

## MID-CENTURY IN SEATTLE

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**1. Introduction.** This is a view of algebraic activity centering around abelian group theory, particularly the theory of torsion-free groups, at the University of Washington roughly during the period from the 1950's to the mid 1960's. Hence, the title. Any such account naturally focuses on two people, R.A. Beaumont and R.S. Pierce, each of whom as it happens has been the subject of recent review (cf. [13], [15]). To keep within suggested space limits, we take the liberty of referring generously to these accounts, which therefore might be consulted in conjunction with our remarks here. We emphasize that this is in the nature of a snapshot – that large areas, e.g., work on  $p$ -groups, are not addressed. Complete bibliographic references may be found in [13] and [15].

We also adopt a somewhat personal point of view and our comments will reflect to a large extent our own experience. However, we hope the report is broad enough to give a reasonable idea of what was going on, who the major players were and what some of the accomplishments were. We hope also to give some indication of the influence of that work on those of us who were there at the time.

**2. People (faculty).** The algebraists on the faculty at the time were Ross Beaumont, James Patrick Jans, Ronald Nunke, Richard S. Pierce and John H. Walter.

Of these, Beaumont, Pierce and Nunke are perhaps the ones we know best in the abelian group community.

Beaumont was the senior algebraist, having come to the University in 1940. He received his degree working under Reinhold Baer at the University of Illinois and was Baer's first American student after his, Baer's, arrival from Germany. He was, whether we were his thesis students or not, a central figure in our experience. Friendly, easy-going, encouraging and with an engaging sense of humor, he was a wonderful

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