



George Piranian

1914–2009

In Memoriam

The Michigan Mathematical Journal notes with sadness the recent death of George Piranian and pays tribute to his memory in recognition of his long and distinguished service as managing editor. The journal began life without special funding in 1950, and the first issue appeared in 1952. At first it was strictly an in-house operation, guided by a committee in the Mathematics Department, with articles contributed by local faculty and typed by a Department secretary on a varitype machine, from which the journal was printed. When the system broke down in 1954, George was persuaded to take the reins as managing editor. His first move was to transfer the typing and printing of final text to Cushing–Malloy, a local firm noted for the high quality of its product. George then wrote personal letters to solicit manuscripts from other mathematicians. Later he would recall that “the preponderance of analysis in some of our early volumes reflects the interests of most of my close acquaintances.”

Over the years, George gave the journal a special reputation for clear exposition. After an article had been recommended for publication, he would transmit the referee’s critical suggestions to the author together with a long discursive letter, spiced with humor, offering his own ideas for mathematical or textual improvements. He worked hard to shape the presentation of every paper published in the journal. As one author remarked, George ran a tight ship.

During his 22-year term as managing editor, George led the *MMJ* from obscurity to international recognition. At the beginning of 1976 the undersigned was given the unenviable task of succeeding this living legend as managing editor. By that time, the journal was receiving many papers in a wide spectrum of mathematical subjects. It soon became apparent that George had been handling a huge workload. Our first move was to form a board of four associate editors with various mathematical specialties in order to share the evaluation and initial editing of manuscripts. In effect, George was replaced by five people, but he could never be truly replaced. George Piranian was one of a kind.

Further details, including some biographical information, can be found in Allen Shields’ preface to the special issue of the *MMJ* [Vol. 32 (1985), No. 1], which was dedicated to Piranian on the occasion of his 70th birthday. A full biographical sketch and many photographs are posted on the website www.georgepiranian.com.

—Peter Duren