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Learning Through Teaching, Thinking By Drawing, And Distilling Truth From ‘Crazy Ideas:’ John Wheeler’s Lifelong Influence On Richard Feynman.

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In this talk I will argue that Richard Feynman’s graduate years at Princeton under the mentorship of John Wheeler had an indelible influence on his later career, not only in his research topic, what became known as the Wheeler-Feynman absorber theory, but also on his teaching and research styles. Like Wheeler, Feynman came to believe that diagrams were instrumental to physics calculations, that often the best way to learn something was to teach it, and that nature possessed an underlying simplicity in its rules and components. Feynman found that ‘crazy ideas,’ such as Wheeler’s one-electron universe proposal, might contain seeds of truth that germinate into important findings. I’ll explore examples of ‘Wheeleresque’ moments throughout Feynman’s career.