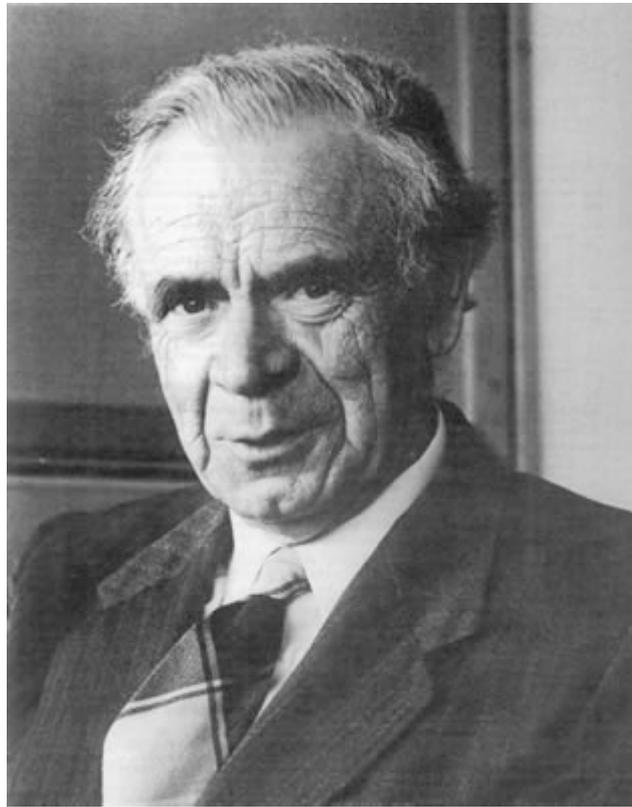


## ***CENTREFOLD***

### **Professor Cecil Segedin**



#### **Head of the Department of Theoretical and Applied Mechanics School of Engineering, The University of Auckland**

##### *A tribute on his retirement*

Cecil Marin Segedin retired in January 1981 after a lifetime devoted to Mathematics at The University of Auckland. He was born in the city and with high school education at Auckland Grammar he embarked in 1933 on his University training undecided on his future specialty – classics maybe, or perhaps chemistry. He eventually chose wisely and after completing a mathematics master's degree he joined the teaching staff of the Auckland University College under Professor H.G. Forder.

His career can be divided with reasonable accuracy into four decades, each of which brought with it a new challenge which kept him active in mind and young in spirit. The first, beginning in 1937, saw him as a vigorous lecturer closely associated both in class and in extramural activity (especially tramping and climbing) with students who were little younger than he. Those of us who were privileged to be taught by him can well recall small group tutorials, where integrals and partial derivatives flourished, but where more importantly the essential spirit of mathematics was developed along with the necessary techniques. It was during this time that he enlarged his interests in mathematical applications, particularly electromagnetism, fluid mechanics, and what was to be his main research field, elasticity.

The first decade ended with promotion to Senior Lecturer, a bumper crop of masters students while Professor Forder was on leave, and the chance to study at Cambridge for a doctorate.

At about this time Engineering moved to Ardmore, and on his return from England Cecil continued teaching mathematics courses for engineers. This he did with customary verve, spending not a little time at Ardmore and identifying with a group of students which spawned Rhodes Scholars, world-ranking engineers, professors of several branches of Applied Science and at least two Vice-Chancellors. His interests in both fluid and solid mechanics developed widely during this time, and many students in Engineering benefited directly from his specialist lectures. The opportunity to supervise ME theses was also accepted, with notable success. The end of this decade, probably the one in which he derived his greatest teaching satisfaction, saw promotion to Associate Professor and the extension of interests not only in continuum mechanics but also in the development of numerical methods courses within mathematics degrees.

The third period was essentially one of planning for new responsibilities; first for marriage and family, and then for his role as the developer of a new department and its associated degree structure. This was made possible by the increasing size of the School of Engineering and by Cecil's continued enthusiasm for mechanics in its widest sense and its place at the foundations of applied science. The Department of Theoretical and Applied Mechanics was founded in 1963 and by the end of this third phase, in 1968, he had been appointed to the Chair, and the first Engineering Science graduates had completed their degrees.

The fourth decade has seen the blossoming of this new course established as an important addition to the range of engineering qualifications available in New Zealand. Its successful development was by no means accidental, for Cecil Segedin is a scholar and a man of vision. His first research dealt with crack and punch problems in elasticity, but this spread to wider fields and his interest steadily grew in the area of numerical techniques. He still enjoys few activities more than developing a new procedure for reducing the truncation error in a series sum or investigating an improved boundary integral method.

His identification with his subject of mathematics and his love for its teaching, especially within engineering, have made a lasting impact on the New Zealand academic scene and on Auckland in particular. His close attachment to the one University for nearly 50 years must establish a record for continuous and loyal service. But above all it is his warm humanity which shines through; it has endeared him to two generations of students, it has cemented friendships with hundreds of academic colleagues and it has gathered round him a wide group of friends in professional and cultural circles.

All who know Cecil Segedin wish for him a long and vigorous retirement with continued interest in mathematics and people.

*Mervyn Rosser*

Photograph by Marti Friedlander.