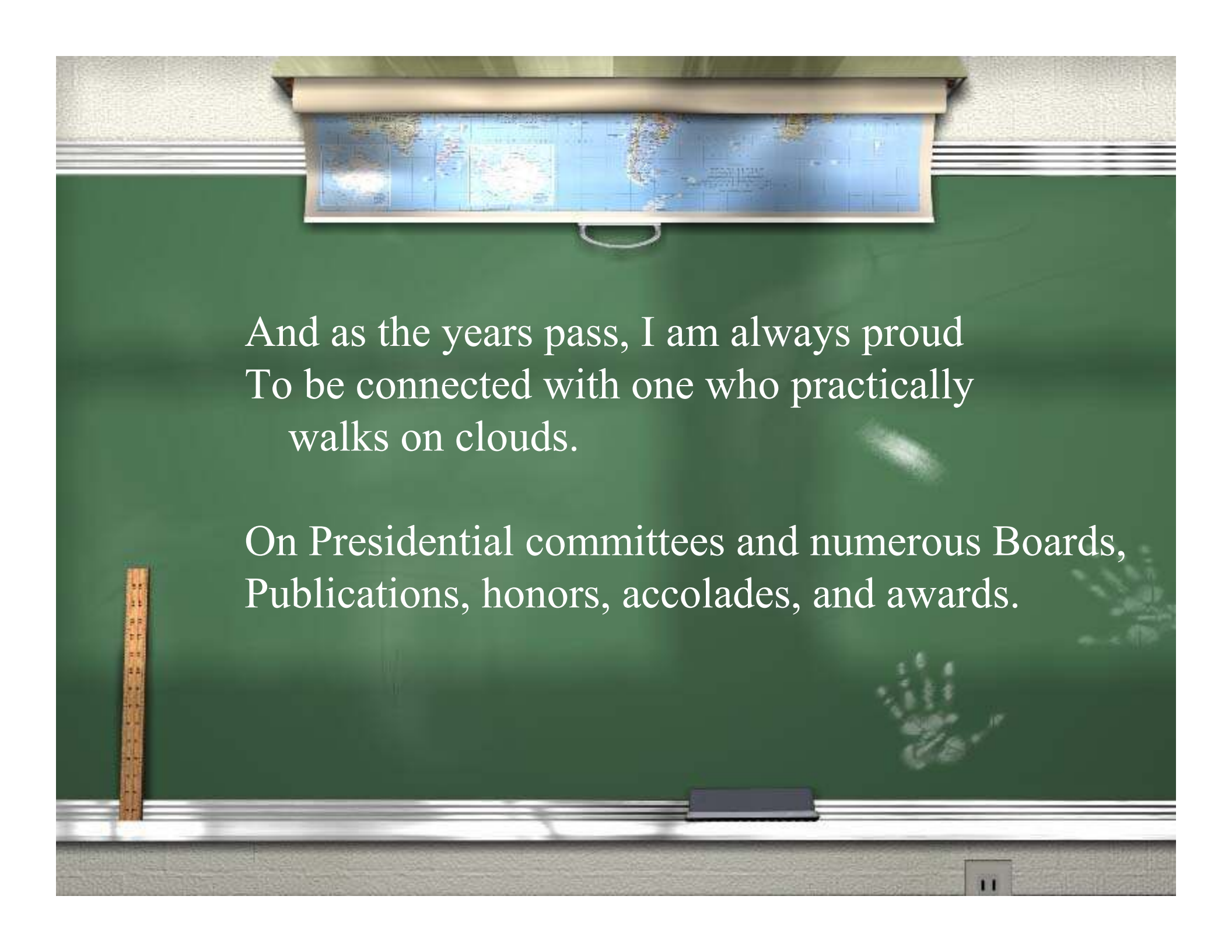
On me, you made such a lasting impression -
7 languages, the number of CDs in possession,

You eating spare ribs with fork and knife,
You having wonderful Lisa as your wife.



You love jetting off, I do conjecture
For conferences, consulting and plenary lectures.

Goodies you'd bring us from wherever you went
Parmesan cheese and chocolate from Lindt.

A green chalkboard with a world map mounted on the wall above it and a wooden ruler on the left side.

