

ON HEYDAR RADJAVI, A MAN OF LETTERS, WORDS, SENTENCES AND MARVELLOUS STORIES

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What can be said about Heydar Radjavi that has not been said before, quite possibly by Heydar himself*? Of course, one might quote from the article “*A survey of Heydar Radjavi*”, written by R. Bhatia, M. Omladič, P. Rosenthal and P. Šemrl [1], where it was suggested that Heydar Radjavi was “(too) good-looking” and “(too) vigorous” for a septuagenarian. Obviously such things will not bear repeating here.

In 2004, *Linear Algebra and its Applications* published a special issue in anticipation of Heydar’s 70th birthday which featured the article cited above. For most mathematicians, such an occasion would serve as a celebration of their *opus vitae*. In Heydar’s case, it served mainly as an introduction to the first half – and who knows, perhaps the first third – of his career: a “mere” 137 publications up to that date.

Eleven years later, the *Bulletin of the Iranian Mathematical Society* dedicated an issue to celebrate his 80th birthday. The article “*The existence and uniqueness of Heydar Radjavi*”, by the present author, M. Omladič, P. Rosenthal, P. Šemrl and B. Yahaghi [2] again extolled his virtues, in a way that only mildly stretched the bounds of plausibility. By then he had accumulated another 55 papers for his cv, and countless (in the poetic sense, at least) new co-authors.

We are now in 2024, and preparing to honour Heydar Radjavi’s 90th birthday at the **Linear Algebra Workshop** to be held in Slovenia in 2025. His publication list now stands at 223, which does not include the papers currently submitted and awaiting publication. His work continues to focus on matrix theory and the study of bounded linear operators acting on complex Hilbert spaces. His contributions are as varied as they are numerous, and he has made a huge impact on both fields, as evidenced by the more than 2,000 citations of his work in 1,285 publications. On a personal note, I have collaborated with Heydar on 28 of those papers**, and although I would never admit it to him, it has been an unmitigated pleasure and honour to have done so. His love for mathematics is indisputable, his knowledge of the area is phenomenal, and he continues to be a fountain of inspiration for all who work with him.

To focus solely on Heydar’s mathematical achievements is to fail to take into account many of his best attributes. One cannot spend time with him without being moved by his love of life, his humanity, and his youthful optimism, and I am forever grateful to him for agreeing to come to Waterloo twenty years ago. He has certainly made my life (and together we have made the lives of the local coffee merchants) that much better. I always look forward to our walks home from work, trying to maintain the pace he sets

* For those who have not had the pleasure of working with him directly, you can get a measure of the man through his non-mathematical writings, as he has now published “*Father takes a drink*”, a sequel to his memoir “*French Hats in Iran*”, both available through Amazon.

** This is by no means close to the record for co-authorship with Heydar. It is with great sadness that I mention here the recent passing of Peter Rosenthal, Heydar’s lifelong friend and most prolific co-author (they had 58 publications together, including two research monographs). Peter, like Heydar, was a wonderful human being, and his passing is a loss on far more than a mathematical scale.

while discussing mathematics and sharing jokes with him, and simply enjoying his company. While his ability to always find the good in people has not yet managed to erase my innate cynicism, it has kept me from becoming the world's most splenetic curmudgeon, and for that, amongst so many other things, I owe him thanks.

Heydar has been a permanent fixture at the Linear Algebra Workshop since its inception. It is our hope that he will continue to return to this conference for a great many years to come, to share his wisdom and insights on mathematics and life in general.

REFERENCES

- [1] R. Bhatia, M. Omladič, P. Rosenthal, and P. Šemrl. A survey of Heydar Radjavi. *Lin. Alg. Appl.*, 383:1–15, 2004.
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