

HYMAN GARSHIN LANDAU

December 18, 1909–December 2, 1966

OBITUARY NOTICE

The closely-knit family of mathematical biologists at Chicago has suffered within less than a year and a half two severe losses. In July 1965 it was the tragic death of Harold A. White, a young brilliant scientist and a man of courage, impeccable integrity and unyielding principles. In December 1966 it was the death of Hyman Garshin Landau, a mature scientist in the prime of his life, a veteran of mathematical biology, and also a man of courage, impeccable integrity and unyielding principles.

Hyman G. Landau was born in Chmelnik, Poland, on December 18, 1909. He was brought to the United States as a small child and was a naturalized United States citizen. He received his B.S. degree in Mathematics from the Carnegie Institute of Technology in June 1932, and his M.S. degree from the same institution in June 1935. After a year of study at Princeton University (1935–1936), he returned to Pittsburgh to receive in June 1946 his Ph.D. degree in mathematics from the University of Pittsburgh.

From then on he worked at the Coal Research Laboratory of the Carnegie Institute of Technology; as a statistician in the War Department in Washington, D.C.; as a mathematician at the Ballistics Research Laboratory, Aberdeen Proving Grounds; and also was part-time Lecturer in Mathematics at the University of Delaware. He also was a consultant to the Westinghouse Electric Corporation and the General Electric Company.

In 1949 he joined the staff of the Committee on Mathematical Biology of the University of Chicago, as Research Associate with rank of Assistant Professor. There, very soon all of us realized that in him we had more than merely a new associate: we had a new friend, a new member of our family. Due to his wide experience in applied mathematics, he has made valuable contributions to many different fields, as exemplified by his numerous scientific papers. But his field of predilection was mathematical biology. The readers of this Journal are familiar with his work on such diverse problems as some theoretical aspects of radiobiology, imitative effects in social behavior, dominance relation and the structure of animal societies, random nets, ageing, contagion and spread of information, and theory of task-oriented groups.

All his associates and students marveled at his ability to solve analytically problems that baffled others. In addition to his own research, he was always ready to help his associates and students with their work. With a reticence, verging on shyness, he spoke little; but when he spoke either at seminars or in private discussions, every word of his was worth hearing and being given careful attention.

In addition to his achievements as researcher and teacher, one quality that stood out in Hyman Landau was his phenomenal sense of duty and responsibility. In the politically dark years of 1953–54, Landau, like many other academic persons, fell a victim to the then wide-spread political witchhunting. He was forced to leave the University of Chicago on a rather short notice, after a great deal of humiliating experience. Anyone else would have under similar circumstances dropped his work and become more concerned about his immediate future. But not Hyman Landau. Until the last day of his appointment at Chicago, June 30, 1954, he was in the office every day, taking care of all

his students, continuing to help his associates, as well as continuing his own research. The latter not being completed by the time he left, he completed it after he left and submitted a full report several months later.

From 1955 to 1962 he was a Research Associate in Mechanical Engineering and a Mathematician at the Heat and Mass Flow Analyzer Laboratory of the College of Engineering at Columbia University.

In 1962 the Committee on Mathematical Biology celebrated the return of Landau, first as Visiting Associate Professor and later as Research Associate with rank of Associate Professor. He resumed his research in Mathematical Biology and the direction of the work of graduate students. Every member of the Committee and every student liked him and appreciated his work. Only the administration of the University never showed sufficient appreciation.

In the morning of November 30, 1966, Landau had a massive cerebral hemorrhage. He was taken unconscious to the hospital where he died in the evening of December 2, without regaining consciousness. Not only his immediate family, but all members of the Committee on Mathematical Biology were waiting almost continuously in an adjoining room of the hospital until the last moment.

In Hyman Garshin Landau we all lost an outstanding scientist and an outstanding man. For the rest of her life his widow will be proud of the memory of her husband, and his four children will be proud of the memory of their father. All of us who have been associated with him, are proud of this association and will always cherish his memory.

N. RASHEVSKY