

REMEMBERING PROFESSOR SIBE MARDEŠIĆ (1927-2016)

Sibe Mardešić died on June 18, 2016, leaving a giant void in the world of topology and for everyone who knew this magnificent man. Both sides of his family came from Dalmatia, the coastal region of Croatia. The Mardešić family tree, from this region can be traced back to the 16th century. His father studied in the 1920's at the renowned Technical University in Vienna. Sibe was born on June 20, 1927 in Bergedorf Germany. In 1929, due to his father's work as an engineer the family moved to Chile. The family returned to Split in 1930. Because of his early years, in different countries and schools Sibe became proficient in German, Spanish as well as Croatian and latter English and Russian.

His father wanted him to follow in his footsteps and be an engineer. The senior Mardešić understood, correctly, that his son would need to study a lot of mathematics.

From an early age this came easily to Sibe. While in high school, he met a university student - M. Makjanić, who introduced him to set theory and cardinal numbers. This completely turned him on and he decided to enroll as a student of mathematics at the University of Zagreb for the school year 1946/7, where he was attracted to set theory taught by Professors Dj. Kurepa and R. Cesarec. He graduated with his bachelors degree in 1950 and then became an assistant in the Mathematical Department under Professor Z. Marković who led him to topology, in particular to a mastering of the material in the book "Lehrbuch der Topologie" by H. Seifert and W. Theltall. In the process of writing his PhD thesis he corresponded with S. Lefschetz, who suggested that he visit the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton. With letters of recommendation from Borsuk, Eilenberg and Kuratowski he was accepted at the Institute and spent the years 1957/58 and 1958/59 in Princeton.

He met his wife to be in the school year 1948/49. Vera is also a mathematician. They have had a very long and wonderful marriage. Their son Pavao is also a very successful mathematician. Their daughter Milica has a PhD in linguistics. Vera and Sibe have 5 grandchildren.

Professor Mardešić was a world class mathematician who during his long and distinguished career made immense contributions to research and teaching of mathematics. He was one of the founders of the topology seminar in Zagreb; his efforts raised Croatian topology to the world class level and he was, without doubt definitely one of the greatest Croatian—respectively Yugoslav mathematicians.

Sibe served as an editorial advisor and later as an editor of our journal, the Sarajevo Journal of Mathematics. He performed his military service in Sarajevo and from this early period had a deep affection for BiH and always wanted to help BiH mathematics move up. He was instrumental in helping the young Amer Bešliagić connect with Professor Mary Ellen Rudin, that led to a wonderful relationship between the Rudins, others in the Wisconsin Mathematical Department and the Mathematical Department here in Sarajevo.

Mardešić worked in all the main branches of topology, writing 148 research papers, 40 professional articles and 18 books. With Jack Segal he developed an alternative approach to “shape theory” using inverse systems of ANRs generalizing Borsuk shape theory to include all compact Hausdorff spaces, independently of Tim Porter and Włodzimierz Holsztynski. Later he extended Holsztynski’s theory for compact Hausdorff spaces to all topological spaces, He introduced the first factorization theorem in dimension theory, the Mardešić factorization theorem. With P. Pašić he introduced the notion of feebly compact spaces.

Prof. Mardešić was an emeritus professor of the Natural Sciences and Mathematics Faculty of the University of Zagreb. He was a member of the Academy of Arts and Sciences of Croatia, the Slovenian Academy as well as the European Academy. He was selected to be a Fellow of the American Mathematical Society. Only a very few mathematicians from the ex-Yugoslavia have received this distinguished award.

We here in Sarajevo who knew him well, because of his outstanding work, generous nature and devoted commitment to all that is good in mankind, salute his memory and mourn his loss with his family and many, many colleagues. Let him rest in peace, his memory lives on with us,

Harry I. Miller
Foreign Member
Academy of Sciences and Arts
of Bosnia and Herzegovina