

Preface

The present issue of *Linear Algebra and Its Applications* is dedicated to Alan J. Hoffman, its founding editor-in-chief, on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday. The double volume issue forms one of the largest special issues of LAA with nearly 50 contributions from his many friends and colleagues. The included papers range from linear algebra to combinatorics, graph theory, and linear programming, as does Hoffman's own work.

Alan J. Hoffman was born on May 30, 1924 in New York City. He graduated from George Washington High School in 1940 and entered Columbia College on a Pulitzer Scholarship. His intention to make his career in mathematics was reinforced by inspirational teachers such as J. F. Ritt and G. A. Pfeiffer. Equally inspiring was the friendship of an extremely talented young graduate student—Ernst Straus. In particular, Straus introduced Hoffman to combinatorics, an area that was to become one of his main research interests.

Hoffman left college early in 1943 to enter the U.S. Army. He eventually served in England, France, Germany, Philippine Island and Japan, most of the time in the Signal Corps, but at least in his first year of service maintained his interest in mathematics. The first progress in what later became his dissertation was made during basic training; and Straus sent long letters with research problems in combinatorics, most of which Straus had already solved.

In 1946 Hoffman returned to Columbia and graduated on his birthday the following year. But he did not attend the graduation ceremony, for on that day he married Esther Atkins Walker. They had been introduced to each other by Hoffman's army friends Joel Wyman and Alex Walker, Esther's brother. Their marriage lasted forty-one years, ending with Esther's death last summer.

Hoffman continued at Columbia as a graduate student, receiving his Ph.D. in 1950, with a dissertation "On the Foundations of Inversion Geometry". His advisor was E. R. Lorch; H. S. M. Coxeter of Toronto and fellow student Hing Tong were also helpful in preparing the dissertation.

He next spent a year as a temporary member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. During that year, Hoffman "fell in love" with the Bruck-Ryser-Chowla Theorem, which concerns the integers that can be orders of finite projective planes. The theorem serves as an example of one of the "edges" of the "triangle" of Hoffman's mathematical interests. The "vertices" of this triangle are combinatorics (including graph theory), linear

inequalities and programming, and matrix theory (especially eigenvalues). The above theorem is combinatorial in nature, but its proof depends on matrix theory.

After the year at the Institute, Hoffman went to work at the Applied Mathematics Division of the National Bureau of Standards in Washington, D.C., where he spent the following five years. These were the early days of computers and linear programming, and his principal assignment was to participate in the Bureau's linear programming efforts. He learned linear programming through essentially private lessons from George Dantzig. Hoffman was an excellent student, and one outcome of this tutoring was the first example of cycling of the simplex method [10]. He also organized comparisons of the simplex method with potential competitors, the account of which [7] is still viewed as a model for reporting computational results.

Hoffman's immediate supervisor at the National Bureau of Standards was the well-known numerical analyst, John Todd. Also, Olga Taussky-Todd was a regular consultant at the Bureau. She had an important long-term influence on Hoffman as she got him seriously interested in matrix theory. She encouraged him, she challenged him and she helped him. Hoffman still views her as the model of the way senior people should help and look after their juniors. Other visitors whom Hoffman met at the Bureau and who influenced him were Ky Fan, Alexander Ostrowski, Helmut Wielandt and James Wilkinson. At the Bureau, Hoffman reached the "interior" of his research triangle with the Hoffman-Wielandt Theorem [6], which concerns the variation of the spectrum of a normal matrix. The proof of this matrix-theoretic result is based on linear programming and the combinatorial Birkhoff Theorem that a doubly stochastic matrix is a weighted sum of permutation matrices. Another paper of this period that corresponds to the interior of the triangle is [24], jointly authored with J. Kruskal. This classic paper is about integral boundary points of convex polyhedra. The paper touches on the three vertices of the above triangle as it establishes a combinatorial existence result by studying a system of linear inequalities and examining the determinants of the underlying matrices. Together with the transportation-simplex algorithm one can view this work as the early foundation of integer programming.

