



Canadian Society for History
and Philosophy of Mathematics
Société canadienne d'histoire et
de philosophie des mathématiques

NEWSLETTER

Number 1

February 8, 1978

This is the first issue of the CSHPM newsletter. We hope that this newsletter will keep members informed of the Society's activities and will also provide a forum for the informal communication of current research news, etc.

If you have news to report, or if you would like to contribute your ideas, please write to

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or telephone her at (416) 862-0430 (office).

Executive Council Members

In order for the membership to better know the executive, one or two members of the executive council will be featured in each issue. Len Berggren, this year's president, has written about himself:

In 1966 I received my Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Washington in Seattle with a thesis on group theory, and in the fall of that year I began teaching at Simon Fraser University where I am now Associate Professor of Mathematics. For some time my research centred on group theory, but in 1970 I was asked to design a course in the history of mathematics. This led, in a roundabout way, to an invitation to go to the Department of the History of Science and Medicine at Yale University for a year of study and research in the history of mathematics. Professor Aaboe at Yale awakened my interest in Archimedes and my first research in the history of mathematics dealt with Archimedes' work on centres of gravity. It is this topic - centres of gravity - whose history I am now studying from Hellenistic times to medieval Islam. At the same time I am following my interest in Archimedes with research into the sources of his work, especially Democritus.

I have always been interested in languages and when at the time of my marriage I learned Modern Greek, I decided to follow the language backwards and teach myself ancient Greek. An invitation to a colleague to give a guest lecture to my History of Mathematics course led to my getting lessons in classical Arabic. My most recent visit to

Yale (1975-76) gave me the chance to take some courses in both of these languages, and I find both languages to be quite useful in my research.

It was Ken May who made me aware of activity in the history of mathematics in Canada and who encouraged me to become active in the CSHPM when it was being founded. My hope is that during my term as President of CSHPM we can begin work on some projects, and sponsor others, which will encourage the teaching of our discipline in Canada and its growth as a profession.

Executive Council Meetings

The executive council was scheduled to meet via a conference telephone call in January. However, this meeting has been delayed because of the B.C. Telephone strike.

The last executive council meetings were held in Hamilton, shortly after the new executive was elected. Since the entire executive was not able to meet at one time, there were two separate meetings. The discussion at both meetings centred around the establishment of projects which the Society could undertake on an ongoing basis.

Kenneth O. May Memorial Celebration

On December 15, 1977, about a hundred and fifty colleagues and friends of Ken May gathered at Hart House at the University of Toronto, to remember his life and work. H.S.M. Coxeter, Stillman Drake, Charles Jones and Bruce Sinclair spoke, and Terrell Gardner read a letter from Henry S. Tropp, who was not able to come from California to speak. These speeches will be published in two forthcoming issues of Historia Mathematica. Some of the telegrams and letters received from around the world were also read aloud. The speakers all drew a picture of Ken May as a person of great energy, high talent and good humour. As an editor and compiler, he chose work which would probably not have been done, had he not devoted himself to it. While all those assembled at Hart House were saddened by his death, the gathering was really a celebration of his life.

The Kenneth O. May Lecture

The CSHPM has established a fund as a memorial to Ken May. The fund will be used to underwrite the Kenneth O. May Lecture in the History and Philosophy of Mathematics. To contribute to the fund, send a cheque (payable to The Kenneth O. May Lecture Fund) to

The Kenneth O. May Lecture Fund
 c/o Charles V. Jones, Treasurer
 Canadian Society for the History
 and Philosophy of Mathematics
 Atkinson College, York University
 Downsview, Ontario M3J 2R7

Beginning of the Society

The idea of having a Canadian Society for the History and Philosophy of Mathematics began with Ken May. In 1973, he wrote letters to several colleagues in the history of mathematics to ask them what they thought of this idea. Their response was encouraging.

As a result, May suggested that those people interested in the history of mathematics should meet at the 1973 Learned Societies' meeting at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario. A small but enthusiastic group did meet at Kingston, chaired by Charles Jones, in Ken May's absence. The group decided to create a society, and to organize an official meeting for the 1974 Learned Societies' meeting. The group elected Charles Jones as organizational chairman and also as program chairman for the 1974 meeting.

During the second half of 1973 and the first half of 1974, Jones planned for the June, 1974 meeting, to be held in Toronto. He arranged for a invited session, sponsored jointly with the Canadian Society for the History and Philosophy of Science, and for a session of contributed papers. With Tom Settle, he drafted by-laws for the society.

The Toronto meeting was well-attended. The invited session took place in the morning. Professors J.L. Berggren, S. Drake and H.S.M. Coxeter spoke. In the afternoon, a number of contributed papers were presented. That evening the organizational meeting took place, and the Society officially came into being. The by-laws were adopted and signed by the 12 charter members. Historia Mathematica was adopted as the journal of the Society.

Officers were then elected. The charter officers were:

President: C. V. Jones
 Vice President: T. Settle
 Secretary-Treasurer: J.L. Berggren

