

Ode to Bruce Berndt

On the occasion of his 70th birthday

*It is an honor here at my alma mater
to celebrate my mathematical father.
For 70 years Bruce has been alive,
and his mid-life crisis may soon arrive.*

*It all started back
at the home of the Berndt's,
where Bruce sat at the table
in the laps of his parents.*

*It was there, as Mom and Dad
played their favorite card game,
that Bruce learned to call
the integer cards by name.*

*"Two of diamonds, three of clubs
four of hearts," he might say,
it must have made it pretty easy
for their opponents to play.*

*He told me about it,
but I have yet to delve
into how he ever learned
about eleven or twelve.*

*But in any case,
his love of numbers is long-standing,
and his facility with them
is truly outstanding.*

*We have all heard him generously
tout Ramanujan's gift,
but he often forgets to mention
that he's also quite swift.*

*When it comes to exponential sums
he pretty much knows them all:
Dedekind, Gauss, Brewer, Jacobi,
Eisenstein, and Jacobsthal.*

*For each of these,
whenever you please,
he can compute their reciprocity
with extremely high velocity.*

*As for his applications
of modular equations,
we'll hear reverberations
for many generations.*

*Whether quoting a note
that Ramanujan wrote,
or making the antepenultimate estimate
of an integral over a lemniscate,*

*his high level of precision
would confound any derision,
his answers are exact,
and his proofs are absolute fact.*

*Yes, while I was his student,
I witnessed his many mental feats
and while visiting his home,
I have also eaten many treats.*

*But exceeding all of his mathematics,
and even his butter pecan,
is the fundamental truth about Bruce
that he is a truly great man.*

*He is decent, honest, kind, and sweet,
generous, humble, funny, and neat.
He's already been honored by Guggenheim and Steele,
but tonight we honor him in a way just as real.*

*Students, colleagues, family and friends,
we have all come here to say,
"We are infinitely better for knowing you, Bruce,
so have a happy birthday!"*