

The Math Log

Scholarships Awarded

The Mathematics Department has selected four current undergraduate mathematics majors to receive scholarships for the 2005-2006 academic year. The students and the awards are as follows:

- Jay Fisher (Jay and Marie Bjerkaas Memorial Scholarship, \$500)
- Melissa Johnson (Ronald C. and Ann C. Bzoch Memorial Scholarship, \$750)
- Adam Lundquist (Paige Plagge Memorial Scholarship, \$750)
- Amanda Homann (Judy Ann Utton Memorial Scholarship, \$450)

The Mathematics Department is grateful to the alumni and friends whose generosity has made these scholarships possible!

New GTA's Join the Mathematics Department

Several new master's degree students have started work as Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA's) this semester.

Henry Z. Baang is from the Philippines. He received his undergraduate degree in mathematics from Silliman University, Dumaguete, in the Philippines. He is married to Julie Maslog, who is also a new GTA (in the Music Department here at UND). The couple has a two-year-old daughter. Henry enjoys playing table tennis and basketball.

Joel Downs is from Hillsboro, ND. He received his bachelor's degree in mathematics from UND just this year. Joel was recently married. His wife's name is Heather Downs.

Katrina Nagel comes from Strasburg, ND, and her bachelor's degree is from UND. She majored in mathematics and had an education concentration. No, Katrina is not responsible for the bad weather in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama last summer!

Mike Penigian is from Queens, New York. He received his bachelor's degree in mathematics from St. Francis College in Brooklyn, New York. Aside from studying mathematics, Mike has also been doing some traveling, trying to visit all fifty states. He also enjoys fencing.

Haley Skipper also received her bachelor's degree in mathematics from UND this year. She is from Federal Way, Washington.

Travis Stepan is from Sauk Centre, Minnesota. He received a B.S. in mathematics from UND, and he minored in computer science.



Richard Millspaugh Elected Chair

The Mathematics Department has elected Dr. Richard Millspaugh to a three-year term as Chair of the department, effective Fall Semester 2005. Richard received his Ph.D. from the University of Oklahoma in 1989. His mathematical specialty is topology. He has been with the UND Mathematics Department since 1990 and has previously served as Associate Chair of the department. Richard succeeds interim Chair Dr. **Tom Gilsdorf** as well as the previous Chair, Dr. **Bruce Dearden**. Bruce was the interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences last year and has returned to regular duty here in our department. We welcome Richard into his new role, and we welcome Bruce back into the office here!



CONGRATULATIONS

Jonathan Farm was born on August 15, 2005. He weighed 8 pounds and 2 ounces, was 22 inches tall, and had lots of dark

hair! His parents are **Stuart** and **Linda Farm**. Congratulations to Stuart and Linda!

Jack Monroe Olson Simmers was born on June 15, 2005. He weighed 8 pounds and 10 ounces and was 21 inches in size. Jack is the son of **Mike** and **Jayne Simmers**. We congratulate his parents!

Math Log Available on the Web

The Math Log is now available on the World Wide Web. It is located at

<http://www.und.edu/dept/math/mathlog>

Where They Are, What Are They Up To?

Julie Banning (MS 1985) lives in Hillsboro, Oregon with her husband Jeff. Jeff and Julie's oldest child is Doug, who is finishing up basic cadet training at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Julie is busy home schooling the rest of the children. Jeff holds a Ph.D. in organic chemistry and works for Xerox Corporation.

Jerome (Jay) Boushee (B.S.Ed. 1993) has been a middle school teacher in Aztec, New Mexico for the past two years. He previously taught high school math for twelve years and served as department chair for two years. He loves teaching but is also working on a master's degree in administration. His wife's name is Vanessa.

David Brunelle (BS 2004) is a high school math teacher at Sand Creek High School in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He has coached baseball, and he has also coached defensive line in football.

Nancy M. (Gjovig) Dutchak (BA 1965) is a math teacher at Skyline Alternative High School in Great Falls, Montana. Nancy's brother Bruce is director of the Center for Innovation here at UND. Nancy is married to John Dutchak.

Diane Hellie (BS 1979) has been a software engineer at IBM Corporation in Rochester, Minnesota for the last 26 years. She is currently the machine interface architecture owner for the i series computer system. Diane is also active in a variety of volunteer activities in the community.

