

Preface

In honor of Professor Michio Suzuki's 70th birthday, a conference was held in July 1997, at the International Christian University, Mitaka, Tokyo. In early 1998, we published an informal proceedings of the conference, and then began the preparation of a book which would have celebrated the 70th birthday of Professor Suzuki. However, in February 1998, we received an email from Kazuko Suzuki (Professor Suzuki's daughter) informing us that her father had decided to return to Japan immediately, since he was suffering from liver cancer, and that his condition was extremely grave. We were greatly shocked by this news, because Professor Suzuki looked very well during his 70th birthday conference.

Professor Suzuki stayed in hospital in Tokyo. Some of us visited him regularly to discuss mathematics, as well as what we could do for him. Professor Suzuki knew that he would have only a few more months. Together with Professor Suzuki we discussed frankly the possibility that we must change the volume for his 70th birthday to a volume in his memory, and made detailed plans of the volume. Before Professor Suzuki returned to Japan, he had nearly completed a manuscript of about 150 pages, and he tried to give the finishing touches to this manuscript in hospital while fighting his illness. The priority was to make secure the publication of this manuscript, and with his approval, it was decided that the 150 page manuscript would be included in this volume (Professor Michio Suzuki passed away on May 31, 1998).

In the autumn of 1998, we sent invitations for contributions to this memorial volume to the invited speakers of the conference, as well as to researchers who had close ties with Professor Suzuki. Many of them willingly submitted their manuscripts to this volume.

We thought the most important task in this project was to properly handle the paper left by Professor Suzuki. Professor Helmut Bender was asked to check the overall correctness of the manuscript, and confirmation was received within a year (Professor Bender's opinion was that only minimum unavoidable corrections should be made to honor the writing style and the original flow of Professor Suzuki's thoughts). Based on Professor Bender's suggestions, and with the help of Kazuko Suzuki, some necessary corrections were made. In addition, Dr. Naoki Chigira was asked to check the mathematical details of the paper, since his recent interests had been close to the contents of the manuscript. Dr. Chigira took this job very seriously, pointed out many minor irregularities, gave many valuable comments, and also confirmed the overall

correctness of the paper. Except for very obvious misprints, the mathematical changes suggested by Dr. Chigira were not incorporated into the text (following Professor Bender's opinion concerning the style of the paper). We are extremely grateful to Dr. Chigira for his laborious contribution in checking the details of the manuscript. Any reader who is interested in the details of his comments should consult Dr. Chigira directly.

Professor Michio Suzuki had a great influence in group theory over the last 50 years. We believe that his work in the 1950's ignited work on the classification of finite simple groups, and in the 1960's and 70's he led its development. The classification was completed in the early 1980's by Aschbacher, Gorenstein, Thompson and many others. Professor Suzuki's most recent contribution to group theory is in this volume.

Although Professor Suzuki was affiliated with the University of Illinois from 1952 until his death, he had a profound influence on the development of group theory (and subsequently of algebraic combinatorics) in Japan. Through him, word of recent developments in group theory often reached Japan, in particular through his regular summer visits. His recommendations gave many of us opportunities to visit abroad for research and to help us find jobs. We believe it is fair to say that much of the respect given to group theory in Japan as a whole derives from that given to Professor Michio Suzuki as one of the top mathematicians in the world (of course, many other Japanese group theorists deserve credit: nonetheless, the influence of Professor Suzuki was extraordinary). The article by Koichiro Harada in this volume gives an excellent account of this.

It is unfortunate that Professor Suzuki passed away before we could show him our immense gratitude for leading us. Although they are private memories, each of us cannot forget the wonderful times we had visiting the University of Illinois and his home in Champaign, Illinois.

While editing this volume, it has been suggested by many mathematicians that Professor Suzuki's works are exceptionally important, and that they are worthy of being published as a collected work. We firmly agree with this opinion. At the same time, we feel that we are not well qualified for this important task, and hope that other, more qualified people, will take part. We also hope that the publication of this memorial volume will trigger such a project. We are willing to help with such a project in any way that we can, and we hope that Koichiro Harada will be involved.

We would like to thank many of those who helped towards the publication of this volume. It is regrettable that we cannot cite everyone's name. Besides those mentioned in the informal proceedings, we would

like to thank Professor Tadao Oda (former Chief Editor of ASPM) for allowing this volume to be published in ASPM series, and Professor Seiki Nishikawa for providing financial support from his Grant-in-Aid (from the Japanese government) for editing this volume. Hiroshi Suzuki supervised the work of changing the manuscripts to fit the style file of ASPM, with the help of Kenichiro Tanabe and Mitsugu Hirasaka. Finally, we would like to thank Naoko Suzuki (Mrs. Michio Suzuki) and Kazuko Suzuki, who helped us in many ways during the editing of this volume. The typing, as well as the corrections for Professor Michio Suzuki's last paper were made by Kazuko Suzuki with the additional help of Naoko Suzuki.

It has been almost 3 years since the death of Professor Michio Suzuki. We apologize for the long time it has taken us to put this volume in a publishable form. Although time seems to pass quickly, we will not let the vivid memories of Professor Suzuki and his mathematics fade away. We hope that this volume will renew people's memories, and also provide an opportunity for new generations of mathematicians to acquaint themselves with Professor Michio Suzuki and his mathematics.

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*All papers in this volume have been refereed and are in final form.
No version of any of them will be submitted for publication elsewhere.*

