

Alexander Nagel

After 42 years of distinguished service in the Department of Mathematics Professor Alexander Nagel retired from the university in December 2012.

Alex attended Harvard University (B.A. 1966) and Columbia University (Ph.D. 1971) where he was a student of Lipman Bers. He joined our department as an instructor in 1970, and was appointed Assistant Professor in 1972, Associate Professor in 1974, and Professor in 1977. He also had visiting positions at Princeton, Orsay, MSRI (Berkeley), Toulouse, Barcelona and Pisa.

Alex's research is in analysis where he mainly investigates problems on the interface of function theory of several complex variables and modern harmonic analysis. He has made many fundamental contributions, often in joint work with various collaborators. Much of his early work concerned function algebras. He wrote a series of major papers on fundamental operators in complex analysis, in particular on the question of how the geometry of the underlying domains relates to concrete estimates of the kernels. A deep paper by Nagel, Stein and Wainger with the unassuming title "Balls and metrics defined by vector fields: Basic properties" had tremendous impact on many branches of analysis and geometry. Alex was a major contributor to the theory of singular Radon transforms, in various stages of development. He is also well known for a fundamental estimate on Fourier transforms of surface carried measures and related applications. His achievements were recognized by a Romnes Award from this university and a Guggenheim fellowship. He was named Lipman Bers Professor of Mathematics in 2001 and Steenbock Professor of Mathematical Sciences in 2004. The American Mathematical Society awarded him the prestigious Stefan Bergman Prize for his many contributions to complex analysis.

Alex has been one of the top teachers in the Department of Mathematics, both at the graduate level, with a steady stream of students, and at the undergraduate level. He introduced the highly successful Honors Calculus sequence in the Math Department. He has received distinguished teaching awards from both this university and the Wisconsin Section of the Mathematical Association of America. Moreover, Alex has a superb record of service for this university and for the mathematical profession. For many years he was a member of the Editorial Board for the Transactions and the Memoirs of the American Mathematical Society. From 2001 to 2004 he served as an elected member on the Council of the AMS. He was Chair of the Department of Mathematics from 1991 to 1993 and from 2011 to 2012, and served as Associate Dean for Natural Sciences in the College of Letters and Science from 1993 to 1998.

In 2012 the University of Wisconsin awarded Alex Nagel the Hilldale award in the Physical Sciences, in recognition of his multiple achievements in research, teaching, and service. His enormous contributions will be greatly missed, but we hope that he will continue to spend time with us in Van Vleck Hall. We wish him all the best for his retirement.