

Notices

of the American Mathematical Society

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In Memoriam

William Ashton Harris Jr. (1930–1998)

William Ashton Harris Jr., associate secretary of the American Mathematical Society and professor of mathematics at the University of Southern California, passed away suddenly on January 8, 1998, at the age of sixty-seven. Harris had been an associate secretary for the Western Section of the Society since February 1, 1996. He had been appointed to the position by the Council of the Society upon recommendation by the Executive Committee and the Society's Board of Trustees.

Bill was a welcome addition to the Secretariat, the committee of the secretary and associate secretaries of the Society that considers and sets most of the policy for the scientific meetings of the Society and that edits the *Abstracts of the American Mathematical Society*. In addition to his insightful contributions to the organization and programming of meetings, he brought a warm personality and wonderful sense of humor to the meetings and to his other interactions with officers, members, and staff. Often he was able to defuse a tense moment by inserting a concise, thoughtful comment spiced with a humorous delivery. During his term as associate secretary he arranged and supervised many meetings in the Western Section and laid the groundwork for several future meetings. It is ironic that he died during the Annual Meeting of the Society, a meeting he might have attended but could not because of the infirmity that was the eventual cause of his untimely death. The members and staff of the Society who were expecting to meet with him were truly saddened to learn of his passing.

Bill was born in New Orleans in 1930 but traveled north to receive his Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota. He received his doctorate in 1958 at Minnesota under the supervision of Hugh Turrittin. Harris remained at Minnesota as an instructor and rose through the ranks to become a professor in 1968. He moved to the University of Southern California in 1970. At USC he continued his active research program in ordinary differential equations and served actively in many administrative capacities, including a stint from 1977 to 1984 as chair of the Department of Mathematics.

Bill was also a world traveler, visiting institutes and departments in Japan, the United Kingdom, and Europe, in addition to many in North America.

Harris's area of research was the analytic theory of ordinary differential equations, with special emphasis on asymptotic integration and singular perturbations, topics about which he wrote more than seventy research papers. He supervised five Ph.D. candidates and ten applied mathematics master's degree candidates during his career.

Harris delivered Invited Addresses to the Mathematical Society of Japan in 1965 and to the AMS in 1979 and was the principal lecturer at a CBMS conference in 1975. In addition, he served as editor of the *SIAM Journal on Applied Mathematics* and of the journal *Nonlinear Analysis*. His research was supported throughout the years by both the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Army Research Office.

Harris played a significant role in the founding and administration of the Summer School on High Performance Computing at the University of Minnesota in the early 1990s. Bill was the founding director of this program for a two-year period and made significant contributions in time and personal funds to ensure the success of the program. The program was later emulated by other Army centers, demonstrating the high regard it received.

Bill will be missed by his colleagues everywhere.

—Robert M. Fossum
Secretary of the AMS