

# William J. LeVeque Retires as Executive Director

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In September of this year, William J. LeVeque will retire from his position as Executive Director of the AMS. The Society wishes to express its appreciation for his many contributions during his eleven years of dedicated service.

## Biographical Sketch

Dr. LeVeque was born on August 9, 1923 in Boulder, Colorado. He earned his B.A. degree with highest honors from the University of Colorado in 1944, and received both a master's degree in 1945 and a Ph.D. in 1947 from Cornell University. From 1947 to 1949 he was a Benjamin Peirce Instructor in Mathematics at Harvard University. Becoming an Instructor at the University of Michigan in 1949, he advanced to the rank of Professor by 1960, and from 1967 to 1970 he served as Chairman of the mathematics department. In 1970, he accepted a position as Professor at the Claremont Graduate School in Claremont, California, where he served as Chairman of the mathematics department in 1973 and 1974. He remained at Claremont until he became Executive Director of the Society in 1977. During 1951–1952, Dr. LeVeque was a Fulbright Research Scholar in Manchester, England. He was also a Sloan Research Fellow from 1957 to 1960 in London, England and Göttingen, Germany.

Dr. LeVeque was very active within the Society even before he became Executive Director. He served on the *Proceedings* Editorial Committee from 1961–1963 and was Executive Editor of *Mathematical Reviews* in 1965 and 1966. He also served on the *MR* Editorial Committee and the *MR* Crisis Committee. In addition, he has been a member of many other Society committees, including the Invitations and Organizing Committee for the November 1963 Symposium in Number Theory; the Committee to Monitor Problems in Communication

(Chairman, 1967–1969); the Selection Committee for the Cole Prize in Number Theory (1971); the Committee on a Comprehensive Subject Index (1971–1972); and the Committee on Science Policy (1975–1977).

Dr. LeVeque has also been involved in a number of scientific sessions at AMS meetings. He spoke at the Symposium on Theory of Numbers in Pasadena in November 1963, and at a Special Session on Probabilistic Number Theory at Urbana in November 1970. He also organized Special Sessions on Number Theory (Houston, January 1967), and on Distribution Modulo 1, and Random Number Generation (San Francisco, January 1974).

Active in national science policy matters, Dr. LeVeque served as Chairman of the Commission on a National Information System in Mathematics in 1968 and 1969, and as a member of the Advisory Panel of the Mathematical Sciences Section of the National Science Foundation from 1969–1972 (Chairman, 1971–1972). He also was a member of the U. S. National Committee for the International Mathematical Union of the National Academy of Sciences (1969–1975), a United States delegate to the 1970 and 1974 General Assemblies of the International Mathematical Union, and Chairman of the Conference Board of the Mathematical Sciences from 1973 to 1975.

Dr. LeVeque's research interest is in number theory, and he has published several books on the subject, including *Topics in Number Theory* in 1956, *Elementary Theory of Numbers* in 1962, and *Number Theory* in 1978. In 1978, Dr. LeVeque received an award from the Special Libraries Association for editing the six-volume work, *Reviews in Number Theory*, and for his association with *MR*. The award cited his contributions to the documentation of the literature of mathematics.

## Comments

*George Daniel Mostow, President of the Society was asked to provide his personal reflections on Dr. LeVeque's contributions to the AMS. He responded:*

I first met Bill LeVeque, then a young number theorist from Michigan, on an AMS committee. I soon learned to listen very closely to his comments, which invariably made good sense and were illuminating. That impression of Bill has persisted throughout all the years and has been repeatedly confirmed during my term as president of the AMS.

Very often, in scientific societies, there is a divergence of viewpoints among the staff and the scholars. Fortunately for the AMS, Bill has never drifted far from the moorings of his distinguished academic career as a mathematician. His great vigor has consistently been directed at the right target: the advancement of mathematics.

During his stewardship, our Society has significantly increased its services to mathematicians, and Bill has played an important role in developing the revenue to pay for the increased mathematical activities.

During the past two years, as the need to develop a higher visibility for mathematics in the public forum became recognized, Bill played a unique role in leading the Joint Policy Board for Mathematics through a tense period of mounting budgets. Thanks to Bill's persuasive and steady role, JPBM finally can look forward to an Office of Government and Public Affairs which can both accomplish our purpose and be affordable.

Bill's stature and achievements have imparted considerable prestige to the AMS Executive Director position. I came to appreciate this keenly during my service on the search committee for his successor.

I join the many admirers of Bill LeVeque in hailing the lasting contributions he has made to the American Mathematical Society.

*Irving Kaplansky, President of the Society during 1985-1986, was asked to provide his personal reflections on Dr. LeVeque's contributions to the AMS. He responded:*

Some time soon it will be appropriate to look back at the decade of the 1980s and ask: how is mathematics doing? Is the enterprise in good health? A list of accomplishments might include: the classification of finite simple groups, the Mordell conjecture, the Bieberbach conjecture, the van der Waerden conjecture on permanents, the four-dimensional Poincaré conjecture, the structure of smooth four-manifolds, and the new knot polynomials. Let me add that the decade also saw the reconciliation of mathematics and physics moving ahead nicely. So the verdict is that mathematics is thriving. Moreover, American

mathematics is clearly at the forefront, the American Mathematical Society is the nerve center of American mathematics, and all this is happening with Bill LeVeque at the helm of the Society.

On the mathematical political scene, the remarkable David report was followed by a degree of visibility for mathematics and its Washington presence that would have been unthinkable just a short while ago. The AMS deserves much of the credit, in the crudest quantitative sense: the lion's share of the funding of the Washington presence is being provided by the Society, under Bill's leadership.

We owe other things to Bill. Not the least of these are his fine two volume treatise on number theory, his collection of Reviews in Number Theory, and his years as Executive Editor of Mathematical Reviews.

The years 1985 and 1986 were good years to be the President of the Society. There was a gratifying turn around of the proverbial dime, from alarming deficits to reassuring surpluses. Bus Jaco will inherit a Society that is fiscally sound, ready to march in good order to the end of the century.

What was it like to work with Bill? In a word: great. I remember with pleasure his courtesy, his wit, and his untiring efforts to get everybody to do their jobs right. When needed, there was also a hint of steel inside the velvet glove. Many times, when a tricky discussion was bogging down, he would wait till the right moment and then firmly point to the nub of the matter.

I am currently having a good taste of administration. Let me tell something to the readers of this piece. When we go to a meeting and find everything running smoothly with every need foreseen, we probably do not give it a thought. (Of course, when the opposite is true we scream bloody murder.) The next time this happens to you at an AMS meeting, think about it. Somebody has worked hard to make it happen. That somebody is Bill LeVeque, ably aided by the superb staff he has assembled.

Bill, I wish to give you my personal heartfelt thanks in this public way, and wish you lots of fun in the next stage of your career.