During the early fifties, the community of Washington mathematicians was relatively small, and the Applied Mathematics Division of the Bureau was intellectually exciting and socially congenial. There was a sense of being "present at the creation" of developments with big futures (though Hoffman says his personal vision of the futures of computing and of linear programming was very short of the mark). Esther worked as a labor economist with the Wage Stabilization Board until the birth of their daughter Eleanor in 1954.

Hoffman left the National Bureau of Standards in 1956 to become a Scientific Liason Officer at the Office of Naval Research in London, and returned the next year to accept a position with the General Electric Company at its headquarters in New York. He has said that part of the motivation for joining G.E. was sociological: having Military, Government and University, he thought it would be interesting to see Business. The job involved teaching operations research to students from various departments of General Electric and helping them in their subsequent activities. But the lure of mathematics proved more powerful than business or sociology. For example, his first papers on the eigenvalues of graphs were written during the years at G.E. So in 1961 he joined the Mathematical Sciences Department of the T. J. Watson Research Center of IBM at Yorktown Heights, with which he is still affiliated.

The atmosphere he found at the Research Center was reminiscent of what he encountered at the Bureau of Standards a decade earlier, and he found a similar collegiality and stimulation. Hoffman's contributions and stature were recognized by IBM in 1977 when he was designated an IBM Fellow.

Most of Hoffman's professional career has been with research groups in government and industry. Still, he always had the desire to share his energy and enthusiasm for mathematics with students. He continuously held adjunct appointments at various universities, including the Technion—Israel Institute of Technology (1965), City University of New York (1965–1976), Yale University (1976–1985) and Stanford University (1980–to date). Further, Hoffman was involved in the dissertation research of many students and served as the principal advisor for a number of them.

Hoffman was the founding editor-in-chief of *Linear Algebra and Its Applications*. His editorial statement in the first issue of LAA reads in part as follows: "The editors and publisher hope that *Linear Algebra and Its Applications* will become the journal of record of important research on theoretical and numerical aspects of the subject." His vision, as expressed by this statement, determined the tone and the focus of the journal and continues to guide the editors to date.

In addition to serving as the editor-in-chief of *Linear Algebra and Its Applications* for four years and being the managing editor of *Naval Research Logistics Quarterly* for one year, Hoffman held a variety of editorial responsibilities in *SIAM Journal of Applied Mathematics*, *Journal of Combinatorial Theory*, *Combinatorica*, *Mathematics of Computation*, *International Computing Center Bulletin*, and *Transportation Science*. Furthermore, he is currently on the editorial boards of *Mathematics of Operations Research* (advisory editor), *Discrete Mathematics* (advisory editor), *Naval Research*

Logistics Quarterly, *Discrete Applied Mathematics*, *SIAM Journal on Discrete Mathematics* and of course *Linear Algebra and Its Applications* (founder-editor).

Hoffman was elected in 1982 to membership in the National Academy of Sciences of the United States. He is also a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (since 1987) and the New York Academy of Sciences (since 1975). In 1986 Hoffman was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Technion—Israel Institute of Technology.

Above and beyond his scholarly and professional contributions, Hoffman has unparalleled ability to enjoy everything he does. He enjoys singing, ping pong, puns, witty stories, and—possibly as much as anything else—doing mathematics. Curtis Eaves tells the story of an occasion in which he saw Hoffman sitting in a parked car on a freeway. He had stopped to offer his help and was invited to participate in the solution of a mathematical problem.

As mentioned earlier, Esther Hoffman—Alan's wife and companion for over forty years—died last summer, while this issue honoring Alan Hoffman's sixty-fifth birthday was being put together. We are very sorry that she cannot share this occasion with us and we send Alan our deepest and sincerest condolences.

Alan Hoffman has two daughters, Eleanor Hoffman and Elizabeth Perry (married to Michael Perry). He has one grandson, David Jennings Perry, who was born in February of 1987. Anybody who talks to him briefly finds out how much he enjoys his grandson. We all wish Alan Hoffman many more healthy and creative years with a lot of enjoyment from mathematics and much joy with his family.

URIEL ROTHBLUM

Publications of Alan J. Hoffman

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