Jerzy Neyman

but after five minutes he raised his hand. When I called on him he went to
the board and proceeded to write down the proof. After that, I was afraid of
von Neumann."

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*M*ichigan State University often gets rather brilliant undergraduates. In
the early 1960's, a couple of math majors—one of them named Peter
Rheinstein—developed the habit of attending faculty seminars and collo-
quia. One day the speaker was an avatar of what one might call "bad alge-
bra." He wrote twelve axioms on the board for some new gadget that he
called a "hemi-semi-demi something-or-other" and proceeded to prove
propositions and theorems about it. After about twenty minutes, Rheinstein
strode to the blackboard and wrote down a three-line proof that hemi-semi-
demi something-or-others do not exist. The assembled faculty looked at

each other in an embarrassed fashion and then slowly (and silently) filed out of the room.

<center>∽✺∼</center>

Stefan Bergman was a distinguished, if eccentric, complex analyst whose work has been extremely influential. He had command of many languages, and made sure that everyone knew it. When Waclaw Sierpiński (1882–1969) spoke at Stanford about Hypothèse H, he spoke in fractured French. In fact it was so fractured that it was quite easy for most Americans to understand—just by transliteration. But Bergman insisted on translating Sierpiński's remarks into English. Unfortunately, Bergman's translation was much less clear.

Bergman also provided a translation of a three-hour presentation by a visiting Russian. Afterward, Bergman declaimed that, "I speak seven languages, English the bestest."

Bergman was a native of Poland. He was once conversing—in Polish—with his fellow Pole Antoni Zygmund. After a time, Zygmund said, "Please, let us speak English. It is more comfortable for me."

<center>∽✺∼</center>

Bergman's wife Edy was quite devoted to him, but life with Stefan was sometimes trying. When they first got married, Bergman had just completed a difficult job search. In the days immediately following World War II, jobs were scarce; and Bergman wanted a position with no teaching. After a long period of disappointment, Max Schiffer got Bergman a position at Stanford; so the mood was high at the Bergmans' wedding reception. The celebration took place in New York City, and Bergman was delighted that one of the guests was a mathematician from New York University with whom he had many mutual interests. They got involved in a passionate mathematical discussion and after a while Bergman announced to the guests that he would be back in a few hours: he had to go to NYU to discuss mathematics. On hearing this, Schiffer turned to Bergman and said, "I got you your job at Stanford; if you leave this reception I will take it away." Bergman stayed.

<center>∽✺∼</center>

There is considerable evidence that Bergman thought about mathematics constantly. Once he phoned one of his graduate students, at the student's home number, at 2:00 a.m. and said, "Are you in the library? I want you to look something up for me."