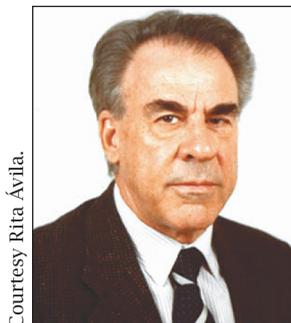


# Geraldo Severo de Souza Ávila—A Math Professor

*José Cloves Verde Saraiva*



Courtesy Rita Ávila.

**Geraldo Ávila, 1983.**

Soon he became assistant professor at the renowned Aeronautical Technology Institute. The Vargas era made great strides in fostering research and Ávila was one of the first talented youths to receive a CNPq grant for the Courant Institute in New York.

In 1957 Ávila married Neuza Ávila, and the couple left for New York. His doctoral dissertation was published in the journal *Communications in Pure and Applied Mathematics* in 1963.

Back home, Ávila was on the faculty and one of the main figures in the math department at the recently inaugurated University of Brasilia. However tense the moment for intellectual leaders, the March 31 revolution having imposed military rule, this first nucleus in Brasília would sow the seeds for important mathematical talents to flourish.

In 1963 Ávila spent three years in Wisconsin before transferring to Georgetown University, where he worked for seven years and was chairman of the math department. In 1972 he returned to Brazil. Among his many achievements in his home country were: expanding the library collection as director of the Science Institute, efficiently managing research programs as dean, advancing the Editorial Committee, and presiding over the Brazilian Mathematical Society. As a member of the Brazilian Science Academy, he diligently saw to the translation and publication of international math classics. His entire agenda set the Sociedade

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Geraldo Ávila was born in the rural interior of Brazil in 1933. Struggling to give their children an education, his parents moved the family to São Paulo, where Ávila would graduate in mathematics at the newly founded University of São Paulo.

Soon he became assistant professor at the

Brasileira de Matemática (SBM) on a fresh new course until 1985. The democratic ideal had gained enough momentum on the political scene by 1985 that extremist demonstrations challenged any post not taken by direct vote. It was in this tense moment of political transition that the Faculty Board appointed its new president. Of the six names on the list, Ávila was by far the favorite among the voting members on the board; he was thus installed in the final days of the administration of General Figueiredo, the last military president before the new administration ushered in the new era of democratically elected presidents.

Despite having taken office, Ávila relinquished his post after two weeks. The new government administration had no interest in supporting a university president who had been appointed during the rule of the military government, especially under pressure from groups that used the transition period as a political springboard. Ávila's name was being wrongly associated with the dictatorship.

Ávila spent 1986 in Utah, where he wrote "Asymptotic Wave Function and Energy Distribution in Magnetodynamics", published in the prestigious German journal *J. für die reine und angewandte Mathematik*.

Back in Brazil, he would still have much to accomplish before succumbing to a fourteen-year struggle against lung cancer at age seventy-seven. He would be awarded the Jabuti Prize, finish writing his new book (to be published), re-edit his other books, work as visiting professor at Goiás University, and be selected for the SP Science Academy.

*The author wishes to thank Prof. Rita Ávila for personal information and for reviewing the text.*

## References

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Courtesy Luis Cláudio.

**Geraldo and Neuza Ávila, 2009.**



Courtesy Rita Ávila.

**Geraldo Ávila, 2008.**