

Peter Hilton

April 7, 1923 - November 6, 2010

Peter Hilton, 87, Distinguished Professor of Mathematics at Binghamton University, died on Saturday, November 6, 2010. He is survived by his wife Margaret, sons and daughter-in-law, Nicholas Hilton, Binghamton and Timothy and Catherine Hilton, Seattle, Wa., two grandsons, one great granddaughter and brother and sister-in-law, Dr. Sydney and Mary Hilton, North Wales, U.K.

Peter was born in London, and educated at Oxford University. During World War II, at age 18, he was recruited from Oxford, because of his mathematical ability and knowledge of German, to work at Bletchley Park, the secret British facility dedicated to breaking German codes. This project was led by Alan Turing, the celebrated mathematician and founder of computer science, with whom the young Peter Hilton worked closely. Initially, Peter worked on breaking the Enigma code, and, later, on the more refined Fish code. Once the British Official Secrets Act was lifted in the 1980's, his lectures about the years at Bletchley Park were highly popular at venues all over the world. He gave several such lectures at Binghamton University.

After the war, Peter obtained his doctorate from Oxford. Peter went on to hold academic positions at Cambridge and Manchester Universities, and a Chair at the University of Birmingham. In 1962, he moved to the United States where he was Professor of Mathematics, first at Cornell, then at the University of Washington and the Battelle Institute. He held the Louis D. Beaumont Chair at Case Western Reserve University for a number of years, ending in 1982 when he became Distinguished Professor at Binghamton University, retiring in 1995.

Peter Hilton was one of the most influential mathematicians of his generation. He made major contributions to algebraic topology and homological algebra. His influence on these subjects has been profound. In his later years he was also a significant figure in Mathematics Education, especially in Continental Europe. He published hundreds of research articles and many books on mathematics and mathematics education, and he lectured at conferences into his mid-eighties.

Funeral services will be private. Peter's family will welcome friends to a celebration of his life the date and time of which will be announced shortly. Memorial contributions in Peter's name may be made to the Southern Poverty Law Center, 400 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104. Expressions of sympathy for the family may be forwarded to www.demunnfh.com. Arrangements for the family are directed by DeMunn Funeral Home.

The article on Peter Hilton in the University newsletter.

An article on Peter Hilton in the Notices of the American Mathematical Society.

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Last update: **2017/01/12 17:56**

