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# A f t e r m a t h

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## Ed Burgess 1920-2004

by Peter Alfeld



Professor Emeritus Ed Burgess is a towering figure in the history of our department. He joined the department after receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin in 1951, and spent his entire career here, punctuated by

short term leaves, until he became an Emeritus in 1999. In the intervening 48 years Ed shaped the destiny of this department in many and major ways. He served as chairman from 1967 until 1977, the crucial period during which our department grew much of the way from small beginnings to the nationally and internationally known institution that we are today. Ed created our postdoctoral program. The number of postdocs has fluctuated over the years. It was 15 in 1977, at a time when it was entirely state funded. With our current VIGRE and IGERT grants it is now at a new high of 19. At other times in the past it has dropped as low as 8. But for more than thirty years it has been an essential part of our operation. This program, one of Ed's legacies, has added greatly not just to the vitality of our department, but it has also provided a very significant service to the mathematical community of this country, and indeed the world, by offering an attractive environment and an extended time period for many new Ph.D.s to grow into their careers as professional mathematicians. Ed also wrote numerous papers in 3-dimensional topology, he served as Ph.D. advisor to ten people and M.S. advisor to sixteen, and he served in various capacities in the Mathematical Association of America, the American Mathematical Society, and the National Science Foundation.

Ed was unusually kind and supportive to young people. I met him in person for the first time at the 1978 departmental picnic, and I distinctly

remember him slowly and conscientiously making the rounds and introducing himself to everybody who was new at that time. He always had all the time in the world to talk with a young faculty member. His advice was always insightful and helpful.

Ed passed away on November 18th, 2004. He is survived by his wife Charlotte June, his daughter Carol, and his son Grant.

## Attention Undergrads!

Applications for Spring 2005 REUs (Research Experiences for Undergraduates) are due no later than **Friday, January 14, 2005**. If you are interested in getting involved in research through the VIGRE program you'll need to find a faculty member to work with and submit a research proposal. Applications are available at

*[www.math.utah.edu/vigre/reu](http://www.math.utah.edu/vigre/reu)*

Applicants will be notified of acceptance for an REU by Friday, January 21, 2005.

## Topology Conference

by Dan Margalit

On December 4th, the department hosted the 20th almost-semi-annual Winter Wasatch Topology Conference. There were four excellent speakers: Noel Brady (Oklahoma), Ian Leary and Tadeusz Januszkiewicz (both at Ohio State), and Kevin Wortman (Cornell). The talks covered various aspects of geometric group theory and low-dimensional topology, in particular finiteness properties of groups and combinatorial curvature. Other attendees at the conference included visitors from BYU and Idaho State. In the evening, Michah Sageev's family hosted a dinner party, which featured Michah's cornished hens smothered in a delectable orange glaze, Ken Bromberg's famous chocolate brownies, and Cyndi Bestvina's dip (not Mladen). We were all entertained by the guitar and vocal stylings of Ian and Tadeusz, the billiard mastery of Michah, and the fashion tour de force known as Lars. A wonderful time was had by all!

## Five Years of WeBWorK

The upcoming spring semester marks the fifth anniversary of WeBWorK in our department. WeBWorK is a software package that delivers homework sets to students electronically. Students answer questions online. If their answer is incorrect they get to figure out why and try again. WeBWorK was developed with NSF support by Mike Gage and Arnie Pizer of Rochester University. It's used at a growing number of universities across the country. Every semester during the regular year students in our department submit close to one million answers through WeBWorK.

## Personality!

We'd like to welcome Susan Hendry and Heather Rasmussen to the math department. Susan is our new grant accountant and Heather will be working with the RTG and IGERT programs as well as providing faculty support.

Susan was previously the Administrative Officer in the Dean's Office, College of Humanities. Fortunately, she heard that Mathematics had good people who were professional and easy to get along with, and now we are lucky to have her as part of our department.

In her spare time she likes to read, hike and snowshoe the Wasatch, read, practice Aikido, read. (Did we mention she enjoys reading?)

Susan is the slave to three geriatric cats – 19 years old and going strong. There is much to get to know about Susan – just to whet your appetite, she's hitch hiked through Africa, from Cape Town to Casablanca, after serving for two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Lesotho (in southern Africa).

If you haven't already met Susan, stop by sometime and say hello.

Heather is already familiar with the math department because her husband was a math major while here at the U. She's happy to be working on campus because she enjoys working with people in an academic atmosphere.



Heather was born in Ventura, CA, but moved to

Bakersfield when she was two. People often get confused about where Bakersfield is, so we'll clarify it for you. It is NOT Baker (the first stop into California after leaving Nevada, with the big thermometer). It is NOT the town with the big outlet stores that she's never been to and the McDonald's with the train inside of it (that's Barstow). Bakersfield is where Hee Haw originated and where Buck Owens owns half of everything. It's where Hank Williams Junior lived with his guitar shaped pool, and where Caesar Chavez worked with the migrant farm workers. Except for the last bit, that's why she moved away almost ten years ago. It was just too much excitement! Now she goes back at least twice a year to enjoy being with her family and her favorite restaurants.

Heather and her husband, Craig, have an energetic six-year-old daughter named Halle (pronounced Holly). They live in Holladay in the home they purchased almost two years ago.

Heather likes to read, cook, swim, ride her road bike and be with her family. She can talk about virtually anything for hours on end without getting tired (some people say she's a little too good at it). One thing that might surprise you about Heather is that she's never seen "The Sound of Music." (Anybody have a video they'd be willing to lend her? Even if you don't, stop by and say hello.)

## A Visit From Fibonacci

At a very special Math Circle on Wednesday, December 8 Sandy Spiroff held a seance and successfully summoned Fibonacci for a visit to our very own math department!



The Aftermath is edited by Peter Alfeld and Angie Gardiner. Please contact either one of us if you have an idea or article to submit. (Issues of the newsletter will be archived on the web at:

[www.math.utah.edu/newsletter](http://www.math.utah.edu/newsletter)