The foundation of the Bernoulli Society

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I have been asked as the founding President of the Bernoulli Society to write a few words welcoming the first issue of our journal *Bernoulli* and to recall some of the circumstances of the Society's creation.

For many years the only international statistical society was the International Statistical Institute, but its membership was rather small and consisted to a great extent of government statisticians: mathematical statisticians could be and occasionally were elected, but they remained as it were a fringe. Things began to change after World War II, when one began to see names like that of Peter Whittle appearing in the list of members, but the actual meetings of the ISI had rather little to offer them. It was Jerzy Neyman who started the campaign to put things right by creating a sister or daughter body as a home for statisticians in the broadest sense – one that would be open to any serious candidate, and that would impose no 'national quotas'.

The time soon came when we perceived a ground swell of support for action in this direction, but it became clear that a step-by-step procedure would be necessary. The first move was to persuade the ISI to establish a Section for 'Statistics in the Physical Sciences' (IASPS) with a relaxed attitude to election procedures. But other events had a great influence also, notably the creation of the 'European Meeting of Statisticians' and the 'Conference on Stochastic Processes and their Applications'. Each of these groups had its partisans, and a little time had to pass before it was possible to set up a comprehensive solution to the general problem.

Neyman already realized what form this would have to take, and made his target the creation of a Bernoulli Society – an inspired choice because the Bernoullis as a group had betweeen them such a wide range of interests. By the time of the Warsaw meeting of the ISI in 1973 there was a very general demand for such a body, and in Warsaw it was born.

Symbolically during that meeting a Nova (new star) flashed out in the Polish heavens. I enjoyed pointing this out to some of the delegates at midnight. They did not all believe me, so we agreed to assemble again at the following midnight to see if (as I had predicted) the star would by then have become fainter, or have disappeared. Happily the Nova behaved as predicted, and having done its work, vanished.

Immediately afterwards the Assembly of the ISI voted the Bernoulli Society into existence as a Section of the ISI accommodating all the other statistical groupings that had been in search of a home. I became its first President with the daunting task of writing appropriate Statutes together with Bart Lunenberg (a veritable tower of strength) – and that was that.

Now at last we are to have our own journal, and one can confidently predict that it will be a dazzling success, supported as it is by a wealth of good will.

One of the most pleasant of my duties as President was to locate and write to the Bernoulli family

in Switzerland to ask for permission to adopt the Bernoulli heraldic tinctures – *vert* and *argent* – for the new Society. I am delighted to see that in the flyer for the journal these are proudly displayed. This is a Society that one confidently feels will live for ever.

We have been presented with a copy of a book setting out the history of the Bernoulli family, and on its end-papers the successive Presidents will be invited to write their names.

So that is the culmination of my story, and I feel confident that in the good hands of my friend Ole Eiler Barndorff-Nielsen and his successors, the Society and its Journal will flourish like the leaves on the tree in the Bernoulli arms.