Death and Mathematics Poems

Reuben Hersh

GEORGE PÓLYA

was blind, his last few years.
Kolmogorov too.

Lie down, lie down, old plowman.

Life is cruel, death is kind.
And deaf and dumb.

And blind.

SONIA AND EMMY

died too soon.
Karl burned Sonia's letters.

On Bryn Mawr grounds are buried
Emmy's ashes.

OSWALD TEICHMÜLLER

Born 1913.

In 1933
his gang bars Landau from the platform.

From Stalingrad in 1943
his corpse does not return.

BELLA ABRAMOVNA SUBBOTOVSKAYA

barely remembered, mostly forgotten.
just found classrooms, found teachers, provided chalk.
even made sandwiches.

a woman easily disposed of, easily executed.

DUTCH MATHEMATICIANS

Van der Waerden thinks best keep his Chair in Leipzig
till the War is over.

The Dutch did not forgive him.

Brouwer thinks best serve the Germans,
disliking French even more than Jews.

The Dutch did not forgive him.

Freudenthal, Dutch Jew born German,
hidden Underground, writes a prize-winning novel.

At 85 is found,
seated on a park bench,
among playing children.

AN ANALYST, A LOGICIAN, AND THREE TOPOLOGISTS

Herbrand and Galicki, climbing in the Alps.

Paley, skiing in the Rockies.

Urysohn, swimming off Brittany.

Hurewicz, standing on Uxmal in Yucatán.

PHYLLIS'S ASHES

Ten years ago she planted here these tulips,
that now feed on her ashes.

Where are the grasses now, that in ten years
my ashes will be feeding?

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