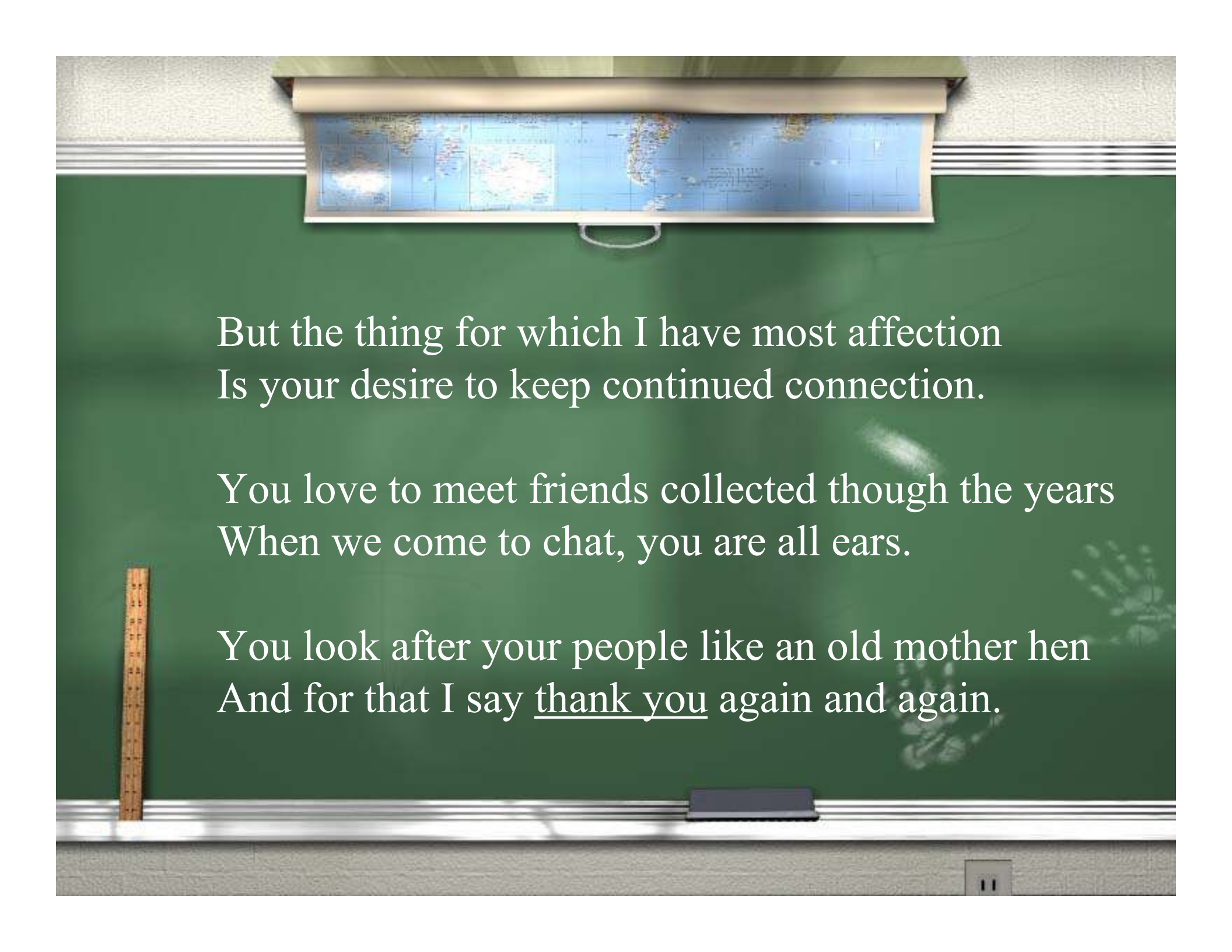
And as the years pass, I am always proud
To be connected with one who practically
walks on clouds.

On Presidential committees and numerous Boards,
Publications, honors, accolades, and awards.

Undergrads gaze skyward
to catch a glimpse of
Dr. Peppas walking on clouds
and
to see to the top of his CV.

