

Des équations aux dérivées partielles au calcul scientifique

Congrès en l'honneur de Luc Tartar

à l'occasion de son sixantième anniversaire

Paris, Ancienne École Polytechnique, 2–6 juillet 2007

Opening session

Address by Roy Nicolaides

Member of the Organizing Committee

Head of the Department of Mathematical Sciences

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As we all know, this meeting is being held to celebrate Luc's 60th birthday, but I would like to mention that this year is also the 20th anniversary of Luc's appointment in the Department of Mathematical Sciences at Carnegie Mellon University. I well remember the excitement in the Department when we realized that there was a good chance that we would be able to recruit Luc. To recall those days I thought it might be interesting and fun to read again the recommendation letters that were written for Luc at the time. In going over the letters I was struck by the shortness of many of them, at least compared to what we usually get from letter writers. Perhaps there is an inverse correlation between a person's standing and the length of the text needed to describe them! Anyhow here are a few near verbatim quotes from four of the letters written for Luc back in 1986-1987. Each letter writer is a major figure in applied mathematics, one whose name would be instantly recognized by almost every participant in this meeting.

Writer 1 says this: "... (Luc) is probably one of the most powerful living analysts... I have mixed feelings with this recommendation. His departure will be very bad for us and very good for the Department where he goes."

From Writer 2 we have: "He is the best French mathematician of his generation working in nonlinear PDEs... His work has been extremely daring and has provided the catalyst for several of the most important developments in nonlinear PDEs in the world during the last few years... In addition he is an enormously broad and cultured scientist."

Writer 3 says: "Luc is the most powerful and creative mathematician with whom I have had close contact. His speed and mastery of all aspects of differential equations is simply marvelous, and in my opinion unrivalled."

Finally, from Writer 4 we have this: "His achievements are huge and his creativity and devotion to science are at the top of the scale. The very few people in the world in his area near his level have so many options that it is usually hopeless to try and attract them."

If you are able to appoint him your Department will achieve a new visibility and stature in the nonlinear community and acquire a talent capable of improving the productivity of others. (I sometimes think: "If only Luc were here I could solve this problem.") I hope that you are able to act."

Well, we did indeed act and it is evident to all that Luc's presence and contributions in the Department have been a huge factor in the many transformations which, over the years, have made us a major player in nonlinear analysis. On behalf of the Department and all of us at this meeting, Luc, our very best thanks and good wishes on this happy occasion.