



ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

MATHEMATICS AND COMPUTER SCIENCE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS

APRIL, 2008

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Welcome to the Alumni Newsletter! It is the end of another academic year, and we are getting ready for the summer. Summer is a quieter period for many of us in the department. We have summer courses, but very few of them. Most of our faculty are traveling, visiting research collaborators, or just holed up in their offices writing papers for publication. The few of us working away at summer teaching or (in my case) running things, can only envy the others. Faculty are paid to work two semesters in the year, which is why university salaries are not competitive with "real world" salaries where people get paid for a full year. But then, we get the summers to think up new ideas in our research!

For me, this will be the last working summer for some time to come, I hope. This is my last year as Chairperson of the department, and I will pass on the mantle to Haiyan Cai, in August. The next Chairperson Dr. Cai is, as many of you know, our departmental specialist in statistics and probability. He shepherds our students through the senior level statistics sequence and teaches graduate statistics classes. These classes have always been popular with students and I suspect that we will, in the future, have a broader spectrum of statistics courses in our course offerings. Right now we are trying to hire two new faculty members, and when Dr. Cai comes in, in the Fall, he will head a rejuvenated department.

That's wonderful, because the last year was not all that easy. The worst event was the passing of Professor Kyungho Oh last summer, after a long struggle with cancer. He was 48 and he will be missed. Preetam Desai and Monica Brown, two of our lecturers, left the department for other employment. With such holes in the department, getting two new faculty members will make us all feel stronger.

I won't say much more. Visit our website; it's new. Enjoy the newsletter that John, Nazire, Galina and Emily have put out, and think of us over the next year.

Cordially,

A. Prabhakar Rao



A. Prabhakar Rao

WE MOURN THE PASSING OF DR. OH

Kyungho Oh, associate professor of mathematics and computer science, died on Monday, June 11 2007 of complications from cancer at the age of 48. He had been at the University of Missouri-St. Louis since 1990, first as visiting assistant professor of mathematics and then as assistant professor and associate professor.



Kyungho Oh

Dr. Oh did his undergraduate work at Seoul National University and received his PhD in mathematics from Purdue University in 1990. His advisor was Joseph Lipman and his early work was in algebraic geometry. He later worked in string theory and received the courtesy title of associate professor of physics and astronomy. Dr. Oh published more than 30 papers in these two areas of research, as well as in computer graphics.

Dr. Oh visited other institutions extensively during the last 15 years, mostly for a semester to a year at a time. These included visiting stints at the physics departments of Yonsei University and Harvard University, and the mathematics departments of KIAS and POSTECH in Korea, UC-Santa Barbara and the University of Warwick. He attended string theory and algebraic geometry conferences around the world, giving more than a dozen invited lectures or lecture series. His research received support from university sources as well as the National Science Foundation and the Korea Research Foundation.

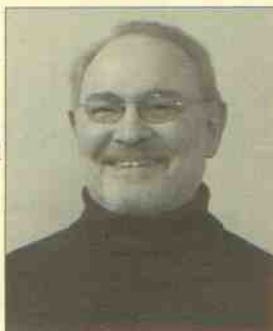
Dr. Oh was an energetic teacher at all levels. He taught graduate courses in pure mathematics and applied mathematics, undergraduate courses in mathematics and in computer graphics, and even the department's first on-line course in College Algebra. One of the last things he did was to organize a section of the US Mathematics Olympiad exam on the UMSL campus in Spring 2007, while already suffering from effects of his disease. For many years, he was faculty advisor to the Korean Students' Organization.

Professor Oh leaves behind three children Stephanie, Christine and David, his wife Dr. Mikyeung Park, his three brothers, and his parents.

HYMAN BASS TO DELIVER THE ELEVENTH ANNUAL SPENCER LECTURE

On Monday April 21 at 7:30 p.m. in the Century Room of the Millennium Student Center, Hyman Bass will present the Eleventh Annual Spencer Lecture. His talk is entitled "Improving U.S. Mathematics Education: Myths and Realities."

