

It is a great pleasure for me to send a few words about Jean-Pierre Kahane, what he meant to ICMI and to me personally, and to congratulate him on his 90th birthday.

In 1980 the ICMI executive committee was in disarray. The great mathematician, and a personal friend of my family, Hassler Whitney, had not proved a successful President. The committee, then, proposed that he should be succeeded not by a leading mathematician as was the custom, but by the Danish mathematics educator, Bent Christiansen. I was asked if I would be willing to be Bent's Secretary-General and I agreed. However, the International Mathematical Union decided that it would still be better for a mathematician to lead ICMI into calmer waters and asked Jean-Pierre Kahane if he was willing to become President. I was asked if I would be willing to work alongside Jean-Pierre and, although at that time I knew nothing about him, I replied 'yes'.

So it was in December, 1982 that I was invited, along with Bent Christiansen and Ed Jacobsen of UNESCO, to have breakfast with the Kahanes and to meet Agnes and Jean-Pierre for the first time. After breakfast, Bent, Jean-Pierre and I went to Orsay for further talks on what ICMI might do and how it would best operate. On the train back to Paris, Bent said to me, 'This is a man we can do business with'. Indeed, despite his disappointment at not being the first mathematics educator to become President of ICMI, within two years Bent told me that had he been so appointed then ICMI would not have made such advances as it had done under Jean-Pierre's guidance: that the IMU had made the right decision. I, for my part, had not only found an ideal colleague with whom to work with on ICMI matters, but two life-long friends, Agnes and Jean-Pierre, with whom my wife and I could exchange visits.

Bent and I had already planned the form that ICMI studies might take, but it was Jean-Pierre who provided the foundation on which our ideas would be built and the first study, on computers in mathematics education, was on a topic that he himself advanced. Then and throughout the eight years in which he and I co-operated his knowledge, his leadership, his network of friends, his status within the mathematics community, his ability to raise funds, and his personal charm and efficiency never failed to impress me and others. Personally, it was not only a pleasure to work with and, indeed, just to be with, Jean-Pierre, but also to learn so much from him - his great erudition, his ability to supply simple explanations and guidance, and his wide interests. When he stepped down as President ICMI was in a very much stronger position than when he had taken over.

That breakfast in December 1982 was to prove a milestone in my life. It did not just link me for eight years to a very amiable and immensely talented colleague, but, more importantly, it introduced me to a friend from whom I could learn so much, with whom I have had so many happy hours and to whom I send my very warmest greetings upon his 90th birthday.