Carol Hokana (BS 1982) earned an M.Ed. degree in teaching and curriculum from another university in 1994. Carol has two daughters, aged 2 and 5 (almost 3 and 6). Carol and her husband are teaching them mathematical patterns and geometric shapes. When the older daughter was a two-year-old in nursery school, she amused her teacher by using the word "rhombus" to refer to a diamond shape!

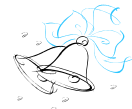
Rebecca Kyler (BS 1994, M.Ed. 1996) is currently an associate professor and will be starting a job as a full-time professor at Sierra College, in Rocklin, California. Rebecca and her husband Glenn listen to UND hockey games on the Internet.

Ralph L. Lenhart (MS 1969) is retired and lives in Glendive, Montana. He is currently serving as a state representative in the Montana state legislature, and he is also the Interim President of Dawson College, in Glendive. Prior to his retirement, Ralph taught mathematics at Dawson College. Ralph's wife is Shirley.

Virginia Rains (BS 2001) is currently living in Bremerton, Washington and works for the Naval Undersea Warfare Center, Keyport. She is the Submarine Combat Systems task lead and Alternate Task Order Manager for Submarine Alteration Installation Team Services. She just purchased a home and is settling in following a two-year rotation to the Naval Sea Systems Command Headquarters in Washington, DC.

William Switzer (BA) is a utility economist at City of Fort Collins Utilities in Fort Collins, Colorado. He is currently involved in rate tariff design for water and electric rates. He has three children and two grandchildren, and his wife's name is Ellen Switzer.

JUST MARRIED



Bruce Dearden and **Katherine Norman** were married on August 10, 2005. Many past and present people from the Mathematics Department and around the university attended the reception following the wedding.

Faculty Footnotes

Dr. **Anthony J. Bevelacqua** has published the article “Four dimensional quadratic forms over $F(X)$ where $I_1^3 F(X)=0$ and a failure of the strong Hasse principle” in the journal *Communications in Algebra*.

Last spring Dr. **Lawrence J. Peterson** attended the 2005 Midwest Geometry Conference at Ohio State University.

Dr. **Shuzo Takahashi** has received a Summer Instructional Development Professorship grant from UND’s Office of Instructional Development, which he used to develop some videos for use in calculus instruction. If you have the proper software, you may view some of the videos on Shuzo’s Web page, which is located at

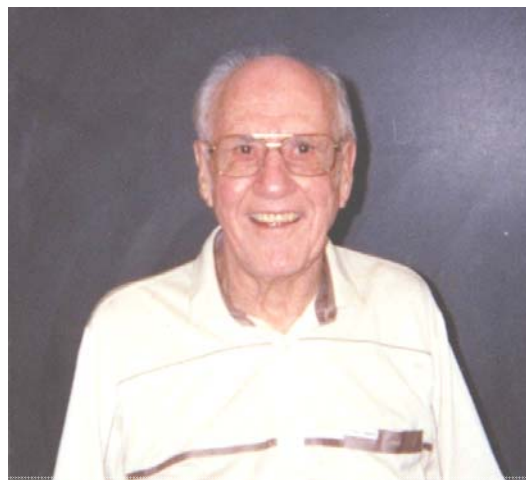
<http://www.und.edu/instruct/takahashi>

Dr. **Ryan J. Zerr** and Dr. Justin R. Peters have published the article “Partial dynamical systems and AF C^* -algebras” in the *Houston Journal of Mathematics*.

A Discussion with John Whitcomb

By the editor

Many of you may remember Professor John Whitcomb. John joined the UND Mathematics Department in the fall of 1960 and retired in 1988. Last summer John and I discussed his career and his experiences with Mathematics. John is originally from Flasher, ND. He first came to UND in 1946 as an undergraduate. He was originally interested in engineering, but he switched to education and graduated in January 1950 with a B.Ed. degree. In the spring and summer of 1950 he took courses in our master’s program, and in August of 1950 he took a teaching job in Minnewaukan, ND. John continued in the Minnewaukan job until 1953, but he came back to UND to take more courses during the summers of 1951 and 1952. While at Minnewaukan, he completed his master’s thesis, which he defended in 1953. At this time John was teaching classes from Monday through Friday, but UND was still having classes on Saturday mornings. John says that this enabled him to come in on a Saturday to take his oral exam. John’s thesis adviser was Dr. **Raymond C. Staley**, the only Mathematics faculty member at the time who held a Ph.D. degree. John said that Staley was demanding. But he also said that this was appropriate, since we are here to work!



