BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
LEO MOSER

Leo Moser's death on February 9th, 1970, will be felt as a personal loss by many mathematicians throughout the world. Although the names of people engaged in research often become well known by the quality of their work, few of them have had the close personal contact Leo Moser established with the many hundreds of people interested in his discipline.

Leo Moser was born in Vienna in April of 1921, but the Moser family moved to Canada early enough for him to obtain his elementary education in Winnipeg. After graduating from the University of Manitoba with a B. Sc. degree in mathematics in 1944, he went on to an M.Sc. degree at the University of Toronto and a Ph. D. at the University of North Carolina. He then spent a brief period at the Texas Technical College, before beginning in 1951 his long association with the University of Alberta.

Leo Moser had mathematical talents that were unique among the many mathematicians I have known personally or through their published work. Foremost among these talents were intuition, simplicity, ingenuity, and clarity. Above all he demonstrated an amazing ability to analyse the most complex of mathematical problems, and by intuitive heuristic arguments outline ways in which they might be attacked, and quite often to estimate accurately what the answer was likely to be. Since Leo Moser and I worked closely together on research for a period of about five years, I can give personal witness to the contribution his unique abilities made to the solution of difficult mathematical problems.

During his lifetime, he made contributions to more than one hundred research publications, mainly in the fields of number theory, graph theory, and algebra. This work is characterized by an amazing ingenuity, an ingenuity that compensated for his lack of knowledge of many of the high-powered tools of analysis. Because of his consistent use of elementary analysis, Moser's papers show a simplicity and clarity that is rarely found in the work of other mathematicians.

Leo Moser was one of the best teachers of mathematics the University of Alberta has had. Gifted with many of the attributes of a successful actor, he made of mathematics a fresh and living subject for very large classes of students just beginning their mathematical studies. At the same time, he could completely captivate smaller groups of professional mathematicians who are prone to be critical of the work of other people.

It is not too much to say that Leo Moser was the most popular of the lecturers of the program sponsored by the Mathematical Association of America. As far as I am aware, he is the only mathematician to be invited to take part in this program during two consecutive years. In the course of this program and a similar one sponsored by the American National Science Foundation, he lectured at more than one hundred Canadian and American universities. In his time, he gave invited talks to high school students, high school teachers, university students, and professional mathematicians.

Leo Moser had many interests other than mathematics, notably chess. He held the Alberta Chess Championship for many years, and spent many hours playing chess with high school students in the city of Edmonton. Often, he would play 50 simultaneous games, showing a capacity of mind possessed by a fortunate few. More important to him than the game itself was the time he spent with young people describing the work of the University. There are literally hundreds of students who were influenced by him to continue their education beyond the elementary school level.

He was a warm person with a well developed sense of humor. He had an infinite stock of amusing stories, and a huge storehouse of simple puzzles of both a mathematical and a nonmathematical nature. To spend time with him was doubly pleasant in that one always had the sense of learning, and, at the same time, of being quietly entertained.

He loved people, and was prepared to give help wherever and whenever it was needed. He delighted in discussing mathematics and was prepared to share his ideas with anyone who cared to listen. Many of his ideas were developed by those who did listen, and this was a source of joy to him throughout his life.

In addition to his mother and two brothers, Leo Moser is survived by his wife Eva, and four children, Barbara, Melanie, Cheryl and David. There is nothing one can say to his family to help them carry the burden that has fallen on their shoulders. One does not lose a son like this, a husband like this, a father like this, or a brother like this, without knowing that the days to come will be different from the days that have passed. Leo Moser will be missed by his family, he will be missed by many people connected with the mathematical world and the University of Alberta, and he will be missed by me.

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Max Wyman
President
The University of Alberta

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May 19, 1970