[Abstract: Although there is widespread dissatisfaction with U.S. students' mathematical performance, there is little agreement on the roots of the problem or its solutions. This presentation will argue that teacher capacity and teaching quality are key to the improvement of mathematics education, and will analyze the levers that could make a difference for their effectiveness.]



Hyman Bass

Hyman Bass is an American mathematician, known for work in algebra. From 1959-1998 he was Professor in the Mathematics Department at Columbia University. He is currently the Roger Lyndon Collegiate Professor of Mathematics and Professor of Mathematics Education at the University of Michigan.

He earned his Ph.D. in 1959 from the University of Chicago. His thesis, titled Global dimensions of rings, was written under the supervision of Irving Kaplansky.

He has held visiting appointments at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, IHES and ENS (Paris), Tata Institute (Bombay), University of Cambridge, UC Berkeley, University of Rome, IMPA (Rio), National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mittag-Leffler Institute (Stockholm), and the University of Utah. He was president of the American Mathematical Society.

Bass formerly chaired the Mathematical Sciences Education Board (1992-2000) at the United States National Academy of Sciences, and the Committee on Education of the American Mathematical Society. He is now President of ICMI. Since 1996 he has been collaborating with Deborah Ball and her research group at the University of Michigan on the mathematical knowledge and resources entailed in the teaching of mathematics at the elementary level. He has worked to build bridges between diverse professional communities and stakeholders involved in mathematics education.

His research interests have been in algebraic K-theory, commutative algebra and algebraic geometry, algebraic groups, geometric methods in group theory, and functions on finite simple graphs.

A NATIVE CALIFORNIAN MOVES EAST



Rich Friedlander

I was born and raised in Southern California. I went to high school in the San Fernando Valley, and then attended UCLA, where I obtained my B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees in mathematics. While in graduate school at UCLA, I was a teaching assistant in the mathematics department for all but my last year. In that last year, I was offered the opportunity to work in the University of California's Community Teaching Fellowship (CTF) program. In this program, selected graduate students from each of the UC campuses worked with elementary schools in their geographical areas, using discovery methods to teach mathematical content that went beyond the normal curriculum that the students were studying. While I enjoyed working in this setting, I never imagined that it would lead to my obtaining a position at a university that would involve working in mathematics education.

When I finished my doctorate in 1972, the job market for new Ph.D.s was really tough. There were many more applicants for tenure track positions at universities than there were available positions. As a result, many new Ph.D.s were forced to take one or two year visiting positions. I decided that I wanted to get a job where I could stay in one place and obtain tenure after six years. In order to maximize my chances of doing so, I applied to universities from all over the country, including St. Louis. As it turned out, UM-St. Louis was seeking a Ph.D. mathematician who would be a joint appointee with the university's College of Education. While I had never even taken an education course in my life, my experience working with the schools in the CTF program at UCLA led the mathematics department at UMSL to contact me about my interest in the position. I came out for an interview, and while I really knew next to nothing at the time about mathematics education, I viewed this as an opportunity to branch out into a new and important area. I was offered the position (basically, the math department forced me on the College of Education!), and I accepted.

Moving to St. Louis from Southern California was a big adjustment for me – both environmentally and academically. While I liked the St. Louis area, I missed the ocean and the mountains. As a graduate student at UCLA, I lived right by the beach - in those days, it was actually affordable to do so on a graduate teaching assistant's salary. I also had to adjust to the Midwest weather. On the academic side, I felt very comfortable in the mathematics department, but I felt like a fish out of water in the College of Education (and was treated like one by some of their faculty). It took me awhile to "learn the ropes" about mathematics education, but I eventually did so. This was greatly assisted by my attending local, regional, and national meetings of mathematics education professional organizations, as well as my participating in a National Science Foundation program

