REMEMBERING LEO

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I do not remember when was the first time that I met Leo, but I have a clear memory of going to Leo's office on the 4th floor of Evans Hall to talk to him in my second year in Berkeley's Ph.D. program in 1986. The details of the conversation are not retained but a visual image of his clean and orderly office remains, in a stark contrast to a high entropy state of the same office now being used by myself.

In the 1980s, the Berkeley Statistics Department's Statistical Computing Facility (SCF) managed mainframe computers named after musicians such as Bizet and Bach. Later I learned that Leo came back to Berkeley in 1980 as a professor from industrial consulting and soon established and directed SCF—a far-sighted move by any measure, and one that benefited the department for decades to come. Before his retirement in January 1993, Leo had not only been an energetic and effective director of SCF but also an energetic and effective teacher in his multivariate statistics graduate class, in addition to much original research. After his retirement, he remained a strong leader of statistical computing in the department by advising students and helping start the statistical machine learning group with many joint appointments with Computer Science and Electrical Engineering. Moreover, as he told me himself, this period after retirement was the best time for his research—he was producing seminal papers one after the other on statistical machine learning, for example, on analyzing boosting and developing now-popular algorithms such as bagging and random forests.

After I returned to Berkeley as a faculty member in 1993, I would frequently encounter Leo on the 4th floor of Evans Hall since my first office was also on the same floor. We would have hallway conversations and he would tell me what was on his mind at that time. During one of those conversations, Leo asked me to join a journal club on neural networks, one of the topics that attracted Leo's attention at that time and the beginning of his work on understanding machine learning methods and developing many of his own. I believe Jerry Feldman from CS and ICSI was jointly organizing the journal club. The time must have been around 1995 or 1996 because during that time Leo "dragged" me to Denver for the NIPS in 1996 for the first time and that was the only time that I have attended NIPS so far (although I have been co-authoring NIPS papers lately). Those interactions with