

FOCUS

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It Figures

The following editorial appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* just after the Joint Mathematics Meetings in Anaheim. The author, Lee Dembart, is an editorial writer for the *Times* who frequently writes on topics in mathematics and science.

The nation's mathematicians gathered in Anaheim last week for their annual meeting, which like most academic confabulations, was a mixture of business and pleasure, an opportunity to hear new work and see old friends.

These are heady times for mathematics. In the last five years the pace of discovery has been phenomenal. Many important problems that had stumped the best minds for years have been solved. "When I was a student," one mathematician was saying, "no one expected that important unsolved problems would ever be solved. Now half a dozen of them have fallen in the last few years. What is going to be left for us to do?"

No one knows why things have proceeded so quickly. Some people guess that the large increase in mathematics funding in the 1960's, and the consequent increase in the number of mathematicians, had a lot to do with it. They worry

that cutbacks now will have the opposite effect in the future. A report by the National Research Council last year warned that mathematics research had suffered a "staggering" loss of financial support and that the number of Ph.D.s awarded in the field had dropped by more than 50% from 1968 to 1982.

For weeks before the meeting rumors had swept the mathematics community that Louis de Branges, who made a stunning mathematical proof last year (the Bieberbach Conjecture—Editor), would announce a proof of the Riemann hypothesis, widely regarded as the richest and most important outstanding problem in mathematics today. (Suffice to say that the Riemann hypothesis, proposed by Bernhard Riemann in 1859, asserts that the non-trivial zeros of the Riemann zeta function all have the real part $\frac{1}{2}$. The truth of (continued on page 2)

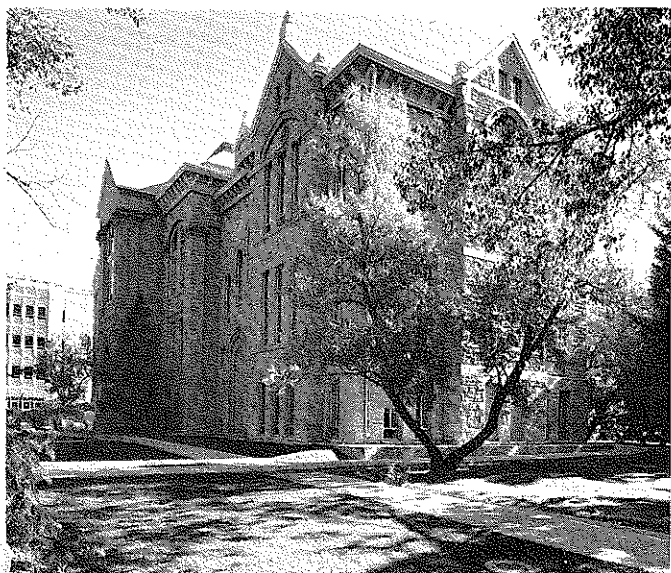
Summer Meeting Information Inside

The center section of this issue contains the preliminary program and housing and preregistration forms for the August 1985 Joint Mathematics Meetings at the University of Wyoming in Laramie. *Note: These are the only forms for this meeting which will be mailed to MAA members. The complete timetable for MAA sessions will appear in the May-June issue of FOCUS.*

The meetings include the **65th Summer Meeting of the Mathematical Association of America**, the **89th Summer Meeting of the American Mathematical Society (AMS)**, and the 1985 annual meetings of **Pi Mu Epsilon** and the **Association for Women in Mathematics**.

The MAA meeting will feature the Earle Raymond Lectures given by Arthur M. Jaffee of Harvard University. There will also be seven fifty-minute invited addresses, four hour speakers jointly sponsored by the MAA and the AMS, five MAA minicourses, an AMS short course, four contributed paper sessions, and various other events of interest to those who enjoy collegiate mathematics.

The deadlines for preregistration and housing forms and for the MAA Minicourses are both June 14. The deadline for MAA Contributed Papers is May 28. See the center section for further information.



Old Main, the oldest structure on the campus of the University of Wyoming, was built during Wyoming's territorial days. The University of Wyoming is the site of the Summer 1985 Joint Mathematics Meetings.