

DEAR MS SWEENEY

There are so many women who inspire me, my mother, my friends, my fellow Ph.D. students, Marie Curie, Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, the list is endless but if I really think about it, the most influential and inspiring person who made me who I am today is hands down you, Ms. Sweeney.

I still remember like it was yesterday, the first day of physics class, sitting there at the top seat of your lab in my black school uniform, army jacket, and my undercut (it was the 90s). On the blackboard you drew a wave, you labelled the wavelength, the amplitude, the peaks, and the troughs. Then you wrote down an equation, $c=\lambda.f$. You explained to us that by multiplying the wavelength by frequency we could calculate the speed of light or sound. That was my lightbulb moment. Physics was the perfect subject for me, it married together my two great loves, maths and science. From that moment on I was hooked.

To me, there was nothing you didn't know. I remember you said once you didn't have a telly, I just imagined you sitting at home working on physics problems. This to me was heaven. But it wasn't just that you were a genius and a brilliant teacher. You also treated us with respect, you never got angry in class and you never gave out. Your lab was a sanctuary of calmness and warmth. In fact, I remember once the left front wheel of my wheelchair ceased up and emitted the loudest most annoying noise possible, a complete nightmare for a conscious teenager. You took me aside and with a couple of squirts of WD-40 all was well, and my nightmare ended. To this day the smell of WD-40 reminds me of you and how you were my hero that day - calm and practical.



$$c = \lambda . f$$

Thanks to online learning, I am now living my lifelong dream of being a teacher, I demonstrate a 1st year maths tutorial class. If I'm half the teacher you were, I'd be delighted.

Twenty years on that love and excitement for physics is still there. All the adventures, friends, and the life I have led since all stemmed from that one day, that one equation, that one brilliant teacher...

Thank you, Ms. Sweeney, from **Sinéad Mannion, Ph.D. student, Queen's University Belfast**