John Whitcomb

After earning his M.S. degree, John took a job as a high school principal in Rolette, ND, and from 1955 to 1957, he worked as a school superintendent at Egeland, ND. John was quick to point out that many of the towns in which he worked were very small. According to the 2000 census figures, Rolette has a population of 538, and Egeland has a population of only 49! While at Egeland, John supervised the school district and taught two or three classes at the same time.

In 1957, John took the job of school district superintendent in the Portland, ND school district. While at Portland he had openly advocated school district “consolidation.” In particular, he had suggested that the Mayville and Portland school districts be combined. Many people opposed this idea. At about this time, one of the important supporters of consolidation on the Portland school board left the city and moved to Grand Forks. It was in this changed political context that John became interested in opportunities in the Mathematics Department here at UND. Dr. Staley had previously offered him a job here at UND, but John had declined. It was around 1960, however, that many UND Mathematics faculty were taking leaves of absence in order to further their mathematical studies. **Gene Kemper**, **Tom Robinson**, and **Jim Rue** were among those who were taking leaves. The department needed people to fill the resulting vacancies. It was in this context that **Robert B. Witmer**, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, offered John a position as a Lecturer, the standard entry-level position in the Mathematics Department at the time. John accepted the offer and moved to Grand Forks in the summer of 1960.

I was very curious about the details of the hiring process. Nowadays candidates for academic jobs often send out dozens of applications. John’s memory of the hiring process is not completely clear, but he does remember that he received the offer without doing

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such a mass-mailing. John also remembers meeting with Witmer in his office, and he noted that certain people at the time were aware of his background and presumably served as references for him.

Just as many others at the time, John continued his education. In the summers of 1963 and 1964, he attended special summer institutes in Lawrence, Kansas and Las Cruces, New Mexico. These institutes were funded by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF). In addition, John took a one-year leave of absence in 1970 and took classes in Greeley, Colorado at what is now the University of Northern Colorado. These courses centered around the topic of mathematics education, i.e. the training of mathematics teachers.

In 1966, John attended two organizational meetings of the North Dakota Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NDCTM) and became a charter member of the organization. He was the first person to serve as treasurer of the NDCTM, and he later served as president of the organization. He was also the editor of the NDCTM newsletter for fifteen years. John is grateful to the Mathematics Chair of the time, Dr. **Ronald C. Bzoch**, for encouraging his involvement with the NDCTM. John has also been involved with the Phi Delta Kappa professional education organization and the North Dakota Higher Education Association (NDHEA), having served as treasurer for each of these groups.

John was the first supervisor of the Math Lab at UND. If you took Math 102 (Intermediate Algebra) here in the 1980s or 1990s, you may have taken the course in the Math Lab. The Lab was a special room in which Math 102 students studied independently, asking tutors for help when necessary. You may remember the Math Lab directors **Denise Blecha**, **Lois Well**, and **Pat Brown** (who later became **Pat Mower**). In fact, you may even remember *me* from the Math Lab, since I worked as a tutor there during the spring of 1990!

John was sometimes known as a tough teacher. For several years he taught Math 103 (College Algebra) in a large-lecture format. He explained his grading scheme to me, part of which involved more than twenty quizzes each semester! But John's students (or at least some of them!) still seemed to like him, for one day they presented him with a T-shirt bearing the printed words "I survived a Whitcomb quiz"!

John retired from UND in 1988 as Associate Professor Emeritus. He lives in Grand Forks with his wife **Beverly**. The two are in good health and have been married for fifty-one years. They have three children, five grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. For the past several years John and Beverly have spent some time in Arizona each winter. We still see John regularly, however, since he, along with many of his fellow retirees, continues to attend the departmental picnics and lunches that we hold here from time to time.

At the end of our discussion, I asked John for his overall impression of the years he spent here in the UND Mathe-

matics Department. He replied by saying that although people have complained about the low pay from time to time, one impression that sticks with him is the collegiality of the department. John remembers times when people disagreed, but he says that they were always willing to talk. He never felt that he couldn't talk to a particular person, and he "never regretted going to work." As an indication of how well he got along with his coworkers, John noted that most of his current friends are former colleagues. Perhaps one comment by John sums up his memories the best: the department atmosphere "made life not only tolerable but enjoyable."

