



OVED SHISHA

Dedication

Tribute to Oved Shisha

On March 31, 1995, Oved Shisha was hit by a vehicle. As a consequence, he suffered severe brain injuries of which he is not expected to recover. Thus, although his body languishes, I feel that it is appropriate to write this article. Not to mourn his passing, but to celebrate his life; for those who knew him well also know that he was endowed with great decency and extraordinary kindness.

Oved Shisha was born on September 27, 1932, in Tel Aviv, Israel, and received his Ph.D. in Mathematics from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1958, under the supervision of A. Dvoretzky. His minor subjects were Physics and Applied Mathematics.

From 1953 to 1955 he was an assistant at the Hebrew University, from 1955 to 1958 an instructor at the Technion in Haifa, and from 1958 to 1960 a research associate at Harvard University. From 1960 to 1962 he worked as a mathematician at the National Bureau of Standards, Washington, DC. In 1962 he began his employment as a mathematician with Aerospace Research Laboratories, Wright–Patterson Air Force Base, Dayton, Ohio, a position he held until 1972, when he joined the Mathematics Research Center, Naval Research Laboratory, Washington, DC.

In January 1974 he was appointed a visiting professor at the University of Texas at Austin, and in September of the same year he moved to the University of Rhode Island, where he remained, first as visiting professor, and later as a permanent member of the faculty. His tenure at the University of Rhode Island was interrupted by visiting professorships at the Hebrew University (1979), the Technion (1980–1981), and The Ohio State University (1987–1988).

Oved Shisha's main research contributions are in real, complex, and numerical analysis, and in particular, approximation theory, integration, and inequalities. He also did joint work on topics in engineering and physics. In a companion article, Doron Lubinsky discusses and evaluates this body of work. Here, I add that Shisha was particularly happy with his novel proof of Cauchy's integral theorem [40, 41] (see "Publications of Oved Shisha," which follows), his articles on the definition of derivative without limit [96, 102], his work on Laurent's expansion [104], and, of course, his work on integration mentioned in Professor Lubinsky's article. Some of this material is surely appropriate for standard textbooks.

In 1965, 1967, and 1969, he organized three symposia on inequalities.

The proceedings of these symposia, which he edited, were later published by Academic Press as “*Inequalities I, II, and III*,” in 1970, 1971, and 1972, respectively. He frequently mentioned that some of the leading living mathematicians participated in these symposia, and that clearly pleased him very much. In 1968 he began publication of the *Journal of Approximation Theory*. He was Editor-in-Chief of the Journal until 1990 when he was named *Founding Editor*. He was also a member of the editorial board of the “Encyclopedia of Mathematics and Its Applications” and head of its inequalities section. In September 1987, he received the *Excellence Award for Scholarly Achievement* of the University of Rhode Island.

He was frequently invited to give colloquium talks or to participate in conferences. For example, he gave an invited one-hour address at the New York City meeting of the American Mathematical Society in March 1978 and gave invited lectures at special sessions on “Approximation Theory” in meetings of the Society in Houston, Texas, in April 1978, and Fairfield, Connecticut, in October 1983. He also gave an invited lecture at a special session on “Total Positivity and Applications” during the annual meeting of the Society in Atlanta, Georgia, in January 1988. In 1978 he directed a regional conference on approximation theory sponsored by the National Science Foundation.

Oved Shisha never married, and his immediate family was the mathematical community. He remembered names of mathematicians’ spouses and children and their origins, and was always interested in updates of this family. He was very proud of his heritage and in later years he derived a great deal of pleasure from writing short stories in Hebrew, some of which were published. He enjoyed reminiscing about his late parents. He devoted many hours to his work, for he had few distractions, and the Journal that he created occupied much of this time. He had a complex and controversial personality, and his opinions would on occasion be quite at variance with reality. On the other hand, he would sometimes exhibit flashes of profound insight. His singular character caused him much grief, for working with him would sometimes be very difficult, and he had to endure the backlash. But in all the years I have known him, I have never seen him be unpleasant to anyone.

I bear witness to his kindness and decency, both to me and to others. He tried to help many mathematicians launch their careers, and in a few cases he succeeded. After the Journal, that may be his most enduring memorial.

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