MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS LAURENCE CHISHOLM YOUNG

Laurence Chisholm Young, professor emeritus of mathematics, died peacefully at home on December 24, 2000. Thus ended a remarkable career of a mathematician and widely cultured gentleman. His parents, William Henry and Grace Chisholm Young, were both mathematicians and in his life of 95 years Professor Young knew and interacted with many of the creators of modern mathematics.

Laurence Young was born in Göttingen, Germany on July 14, 1905 and was raised in Switzerland. His university studies were at Trinity College, Cambridge University, where he was named Isaac Newton Student in 1930. He rowed for his college while there and was instrumental in starting the Cambridge University Chess Club. At Cambridge he was awarded the MA in 1931 and the ScD in 1938. From 1938 to 1948 he was professor and head of the Mathematics Department of the University of Capetown, South Africa. He came to Madison in 1948 and was professor of mathematics at the University of Wisconsin - Madison until his retirement in 1976. He served as chair of the department from 1962 to 1964 and became "Distinguished Research Professor" in 1968. He had a long association with the Mathematics Research Center in Madison. In 1984 he was awarded an honorary degree from the Université de Paris-Dauphine.

Starting early in his career L. C. Young made major contributions to mathematical analysis, particularly to the fields of calculus of variations and control theory. In the 1930's and early 1940's he introduced the radical idea of generalized curves and surfaces, extending the usual notions in such a way that variational problems with nonconvex integrands, not treatable in the traditional framework, could be resolved. In Young's setting the new objects were elements of the dual vector spaces of spaces of continuous functions. In the 1960's these ideas resurfaced in control theory in the form of relaxed controls. His text “Lectures on the Calculus of Variations,” published in 1969, is a classic and his generalized curves and surfaces paved the way for a field developed by many researchers, “Geometric Measure Theory.” In the late 1970's Young's ideas again came to the fore in the use of 'Young measures' to resolve problems arising in elasticity and material science wherein convergence of solutions was given a rational setting. Young was the author of close to sixty research articles during his career and while at Madison he was the major professor for at least twelve doctoral students.

Professor Young lectured widely over the globe, was fluent in German, French, and Italian, and was knowledgeable in several more languages, including classical languages and Russian. He was an accomplished pianist and a champion chess player, having won the Heart of America Competition in chess in 1955. He was responsible for initiating and raising funds for the "Wisconsin Talent Search", a program started in 1963 for discovering talented students among Wisconsin's schools. It is a program which still thrives today. Several times a year challenging mathematical problems are sent to the high schools around the state and students submit solutions. Each spring, the highest scorers are invited to Madison for a day of activities and awards, the highest award now being a four-year scholarship at Madison.

Young married Joan Elizabeth Mary Dunnett in 1934. She was an impressive figure in her own right, playing host to many of the visitors to Madison and hosting literary events. She preceded him in death in 1995. A son, David, died in 1964. Young is survived by five children, Angela Young, Beatrice Nearey, Elizabeth Rosalind Young, Frank Young, Sylvia Wiegand, and their families.

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