

From the Editor's Desk

Gladys Sterenberg

January brings with it the tendency to look back on the past year. For me, I am reminded of the mathematicians and math educators who have made a great impact on me. I thought it would be appropriate to share a few of my memories and experiences and invite you to share with me the memories you cherish.

As a mathematics teacher, I often encounter students' views of mathematics as certain, unchangeable and absolute. My own views of mathematics shifted several years ago when I read *Chaos* (Gleick 1987). I remembered encountering the images: the Lorenz attractor, the Koch curve, the Mandelbrot set, fractal clusters. Drawn into the stories, I felt excited by these new mathematical possibilities for describing our world. Nonlinearity, pluralism and the dynamic nature of chaos resonated with my view of the nature of mathematics. Yet it was the computer-generated pictures of fractals that held my attention. I was enthralled by the colour and fluidity of shape. I began to play with my understanding of the universe. I imagined tree branches, coastlines and blood vessels as fractals and was fascinated by the harmonious arrangement of order and disorder occurring in natural contexts. This view of mathematics was relational: I was relating to the beauty, elegance and imagery of mathematics. The work of Benoit Mandelbrot, who coined the term *fractal* and worked extensively on describing the Mandelbrot set, had an enormous effect on my view of mathematics. Benoit Mandelbrot passed away on October 14, 2010.

On a more personal note, my work as editor of *delta-K* was greatly influenced by a previous editor, Art Jorgensen. About four years ago, I had the pleasure of meeting him and his wife, Ivy. While I didn't know him well, I was impressed by the encouragement he provided to me both professionally and personally. Some of you are aware that my husband went through high-impact cancer therapy a few years ago. When Art found this out, he regularly phoned my husband to speak with him and find out how he was. He also contacted me to provide feedback about my work. These acts of care were greatly appreciated and will be profoundly missed.

Art has greatly affected math education in our province and, years ago, MCATA created the Dr Arthur Jorgensen Chair Award in honour of his long-time interest, involvement and support of our organization. This award is presented to a student in a degree program at a faculty of education in Alberta who has demonstrated academic excellence and a clear commitment to mathematics education. Art spent more than 50 years involved with education. I had the pleasure of interviewing him about his experiences and, in his memory, excerpts from our conversation are reprinted in this issue of *delta-K*. Dr Arthur Otto Jorgensen, of Edson, Alberta, passed away on February 19, 2011, at the age of 83.

Great teachers continue to provide leadership in our community. This issue contains a discussion by Sherry Matheson on problem solving, research on initiating conversations, by Greg Belostotski, and an examination of the use of a workbook for Math 10C, by Richelle Marynowski. Each of these articles was selected to provide a glimpse of issues facing teachers in the classroom. Some practical teaching ideas for patterns are explored by Krista Francis-Poscente, Sharon Friesen and Trevor Pasanen. Veselin Jungic and Jamie Mulholland present their findings about teaching math in an online environment. Finally, *delta-K* presents a problem by Gregory Akulov—I encourage you to submit teacher and student solutions.

As always, I welcome your feedback and submissions. Guidelines for manuscripts can be found on the inside front cover of this issue. I am more than willing to help you with the writing process.

At this time of celebration and remembrance, I encourage you to reflect on the impact of your colleagues and former teachers. Perhaps you will have the opportunity to write a brief note in acknowledgement of how they have touched you. Live well and remember Art's words, "You teach children, not math. Math can't learn a damn thing!"

Reference

Gleick, J. 1987. *Chaos: Making a New Science*. New York: Penguin Books.

MCATA Executive, 2011/12



Back row: Indy Lagu, Daryl Chichak, Robert Wong, Lisa Everitt, Christopher Smith, Debbie Duvall, Christine Henzel, Carmen Wasyluniuk, Donna Chanasyk

Front row: Tancy Lazar, Marj Farris, Karen Viersen

Missing: Olive Chapman, Carol Henderson, Rod Lowry, David Martin, Shauna Rebus, Gladys Sterenberg