

## ***CENTREFOLD***

### **John Kalman**



It was during my student days 40 years ago that I first heard of the existence of John Kalman. He was referred to with awe amongst mathematics students as being a "Research Fellow". We knew what lecturers were and more or less what they did, but the concept of a career devoted to mathematical research was certainly a revelation to myself and to other students.

Some years later when I was contemplating a return to Auckland I paid a brief interview visit, and it was partly the gracious way John received me and reintroduced me to the Department that made me realise that this was where I wanted to be.

John Kalman was Dux of both King's School and later King's College. He was top of the Entrance Scholarship list and went on to study both law and mathematics at Auckland University College. His father was a lawyer but John decided not to follow this same path but rather to pursue a career in mathematics. After completing his MA degree in 1951, he obtained a scholarship to study at Harvard where he took the AM (1952) and PhD (1955) degrees.

He returned to Auckland in 1955, originally as a Senior Research Fellow. In 1957 he was appointed lecturer and rapidly gained promotion through the various ranks to gain a Professorship in 1964.

He was head of department for a few years in the 60s and has been the senior Professor of Mathematics until his retirement at the end of 1993.

During the time I have had the privilege of being his colleague, I have formed some impressions about John Kalman. Foremost would be his utter lack of pretention and his meticulous care for detail. I need not say more about the first of these but I will on the care for detail. This applied to his teaching, to his administration, and to his research.

As a teacher he offered as close to certainty as anyone can expect in a mathematics class. If

he wrote something on the blackboard, students could feel absolute confidence that it was correct mathematics, that there were no flaws in the proofs and that nothing significant was left out. Outside the classroom, his concern for the personal welfare, as well as the mathematical progress of his students, added an extra component to his work as a teacher and a guide to generations of students. Under his influence, many of our ablest students found their ways into first-class graduate schools in other countries. Many of the people whose talents he nurtured have gone on to careers in mathematics, overseas or in New Zealand. The Auckland department alone owes much of its present strength to people John has taught.

During his tenure as head of department his single-minded devotion to the discipline of mathematics and his care for detail ensured that the department ran smoothly. In that time of rapid growth, it became clear to John that Mathematics was relatively poorly treated in terms of resources. He fought hard for better treatment for his department, but his hopes of receiving more equitable treatment were never adequately realised. Eventually he relinquished the headship. Colleagues today take for granted many of the gains he brought about in terms of curricula, in terms of the quality of the mathematics section of the library, and most of all in terms of the quality of the staff appointed to the department. The Mathematical Chronicle owed its existence to John's initiatives and its new identity as the New Zealand Journal of Mathematics gives New Zealand the opportunity to develop a mathematical publication of international standard.

His early research interests included lattice theory, universal algebra and nonclassical logic. In more recent times, he has worked mainly on automated reasoning and has become well-known and highly esteemed by other workers in this field.

Although John has now retired he is still active in mathematical research. His colleagues in Auckland and throughout New Zealand will join me in wishing him well in this new phase of his life.

*John Butcher*