

REMINISCENCES OF KAROL BORSUK

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Dedicated to the memory of our teacher, Karol Borsuk

The death of Karol Borsuk on January 24, 1982, in Warsaw has brought sorrow and regret to a wide circle of his friends and former students. His creative mathematical work and his profoundly unique personality left us with a feeling that something of inestimable value has departed and yet remains as a treasured remembrance.

Karol Borsuk was born in Warsaw on May 8, 1905. In 1936 he married Zofia Majewska by whom he had two daughters, Elżbieta and Magdalena. On graduation from the Warsaw University in 1927, he taught for three years at a private school. During these years he wrote his doctoral dissertation “Sur les rétractes” which was published in 1931 in *Fundamenta Mathematicae*. His thesis initiated a steady and remarkable stream of research interrupted only by the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

In 1932, at the age of 27, he probably made his most beautiful discovery, the “Antipodensatz”, which was presented at the International Mathematical Congress in Zürich in 1932. Around the same time, Borsuk “discovered”, at the University of Warsaw, a young student, Samuel Eilenberg, who in 1933, under his influence, published a first paper in topology and two years later wrote his doctoral thesis (at the age of 22). This “discovery” turned out to be a good fortune both for the “student” and for the “teacher”: between 1933–1939, the intense activity of each of them provided a stimulus and inspiration for the other. The resulting mutual interaction generated almost 100 publications, some of them of the first order of importance.