

Czesław Ryll-Nardzewski

On September 18th, 2015, Czesław Ryll-Nardzewski passed away at the age of 89. Since 1954 he was a professor of a few Polish universities, and of the Institute of Mathematics of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

He spent a year as a visiting professor at the University of California Berkeley, collaborating with A. Tarski. In 1979 he was elected a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences. During his lifetime he published more than 100 papers, but left quite a few results unpublished; some of them were published by other mathematicians.

He was a teacher of several generations of mathematicians, and supervised more than 10 PhD theses from many areas of mathematics.

He was awarded a professorship at Wrocław University at the age of 28, which was quite unusual at the time.

Ryll-Nardzewski's adventure with science starts from experimental chemistry (pyrotechnics), medicine and physics. He inherited medical skills from his parents: his father was an army colonel and a well known dermatologist, after the war a professor at a medical school in Lublin, and his mother was a gynaecologist.

Mathematics was his very late scientific choice. During the war, his parents arranged for him to have German lessons with a mathematician, Professor Stefan Straszewicz, who convinced him to study mathematics.

His characteristic feature in approaching mathematics was to treat it as a unified system, rules of which he understood and applied in various subareas, obtaining many spectacular theorems.

Ryll-Nardzewski received several scientific grants. The filling of an application form always created a problem when he had to define his main research area.

For many years he was the editor of the mathematical series of the Bulletin of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and a member of the editorial boards of *Studia Mathematica*, *Fundamenta Mathematicae*, *Colloquium Mathematicum* and a few other journals.

He popularised mathematics, being an author of many fairly non-trivial elementary problems for talented primary school students.

When the martial law was declared in Poland in 1981, he was serving as director of the Institute of Mathematics of the Technical University of Wrocław. Using his position, he prevented expelling a few politically active students.

For his scientific achievements he was awarded high Polish decorations, and many major prizes by mathematical institutions; however, he never accepted any honorary academic title. He was also a respected bridge player.

Ryszard Frankiewicz