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butions to the University of Washington. He was instrumental in creating the present retirement system for the faculty, and he was active in the effort that led to the inclusion of the faculty in the Social Security system. He was also a plaintiff in a suit in the early 1960's concerning the loyalty oath; his was the only testimony in the case that was cited before the Supreme Court of the United States.

Bill married Hilde Merzbach in Seattle in 1940. Mrs. Birnbaum is well known in the Seattle community, especially for her work at Group Health, which she and Bill helped found.

A memorial service, which was attended by more than two hundred persons, was held in memory of Bill at the Faculty Club of the University of Washington on April 6, 2001.

**NEW DIRECTOR FOR MATH STUDY CENTER**

Patrick Perkins has been named the new director of the Department's highly successful MATH STUDY CENTER. Perkins assumed the position in the autumn of 2000 when the former director, Ken Plochinski, left to enter law school at the University of Michigan after having directed the Center since 1990.

The Math Study Center, which is located in the basement of the Communications Building across the street from the Mathematics Department, is a great place for students to work on math, whether or not they need help. It is not a tutoring center in the traditional sense. The Center provides a comfortable place and a supportive atmosphere where students can come together and study, in groups or individually. It has on staff a number of tutors (both graduate student TA's and advanced undergraduates) who will sit down with students and answer questions to help them understand difficult points. The Center does not provide long blocks of uninterrupted one-on-one tutoring. Many faculty members and TA's hold their office hours in the Center. Most students who use the Center work at large tables in the main room. There are also several smaller cubicles available. These are equipped with white boards and are often used by faculty for office hours. Textbooks, calculators and other study materials are available to be checked out for in-room use. Student response to the Math Study Center has been very positive. For example, the staff recently received a card and a big bag of homemade cookies from one grateful student!

**Mathematics**

This newsletter is published annually for alumni and friends of the Department of Mathematics at the University of Washington.

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**PROMOTIONS**

Boris Solomyak



James Zhang

During academic 2000-2001, the Department promoted Boris Solomyak and James Zhang from associate professor to professor. Professor Solomyak works in ergodic theory and symbolic dynamics. Professor Zhang works in noncommutative algebraic geometry.

**CHANGES IN THE OFFICE**

(l-r: Lisa Spencer, Mary Sheetz, Susan Burgher, Jessica Baird)

After many years of service to the University and to the Department, the Department's administrator, Donna Gardner, retired at the end of February.

After a thorough personnel search, Mary Sheetz, formerly the secretary to the chair of our department, was chosen as the new department administrator. Another change in the department's office is that Lisa Spencer, formerly receptionist, has become the department's fiscal specialist, replacing Carmela Halos, who has assumed a new position in another department. Jessica Baird has taken over as the secretary to the chair and our new receptionist is Susan Burgher.

**NEW FACULTY**

This year the Department welcomes four new faculty members:

- Yu Yuan (Assistant Professor - on leave this year), PhD University of Minnesota, 1998. Professor Yuan's mathematical work is in the subject of linear and fully nonlinear partial differential equations.
- Timothy Chartier (Acting Assistant Professor), PhD University of Colorado, 2001. Professor Chartier works on algebraic multigrid methods.
- Isabella Novik (Acting Assistant Professor), PhD Hebrew University, 1999. Professor Novik's subject is geometric combinatorics.
- Jennifer Taggart (Lecturer), PhD University of Boulder, 1997. Dr. Taggart's mathematical work has concerned hypergeometric series.

**An opinion.** "I think there's no way they should have to teach [math] now. We have computers. We no longer need to know why  $3x=2y/4$ ."

—Talk-show host Rosie O'Donnell, as quoted in *Newsweek*, April 9, 2001.