

## The Original: Dr. Dennis Connolly

April 27, 1967, was a day that some may remember, but none more than mathematics and computer science professor, Dr. Dennis Connolly. As the University of Lethbridge's longest-serving faculty member, Dennis shares the story of how he came to the U of L and why after five decades, he's as excited as ever to get to class and teach his students.



“For those living in Lethbridge at the time, late April of 1967, saw a three-day snowstorm that shut the city down like never before. People were transported to the hospital by snow mobiles, livestock were fed via helicopter and even snow ploughs struggled to move under the weight of the heavy downfall. I'd never experienced anything like it before.

“I was travelling across North America with a friend to Vancouver to fly home to Australia, having been on scholarship at the University of Western Ontario. I was an avid skier, a member of the London Ski Patrol, and Banff was on the itinerary. Lethbridge was a natural stop-off point for us, having just left Yellowstone National Park. When we woke-up the next morning to head out to Banff, we stepped outside and could barely see the car! There was this thick, white blanket of snow which had shut down the city and surrounding areas.

“I had just finished my studies at UWO and was well on my way back to Australia. While waiting for the snow storm to clear, I picked up a copy of the Lethbridge Herald and there was an advertisement for the University of Lethbridge looking for faculty. I thought, this looks interesting and could be an adventure, so I met with the head of the mathematics department, Laurence Hoye, about a possible teaching position. I remember saying to Laurence, ‘If I get the job, I'll only be here for one year, or two years at the very most.’

“Well, the first few years have turned into a few decades! I have so enjoyed living and working in Lethbridge. I can see a lot of similarities between my hometown, Wagga Wagga in New South Wales, Australia. Small country cities with very strong agricultural industries and where the biggest things in them are the hospital and the university, and no traffic jams.

“While the location of where you build a life may be important, for me, it's really the work and the students that keep me coming back every semester. I enjoy seeing students progress through their studies and then where they end up after they've crossed the convocation stage. I take a photo of each student on their first day in class and ask them to write a little summary about themselves. It helps me to learn more about them and that way it's easier when I'm marking papers because I think: ‘David has done much better this time around or Emma is well on her way to graduate school with these marks!’ It's much easier and more interesting to mark papers if you know a bit about the student.

“I've seen so much over the past 50 years at the U of L. I've cheered along at some of the greatest sporting highlights in Pronghorn Athletics history like the 1994 Men's Hockey team's National Championship run and Women's Rugby to three National Titles. I've been a proud parent, witnessing my own children graduate and gain employment at my workplace too. The U of L has played a huge part in my life and I'm excited to see what the future will bring.”

