
OBITUARY

IGOR FEDOROVICH SHARYGIN

1937–2004

Igor Fedorovich Sharygin was born on February 13th, 1937 in Moscow. In 1954, he became a student at the Faculty of Mechanics and Mathematics, Moscow State University where he graduated in 1959. After following a PhD course, he received his PhD degree from the same Faculty where he worked for several years. Only gradually his interest was turned to the problems of the teaching of mathematics in school.

He was an outstanding geometer, talented and always ready to analyze any mathematical fact, theorem or problem, trying to “see” in them purely geometrical ideas and their relationships to the unifying frame of geometry. As a remarkable geometer, Igor Sharygin also made significant contributions to the very important, related to geometry field—the teaching of geometry, as well as to the teaching of mathematics in general.

Already as a young specialist, he was widely known in Moscow as a very good teacher, who was preparing school students for their entrance examinations for high schools. Probably from this successful activity has sprung an impulse developing his interest for didactics of mathematics and forming his feeling of beauty for geometry and a deep love for it. Igor’s talent was particularly exposed in composition of problems, making him one of the best experts of that kind. He created different problems: “standard” ones, problems for entrance examinations, for Mathematical Olympiads, etc.

He is also the author of several books which are real masterpieces, whose exquisiteness attracts all their readers.

Sharygin’s skill in composition of problems had a direct connection with his work with school students having high mathematical abilities. He exposed his experience of how a difficult mathematical problem is solved in a series of articles and problem solving books: “Problems in Geometry. Plane Geometry” (Nauka, Moscow, 1982; Second edition, 1986) and “Problems in Geometry. Solid Geometry” (Nauka, Moscow, 1984), which are very popular in the former Soviet Union countries as well as abroad.

Besides the work with able students a special challenge for him was the teaching of mathematics for average school students. He suggested a new concept of the curriculum and the way of teaching geometry seen in his secondary school textbooks on geometry. His efforts to enrich the primary school teaching of mathematics (grades 1–2) with the new ideas of “geometrization” deserve a special admiration. As a co-author with his wife Tatiana he wrote special exercises-books for children of that age, in 1995.

Average students are an important focus in the didactic activity of Igor Sharygin. His participation in the organization of the Soros Mathematics Olympiad in Russia is marked with the innovative idea of giving more chances to the less prepared students from the country, who are cut from the regular work of the mathematical circles in the big cities. He proposed the way of improving their ability for solving difficult problems by choosing for them contents and formulations close to the school tradition.

Add also that Igor Sharygin fostered the creativity and the talent not only of the students, but also of the school teachers. His attention was turned to the teacher training and he was one of the founders of the All Union Association of the School Teachers.

Igor Sharygin was a member of the editorial boards of several journals related to mathematical education as well as the ICMI national representative of Russia.

First we described Sharygin's achievements in and a strong passion for geometry. Turning full circle, we must also mention his last years' fight for the cause called school geometry and all his efforts to highlight it as one of the most important subjects on school curricula.

Igor Sharygin died on March 12th, 2004*. He will remain in our memories a legend permanently inspiring all lovers of geometry.

Jordan Tabov

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