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## Games and Economic Behavior

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## Editorial

## Introduction to the John Forbes Nash Jr. Memorial Special Issue

In January of 2011, three years after his 80th birthday, *Games and Economic Behavior* published a special issue to honor John Nash. In their introductory note, the editors, Avinash Dixit, Ehud Kalai and Stephen Morris wrote: “We are delighted to have the privilege of coordinating this expression of the whole profession’s admiration and appreciation of John Nash and his work, and look forward to a repeat in ten or even twenty years’ time.”

This wish was sadly interrupted by tragedy. On their way back from the ceremony awarding John the Abel Prize in mathematics, John and his wife Alicia were killed in an automobile accident. The shock and loss to the world was profound. Instead of publishing another special issue in John’s honor, this issue is dedicated to his memory.

Most of the papers in this special issue were submitted by scholars from around the world to honor John. In addition, we approached a small number of leading game theorists, mathematicians, economists and others and asked them to answer the question: What did John Nash mean to you?

The comments that follow include tributes to his work as well as personal accounts and touching anecdotes. Even friends and colleagues who knew John well are likely to be surprised. Despite the severe personal hardships that John, Alicia and their family endured, the scope and breath of John’s contribution is overwhelming.

John Nash will be greatly missed. His legacy is epic.

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## John Nash: A Commemoration



John Nash  
(Photo courtesy of Jay Goldman)

John Nash was certainly an amazing person. I first got to know him more than 65 years ago when he was a young graduate student and I was an even younger undergraduate. We saw a great deal of each other in the old Fine Hall building, especially in the Commons Room, which was a marvelous place where people got together anytime of the day. It was a beautiful building with many interesting mathematical artworks scattered around. For example, the figure below right shows a trefoil knot, and a Möbius band with a fly walking around it.



The Old Fine Hall  
(photo courtesy of Lee Neuwirth)



Math decorations in Old Fine Hall  
(photos courtesy of Lee Neuwirth)

The Commons Room was often full of people, sometimes in mathematical discussions and sometimes playing games.

In the figure below (left), I am watching a Go game between Fox and Gonshor, and the figure to the right shows a game of “Hex”, or as we called it then “Nash”. (As far as we knew, Nash was the first one to invent it.)

The Commons Room was full of games, but also of mathematical discussions, for example of game theory. There was a strong game theory group headed by Al Tucker, also including Harold Kuhn.

But Nash was interested in everything, not only in game theory. As one example, when he was a freshly arrived graduate student, he managed to make an appointment with Albert Einstein, and spent a half hour or so explaining to Einstein his ideas about radiation, gravitation and friction. Einstein listened carefully for a while, and finally patted him on the back and told him to go learn more physics.

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