Bernhard Neumann arriving at the Canberra offices of the CSIRO Division of Mathematics and Statistics.
Bernhard Neumann’s 70th Birthday

The Mathematical Scientist wishes to commemorate in this year 1979 the 70th birthday of Bernhard Hermann Neumann, who was born in Berlin on 15 October 1909. After completing his secondary education at the Herderschule, Berlin, he began his studies in mathematics at the University of Freiburg in 1928 and obtained his Dr.phil. degree from the University of Berlin in 1932. While studying in Berlin, he was a member of an informal circle which included such eminent mathematicians as Richard Rado, Kurt Hirsch and Helmut Wielandt, as well as his future wife, Hanna von Caemmerer, who was at the time a student at the University.

During those years, the political situation in Germany was extremely disturbed: Bernhard emigrated to Britain in 1933, to continue his studies at Cambridge, and was awarded his Ph.D. by this University in 1935. After two years of unemployment, he took up an assistant lectureship at Cardiff in 1937, and in 1938 married Hanna who had left Germany to join him. Shortly after, the Second World War was declared, and Bernhard was briefly interned as an enemy alien. He was released from internment to join the Pioneer Corps, the Royal Artillery, and later the Intelligence Corps in which he served between 1940 and 1945.

At the end of hostilities, he was successful in obtaining appointment to a lectureship in Hull in 1946, and his wife later joined him there to find a position as assistant lecturer. In 1948 Bernhard moved to a lectureship at the University of Manchester, where he remained for the following thirteen years; during this period he was promoted to Senior Lecturer and eventually to Reader, having been elected to Fellowship of the Royal Society in 1959. For the first ten years up to 1958, Bernhard commuted from Manchester to his home in Hull, but in 1958 Hanna was appointed to a lectureship in the Department of Mathematics, University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, and the family was then re-united under a single roof. It consisted of five children: the first, Irene, was born in 1939, to be followed by Peter in 1940, Barbara in 1943, Walter in 1946, and Daniel in 1951. The family were all cycling enthusiasts, and frequently explored Britain by bicycle during their holidays.

Mathematically, Bernhard made a considerable name for himself as a group theorist during his career in Britain. When in Berlin, he had come under the influence of Privatdozent Robert Remak, who introduced him to group theory. Remak was briefly allowed to teach in Berlin after Hitler came to power, and managed to escape to Holland; but later in the war he was interned by the Nazis and died in concentration camp. Bernhard developed his interest in group theory, and published a large number of important papers both in Hull and Manchester. He was awarded the Wiskundig Genootschap te Amsterdam Prize in 1949, and the Adams Prize of the University of Cambridge for 1951–52.

But his interests were not restricted solely to research; he always had a very deep appreciation of the need to serve the mathematical community in other ways. He was a member of the Council of the London Mathematical Society between 1954 and 1961, and its Vice-President between 1957 and 1959. His scholarly influence stretched much further than Britain; he enjoyed travelling and was a Visiting Lecturer at the Australian Universities and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Bombay in 1959.
During the academic year 1961–62, he was appointed Visiting Professor at the Courant Institute, New York University; there he contributed much to the understanding of the close relationship between pure and applied mathematics.

In 1962 began a new chapter in Bernhard's and Hanna's lives; Bernhard emigrated to Australia where he became Professor and Head of the Department of Mathematics in the Institute of Advanced Studies (Australian National University—ANU). Hanna joined him in 1963, and was soon appointed Professor and Head of the Department of Pure Mathematics at the School of General Studies, ANU, in 1964, a post which she held till her death in 1971. Bernhard served in his capacity as Head of the Department of Mathematics at the ANU until his retirement at the end of the 1974. After Hanna's death, he married Dorothea Zehm in 1973; he and Dorothea have continued to live in Canberra after his retirement. In 1975 the ANU made him Emeritus Professor and Honorary Fellow. He joined the CSIRO Division of Mathematics and Statistics as a Senior Research Fellow for a period of three years; since 1978, he has been an Honorary Senior Research Fellow of the Division.

His contributions to mathematics in Australia have been many and varied. Not only did he form a department of very able mathematicians at the ANU specialising in group theory and functional analysis, he also took a deep interest in the Australian Mathematical Society. He has been a member of its Council since 1963, has been Vice-President on a number of occasions, and was elected President for the two years 1964–66. But he took an equally profound part in establishing the importance of mathematics teaching; he was Foundation President of the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers between 1966 and 1968 and has remained closely associated with them and the Canberra Mathematical Association since. He has served as Chairman of the National Committee for Mathematics of the Australian Academy of Science between 1966 and 1975, having been elected to Fellowship of the Academy soon after his arrival in Australia.

He has retained his taste for travel and was a Visiting Professor at Vanderbilt University in 1969–70 and a Visiting Fellow of Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge in 1970; he visited the University of Illinois in 1975. He has served as a Member of Council of the Australian Academy of Science from 1968 to 1971, and has made a major contribution to the Australian Mathematical Society through the foundation of the Bulletin of the Australian Mathematical Society, of which he was Editor for ten years after its launching in 1969.

Bernhard Neumann continues to be active both in mathematical research and in mathematical affairs in Australia and abroad. He was instrumental in helping the start of the New Zealand Mathematical Society, and continues to act as a member-at-large of the International Commission on Mathematical Instruction. His interests remain broad; he enjoys chess, music, regularly as a member of the Canberra Symphony Orchestra, and cycling. He is a familiar sight in the vicinity of the Division of Mathematics and Statistics, as he rides his bicycle to work each morning.

It is with the greatest pleasure that we, his colleagues, dedicate the papers in this volume to him on his 70th birthday; may he have many more happy returns.

J. Gani
CSIRO, Canberra

M. F. Newman
The Australian National University, Canberra