EXTRACT FROM OP-SF NET

Topic #2 ---------- OP-SF NET 20.4 --------- July 15, 2013

From: OP-SF NET Editors
Subject: Herbert Stahl, 1942-2013

As announced in our May issue, Herbert Stahl died on April 22, 2013.
Kathy Driver has provided the following obituary notice:

Herbert Stahl was born on 3 August 1942 and spent his childhood on a small farm in Fehl-Ritzhausen (Westerwald, Germany). After completing the Volksschule [roughly equivalent to US Grade 10], he learnt the trade of electrician in the Siegerland and worked there for two years. During the time he worked as an electrician, he became interested in radio technology and realized that mathematics was the key to understanding information technology. He declined a bursary from AEG to study engineering, and instead worked as a casual labourer in Berlin, mostly as a packer in the Springer publishing company, while preparing for the "Externes Abitur", an examination he passed in 1964. He immediately enrolled as a mathematics student at the Technical University in Berlin where he completed his studies and obtained his Ph D writing a thesis on Padé Approximation under the supervision of Christian Pommerenke.

Herbert's first position in academic life was in the statistics department at the Technical University in Berlin. His interests included environmental statistics, business statistics, econometrics, and special models for the environment, economy and management. His enthusiasm for the Russian language and culture started in the 1970's and he frequently organised excursions to Moscow and accompanied student groups there during summer semesters.
In the early eighties he moved from the Technical University to the Technische Fachhochschule Berlin (TFH) and his interest in mathematics revived. The book General Orthogonal Polynomials (1992), co-authored with Vilmos Totik, has become a standard reference. His most significant papers include "Extremal domains associated with an analytic function" (1985), "Poles and zeros of best rational approximants for $|x|$" (1994),"Spurious poles in Padé approximation" (1998), "Best uniform rational approximation of $|x|^\alpha$ on [0,1]" (2003) , "Asymptotic distribution of zeros of quadratic Hermite-Padé polynomials associated with the exponential function" (2006) and, most recently, "Proof of the Bessis-Moussa-Villani Conjecture" which will appear shortly in Acta Mathematica.

Herbert died on 22 April 2013 in Berlin after a two-year battle with pancreatic cancer. He was an outstanding, innovative and versatile mathematician who solved several deep problems; a man of eclectic intellectual interests that included art, architecture, philosophy and psychoanalysis; an expert on the writings of Goethe; and a treasured beloved friend of all those who knew him.

Kathy Driver