

# Founded Mathematics Department at UCSD Prof. Stefan E. Warschawski Dies at 85

[San Diego County Edition]

Los Angeles Times (pre-1997 Fulltext) - Los Angeles, Calif.

Author: MAUREEN FAN  
Date: May 10, 1989  
Start Page: 2  
Section: Metro; 2; Metro Desk  
Text Word Count: 559

## Document Text

Stefan (Steve) E. Warschawski, founder of UC San Diego's mathematics department and one of the world's leading experts in the field of conformal mappings-rules for associating points with other points so that angles are preserved-has died. He was 85.

Warschawski died at home Friday after suffering from cancer of the pancreas, his wife, Ilsa, said.

Conformal mapping, an area of pure mathematics often used in physics and engineering to solve partial differential equations, has also been used to study the air flow around airplane wings.

Warschawski's doctoral work at the University of Basel in Switzerland in 1930 "solved some of the most important open questions at that time regarding the boundary behavior of conformal mappings," said Burton Rodin, a UCSD mathematics professor.

## Kind and Courteous

Colleagues and family spoke of Warschawski as a soft-spoken man who was almost kind and courteous to a fault.

"He often attended seminars in fields other than his own out of concern for the sensibilities of the speaker lest too few people be in the audience," said Richard A. Olshen, another UCSD mathematics professor. "He always insisted on being the last person through the door even when it wasn't necessarily appropriate."

"There were always lines at his door at the end of the year," Rodin said, "when graduate students would come to him for help, and this continued through his retirement years as well. . . . Even students who never had a class with him knew by his reputation that he would be a good person to talk to."

Warschawski was born April 8, 1904, in Lida, in what is now the Soviet Union, the son of a Russian physician and his German wife. When the Germans occupied Lida in 1915, Warschawski was sent to live with relatives in Germany. There, he attended the University of Goettingen and worked under renowned mathematician Alexander Ostrowski, eventually following his mentor to the University of Basel.

## Returned to Germany

Warschawski returned to Germany, and then went to Holland, to teach. When the Nazis came to power, he emigrated to the United States and taught at Columbia, Cornell, Rochester and Brown universities before securing his first tenure position at Washington University in St. Louis.

During World War II, Warschawski developed an integral equation method for numerically calculating conformal mappings, and was invited to join Brown University's Applied Mathematics Group, which was working on problems important to the war effort.

In 1945, he headed the mathematics department at the Minnesota Institute of Technology, and after building a distinguished group there, came to San Diego to recruit faculty, plan curriculum and start teaching for UCSD's mathematics department in 1963.

He retired to professor emeritus in 1971 but continued to teach occasionally at both UCSD and San Diego State University.

## Threw Him a Party

UCSD graduate students threw a huge party for Warschawski's 65th birthday.

"In his 78th year, he received two invitations to the Oberwolfach conference in mathematics. That's very unusual," said Olshen. "It's basically a young man's game . . . (the fact that) Steve got invitations is a statement about the vitality of his mind."

Warschawski is survived by his wife, whom he met in New York in 1946. "He was a good teacher, a good researcher, devoted to his job. . . . There was just the two of us and we stuck together and we loved it," she said.

Funeral services were held Sunday.

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