

John Boris Miller
24 March 1928 – 27 July 2011



John Miller, a foundation member of the Society in 1956, and the Editor of the *Journal of the Australian Mathematical Society* from 1977 to 1979, died in July last year. He was born in Sydney on 24 March 1928, the second son of Boris and Noelie Miller. His father, who had mainly German and Polish ancestry, was born and grew up in St Petersburg. His mother, who had mainly Scottish and Irish ancestry, grew up in Narrabri, NSW. John attended Cranbrook School, Sydney, in his primary-school years; then Knox Grammar School, Wahroonga, where he was Dux of the school in 1945. He then enrolled at the University of Sydney and graduated BSc in mathematics and was runner-up for the University Medal. He won a two-year scholarship to the University of Cambridge where he was awarded the Mathematical Tripos. After returning from England, he took up a position as teacher at St Peter's College, Adelaide. It was while he was in Adelaide that he met and, in 1954, married Brenda Wilson. From St Peter's he was appointed to a position of lecturer in mathematics at the University of New England in Armidale, NSW. While there, he completed a PhD. An appointment as senior lecturer, and later, reader, at Canberra University College (incorporated into the Australian National University as the School of General Studies in 1960) followed. In 1965 John took up a chair of Pure Mathematics at Monash University, where he led the department's analysis group. He retired in 1989, but retained his association with Monash, becoming Emeritus Professor in 1990 and remaining an honorary member of the School of Mathematical Sciences until his death.

His initial research area was analysis, more specifically Banach algebras, with papers such as 'A symmetrical convergence theory for general transforms and Baxter operators and endomorphisms on Banach algebras' appearing in the '50s and '60s, respectively. Some of this work led him to partially ordered topological

groups and then to more general partially ordered sets. Publications such as ‘Quotient groups and realization of tight Riesz groups’ and ‘Simultaneous lattice and topological completion of topological posets’ are typical of this research. After his retirement he turned to Euclidean geometry. Various articles on pantographs appeared in recent years in the *AustMS Gazette*.

Behind a quiet demeanour John displayed a very dry sense of humour made all the more effective by a straight-faced delivery. Colleagues have remarked that his mathematical writing, just like his speech was careful and concise. He aimed for the highest precision in his teaching and frequently expressed his concern that academic standards be preserved in the face of pressure to relax them. John proved a very effective PhD supervisor, providing suggestions on how to go about doing mathematics as well as preparing meticulous and detailed annotations on each submission.

John showed an early interest in drawing, and he became a prolific painter of watercolours, mainly landscapes. Most of his subjects were scenes from his travels in Europe and Australia, and during his retirement he produced well over one thousand fine works. He left many of his paintings to relatives and friends. He was a founding member of the Berwick Artists Society, which held several exhibitions of his work. In 2010 he was awarded the Lindsay King Arts Initiative Award by the City of Casey for his contribution to the visual arts.

He had a great interest in music and more generally in the arts and at one time constructed his own harpsichord. He was also a keen gardener and would delight in showing his visitors around his substantial garden during weekend lunches. Guests would often be an eclectic mix, with Graz as likely to be represented as Glen Waverley.

John and Brenda were passionate about preserving Berwick’s heritage and in the 1990s formed the Berwick and District Community Association.

John was also an ardent supporter of East Timor and wrote numerous letters to *The Age* on this and a wide range of other topics, such as funding for Radio Australia and state government mismanagement. He remarked in later years that he must by then have exceeded his quota as his submissions were no longer being published. He steadfastly supported the disadvantaged in this and other countries.

Brenda’s death affected him profoundly and he suffered his fatal heart attack about nine weeks later. He is survived by his children Timothy and Sarah, and three grandchildren.

Acknowledgements: Robin and Sarah Miller and various colleagues.

Andrew Wirth, Department of Mechanical Engineering, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010.