

Notices

of the American Mathematical Society

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Adieu to the Mathfest

The Seattle Mathfest is the last such meeting to be held in this format in this century. For the Society this represents the 98th Summer Meeting. The program offers a rich variety of scientific and social events. Seattle lies at the heart of one of the fastest growing economic regions in the United States. Many recreational opportunities can be found within a few minutes of the center, including mountain climbing, hiking, camping, fishing, water sports, professional sports, and coffee drinking.

Among the notable events at this meeting are the keynote lecture by Dr. William Perry, secretary of defense, and the Hedrick Lectures by Dr. Richard Askey of the University of Wisconsin. Mathematicians should find a rich selection of sessions and lectures.

Early in the previous decade, the governing bodies of the AMS decided not to hold a national summer meeting. The final implementation of this decision was not effected until last year, when the Council of the Society decided not to participate in a joint summer meeting for the remainder of this decade.

The Summer Meeting has played a significant role in the scientific life of the Society. When first held, the Summer Meeting was the only scientific meeting sponsored by the Society during the summer. Participants combined travel to the meeting with vacations, so that the Summer Meeting was populated by mathematicians and their families. The sites were often attractive university settings, such as Seattle, where summer vacation activities were close to the meeting site.

The lifestyles of mathematicians have changed significantly since those idyllic times. The politics of departmental life, including significant reductions in travel support and significant changes in promotion and tenure procedures, have changed. Spouses and other family members are not as willing to wait several days during a vacation while the mathematician in the family attends lectures—perhaps the spouse should be attending another conference or summer meeting and the kids would rather be hanging at the mall.

Furthermore, the Society and other organizations offer a plethora of specialized conferences, summer institutes, and workshops that are more attractive to the modern specialized mathematician. The gurus of a subject don't go to Seattle. They go rather to Oberwolfach for a week or they attend the AMS Summer Research Institute (also held this year in Seattle). The June 1996 issue of these *Notices* contained two and a half pages announcing meetings during July 1996 and one page of announcements for meetings in August 1996. These Mathfests have (had) a lot of competition for the fewer funds that mathematicians have available for travel.

The Society itself will continue to provide ample meetings activities for its members to enjoy during the summer. There are the AMS-IMS-SIAM Joint Summer Research Conferences in the Mathematical Sciences, the AMS-SIAM Summer Seminar in Applied Mathematics, in addition to the Summer Research Institute. Without the boundary condition imposed by the Mathfest, sectional meetings can be held in early September and earlier in October or also during the summer months.

Also, the Society, jointly with the London Mathematical Society and the South African Mathematical Society, is sponsoring a meeting in South Africa at the end of June 1997. There will be another joint AMS-Mexican Mathematical Society meeting late in 1997.

Plans are now under way for a one-week meeting sponsored by the Society during the summer of 2000 (probably in Berkeley) as part of the International Mathematical Union World Mathematical Year 2000 activities. Details on this will soon begin to appear.

So, as we experience the last of the joint Mathfests, we can rest assured that the Society will continue to provide an excellent menu of conferences, institutes, and scientific meetings during the summer.

Robert Fossum, Secretary, AMS