(Brad Sippy, Krista Fitzsimmons and Jim Lucas)

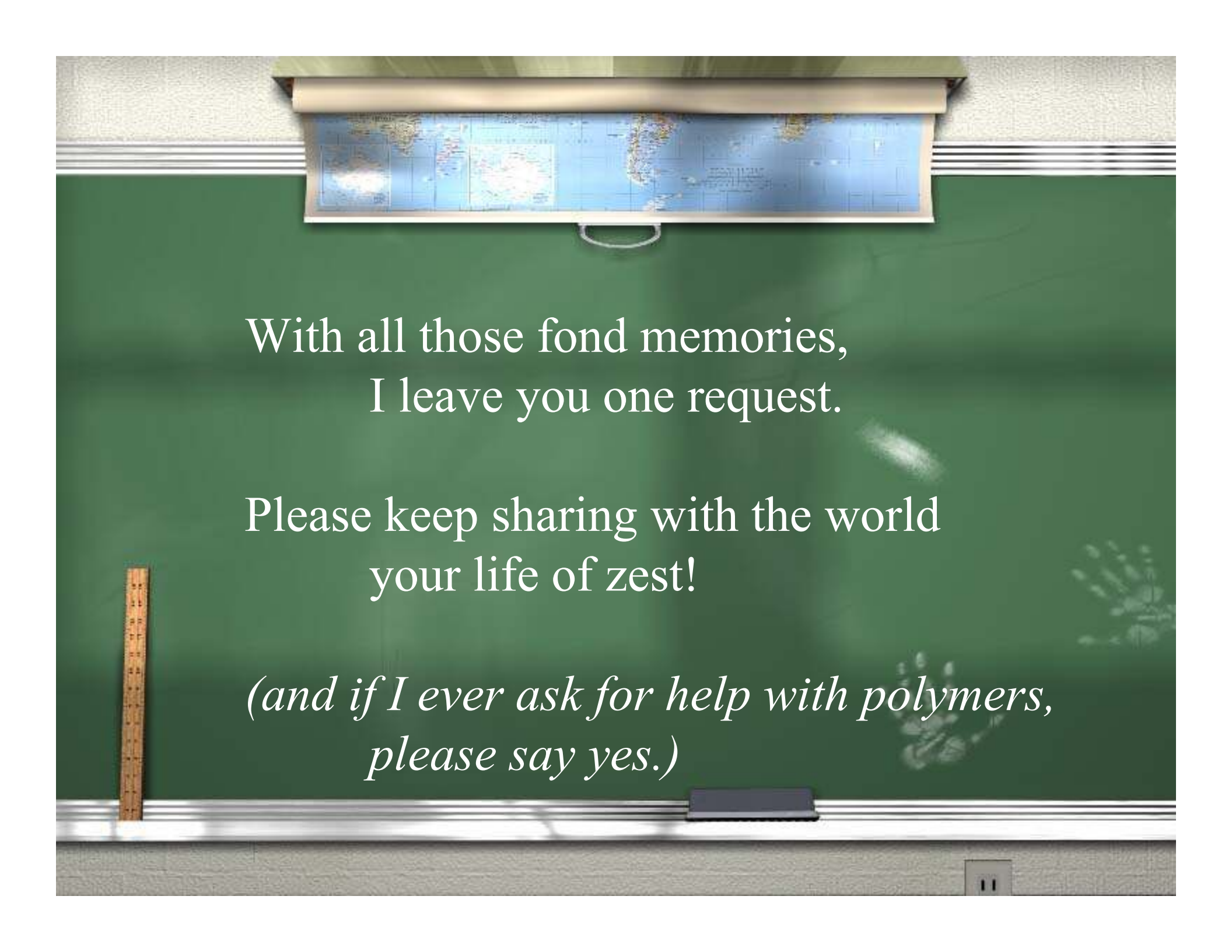
93 11 8



But the thing for which I have most affection
Is your desire to keep continued connection.

You love to meet friends collected though the years
When we come to chat, you are all ears.

You look after your people like an old mother hen
And for that I say thank you again and again.

