

GÜNTER TÖRNER: A TRUE ACADEMIC, FRIEND, WUNDERBARER MENSCH

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Günter Törner and Bharath Sriraman, Bottrop, January 2007

Günter Törner (1947-) turned 60 this year on July 29. The idea for this Festschrift spawned three months before his birthday. It is a German tradition to celebrate a scholar's 60th birthday by either organizing a symposium and/or a Festschrift in which colleagues contribute papers related to or stemming out of the contributions made by the academic. In this case, I am glad to have taken the initiative to compile, edit and organize this collection of articles which comprise this Festschrift to honor my colleague and dear friend Günter Törner, and more importantly surprising him with this book released as part of the monograph series of *The Montana Mathematics Enthusiast* as a (belated) birthday gift during his visit to Missoula and The University of Montana this Fall (Sept.24-Oct.12, 2007).

It is appropriate that this Festschrift appear in a journal which has the words "Mathematics Enthusiast" in its title because Günter belongs to the rare breed of academics who makes original and sustained research contributions to both pure and applied mathematics as well as mathematics education. Günter's doctoral dissertation was in the area of geometry, namely the *Hjelmslev planes* with a detailed study of the associated rings which arise from co-ordinatizing these planes. The dissertation was supervised by Benno Artmann, who is himself another mathematics enthusiast, now actively involved in the study of mathematics and art in addition to 4-dimensional geometry. Günter's work was awarded the prize for the best doctoral dissertation at the University of Giessen in 1974, and four years later at the age of 31, he achieved the remarkable feat of being conferred a Full Professorship at the University of Duisburg (now Duisburg-Essen), where he has been ever since.

The Montana Mathematics Enthusiast, ISSN 1551-3440, Monograph 3, pp.1-2
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The Festschrift opens with an artful paper by Benno Artmann himself on the projective plane, and consists among others, of numerous contributions in the mathematics education domain of beliefs, an area which Günter is considered an expert both in and outside Germany. These papers which connect to Günter's research interests over the last three decades have been written by well wishing and distinguished colleagues whose lives, careers and intellectual works have intersected with that of Günter. It took a great deal of time and effort on the part of these colleagues to prepare an article for this Festschrift given the extremely short notice and tight time schedule to bring this to completion. I could not have had this monograph ready without their help. My heartfelt thanks and appreciation go to all the authors in this issue¹. Please note that I have strived for uniformity to the maximum extent possible which was an exercise in patience and perseverance and at times seemed impossible given the different formats in which the manuscripts arrived (Ms-Word, Word Perfect, LaTeX, etc...)

I have been fortunate to know Günter as a friend as well as having worked with him quite intensively during the last several years on numerous projects. The three most valuable things I have learned from him and emulated are: (1) to never refuse help to those who need/seek help, particularly to colleagues that are just entering the field, (2) the art of juggling multiple research interests and academic commitments without compromising one's family obligations, and (3) consistently aiming for high standards of academic service and scholarship of value and interest to the field.

So, joining the authors who honor Günter in their articles and who have made this Festschrift possible, I say ***Nachträglich alles Gute zum 60. Geburtstag!***

¹ Among the colleagues who join us in honoring Günter but were regrettably unable to contribute articles for this monograph are Rolf Biehler (Bielefeld, Germany) and George Philipou (Cyprus).