

Neumann's work. In the interview, Erdős, regrettably, did not discuss what this work might be.

The second anecdote, now also well known, was likewise recounted by Erdős in his interview with Alexanderson for *Mathematical People* [Alexanderson 1985, 84]; Erdős said: 'You know that Brouwer, the Great Dutch mathematician, was also a businessman, as was an uncle of mine. Brouwer asked him, when he (my uncle) introduced himself, "Are you a relative of Paul Erdős, the young Hungarian mathematician?"'

The third anecdote concerns Gödel. Erdős and Gödel knew each other well. Erdős recounted [Alexanderson 1985, 89] that he used to talk with Gödel 'a great deal. He was certainly a remarkable intellect. He understood everything, even what he didn't work with. It is strange how little he published. He could have certainly done more things.' Erdős noted [Alexanderson 1985, 89] that Gödel 'had a proof that the axiom of choice is independent. And there was a rumor that he had a proof of the independence of the continuum hypothesis before Cohen. I asked him and he said, "No, it is not true." He had a proof for the independence of the axiom of choice, but he didn't like the proof.'

The fourth anecdote also concerns Gödel, but may not be very well known. As I recall, it was at the Third Southeastern Logic Symposium, held on 7 March 1987 at the College of Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina, that Erdős spoke of the following quick encounter that he had once had with Gödel at an airport while both were waiting for a flight. The discussion turned to Gödel's incompleteness theorem and its significance. As Erdős told it (as recorded by [Anellis, n.d.]), Gödel said, "half seriously, half jokingly: "In number theory everything will turn out to be decidable; in set theory, everything will turn out to be either trivial or decidable.'"

References

G. L. ALEXANDERSON. 1985. *Interview with Paul Erdős*, in D. J. Albers & G. L. Alexanderson (editors), *Mathematical people: Profiles and interviews* (Boston/Basel/Stuttgart, Birkhäuser), 85–91. (With photograph of Erdős, p. 82).

I. H. ANELLIS. n.d. *Erdős*, 1 p. ms. note.

RICHARD SYLVAN

RICHARD SYLVAN died on 26 June 1996. A philosopher who carried out his work in Australia and New Zealand and who held a post at the Australian National University, Sylvan's work included the historical and