

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

LEO MOSER

Leo Moser's death on February 9th, 1970, will be felt as a personal loss by many mathematicians throughout the world. Although the names of people engaged in research often become well known by the quality of their work, few of them have had the close personal contact Leo Moser established with the many hundreds of people interested in his discipline.

Leo Moser was born in Vienna in April of 1921, but the Moser family moved to Canada early enough for him to obtain his elementary education in Winnipeg. After graduating from the University of Manitoba with a B. Sc. degree in mathematics in 1944, he went on to an M.Sc. degree at the University of Toronto and a Ph. D. at the University of North Carolina. He then spent a brief period at the Texas Technical College, before beginning in 1951 his long association with the University of Alberta.

Leo Moser had mathematical talents that were unique among the many mathematicians I have known personally or through their published work. Foremost among these talents were intuition, simplicity, ingenuity, and clarity. Above all he demonstrated an amazing ability to analyse the most complex of mathematical problems, and by intuitive heuristic arguments outline ways in which they might be attacked, and quite often to estimate accurately what the answer was likely to be. Since Leo Moser and I worked closely together on research for a period of about five years, I can give personal witness to the contribution his unique abilities made to the solution of difficult mathematical problems.

During his lifetime, he made contributions to more than one hundred research publications, mainly in the fields of number theory, graph theory, and algebra. This work is characterized by an amazing ingenuity, an ingenuity that compensated for his lack of knowledge of many of the high-powered tools of analysis. Because of his consistent use of elementary analysis, Moser's papers show a simplicity and clarity that is rarely found in the work of other mathematicians.

Leo Moser was one of the best teachers of mathematics the University of Alberta has had. Gifted with many of the attributes of a successful actor, he made of mathematics a fresh and living subject for very large classes of students just beginning their mathematical studies. At the same time, he could completely captivate smaller groups of professional mathematicians who are prone to be critical of the work of other people.