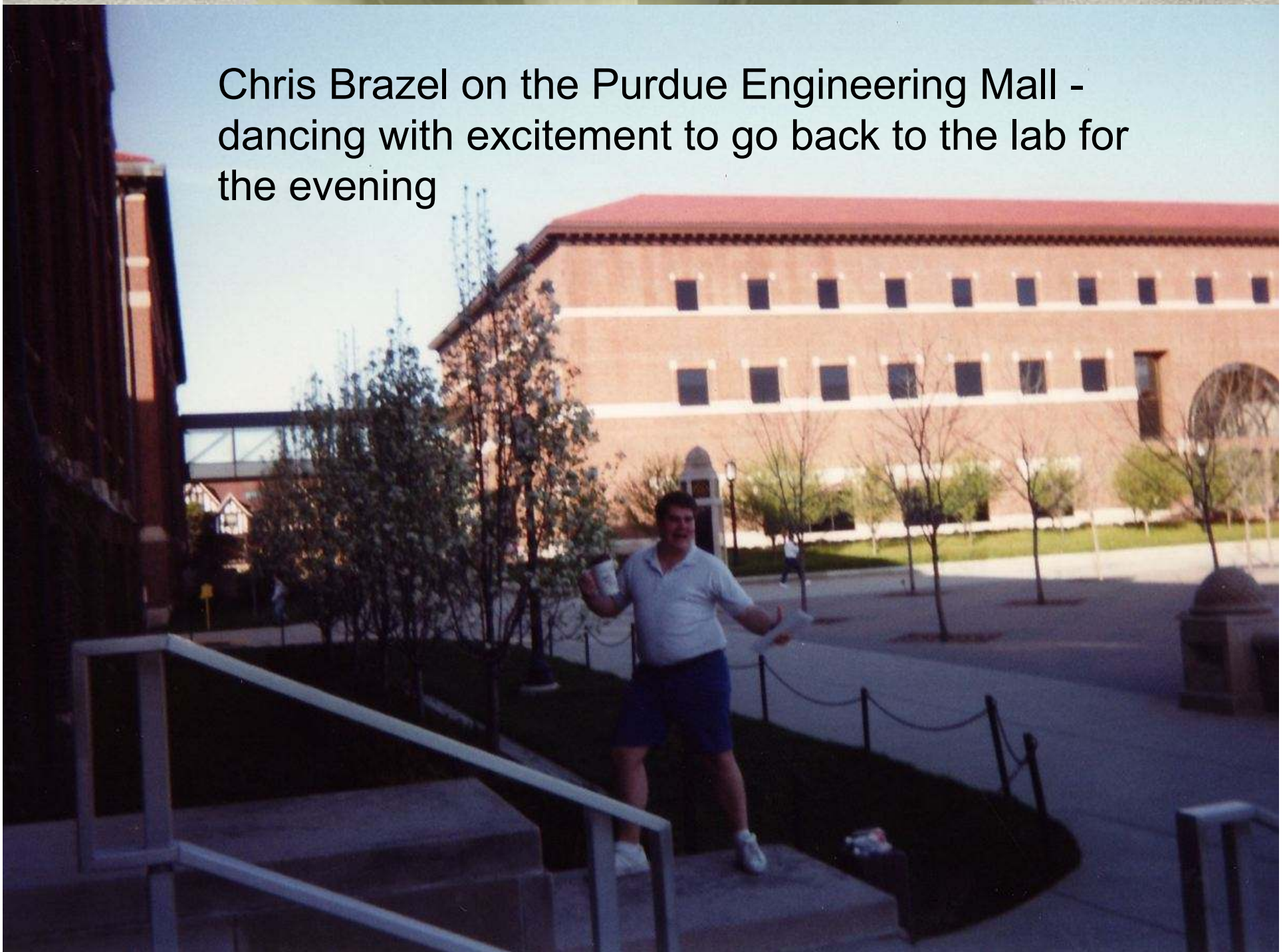


With all those fond memories,
I leave you one request.

Please keep sharing with the world
your life of zest!

*(and if I ever ask for help with polymers,
please say yes.)*

Chris Brazel on the Purdue Engineering Mall - dancing with excitement to go back to the lab for the evening





Eric
Deitz

L. Achar

Rebecca
Hayes

Chris
Brazel

Lei
Carson

Mark

Kenyon
Gjerde

**Peppamers and other Boilermakers at AIChE
(St.Louis, 1994)**

CHE Senior RAZZ Banquet (1994)

Prof. Delgas raising his glass in approval of the impersonation

Vikas impersonating
Dr. Peppas



Dr. Peppas and Some of his Purdue Undergrads



Rebecca
Hayes



Brian
Prather

Amy
Luttrell



Kristin
Hickey



Natalie
Wisniewski

Mina
Mazdai



Dear Dr. Peppas,

Best wishes on your 60th birthday!

Dr. Natalie Wisniewski, PhD
Undergrad Peppamer 1991-1994