The Pseudo-Sum



By Larry Peterson

I hope things are going well for all of you! We are having a nice fall semester here. When we got up in the morning on October 6, there was snow in grassy areas and on parked vehicles. Areas a few miles west of Grand Forks received considerably more snow, however. In any case, the snow here in Grand Forks disappeared within a day or two.

One news item this semester is the expansion of the Mathematics Learning center here on the third floor of Witmer Hall, just a few feet from the Mathematics office. The Mathematics Learning Center opened in the fall of 2000. It is a place where students may study and receive tutorial help, and it has become quite popular among the students. The Learning Center now occupies two former classrooms. To compensate for the additional space that the Learning Center now occupies, we have opened a new classroom. It is our first carpeted classroom! The new classroom is in the room formerly occupied by the old Math/Physics Library. If you were here before the middle of the 1990s (but after 1967!) you may remember this library on the second floor of Witmer Hall. Sometime during the 1990s, the University moved the books over to the main Chester Fritz Library and turned the room into a study area.

One thing I find interesting about the new classroom is the blackboard. Nowadays many other departments seem to be moving toward the use of grease pens and white boards instead of the traditional chalk and blackboard. Our secretary, Lona, says that new high quality slate blackboards of the type you may remember are no longer available on the market. In spite of these changing times, and in spite of the appearance of laptop computers and wireless projectors in many classrooms, most of us here in the department continue to use traditional chalk and blackboards for most of our teaching. So to ensure that the new classroom had a blackboard, we removed two blackboards from the Learning Center moved them to the new classroom! Some people have expressed concern that we might lose

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our blackboards if we ever move into a new building. So if we ever do move, then maybe we will have to take the blackboards with us!

Anyway, the Mathematics Department is likely to stay here in Witmer Hall for the foreseeable future. If we ever do move, we will be sure to let you know! In the meantime, keep reading the Math Log! I hope you enjoyed reading the report on my interview with John Whitcomb! Watch for more articles about alumni and retired faculty in future issues of the Math Log. And if you like color pictures, why not take a look at the Web-based version of the Math Log! For details see

<http://www.und.edu/dept/math/mathlog>

Keep us posted on what you are doing! And stop by the office here in Witmer Hall if you are in Grand Forks. As Lona says, the coffee is always on!

DEPARTMENT FACULTY AND STAFF FOR 2005-06

- Anthony Bevelacqua Assistant Professor
- Donna Boe Word Processing Operator
- Gwennie Byron Senior Lecturer & Math Learning Center Director
- Joseph Champion Senior Lecturer
- John Collings Associate Professor
- Bruce Dearden Professor
- Gerri Dunnigan Associate Professor
- Stuart Farm Senior Lecturer
- Thomas Gilsdorf Professor
- Michael Gregory Professor
- Cheryl Halcrow Assistant Professor
- Joel Iiams Associate Professor & Associate Chair
- Michele Iiams Assistant Professor
- Mohammad Khavanin Associate Professor
- Anita Lesmeister Part-Time Lecturer
- Jerry Metzger Professor
- Richard Millspaugh Professor
- David Morstad Senior Lecturer & Math Computer Lab Director
- Lawrence Peterson Associate Professor
- Mary Rerick Senior Lecturer
- Thomas Richards Assistant Professor
- Michael Simmers Visiting Assistant Professor
- Lona Spicer Administrative Secretary
- Shuzo Takahashi Assistant Professor
- Ryan Zerr Assistant Professor



View this picture in color on the Web! Go to

<http://www.und.edu/dept/math/mathlog/mlphotos.html>

THANK YOU !!

As of publication time, the following persons are responsible for monetary gifts to the UND Alumni Association specifically designated for the improvement of the Department of Mathematics:

Michelle A. VandeLoo
Richard B. Starr
Paul J. Lee
Lancey A. Cascaden
Steven J. Gustafson

Dr. Cheryl L. Halcrow
Bruce C. Hanson
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Dr. Richard J. Paur

Jay and Marie Bjerkaas Memorial Scholarship

Forrest J. Bjerkaas

Ronald C. and Ann C. Bzoch Memorial Scholarship

Dr. Thomas P. Wiggen

Judy Ann Utton Memorial Scholarship

Mark K. Anderson

Your generosity is gratefully acknowledged and sincerely appreciated!

Your teachers and friends are wondering what you are doing! Help us to satisfy their curiosity. (Photos are also welcome!)

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Fall 2005



Let
us
hear
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