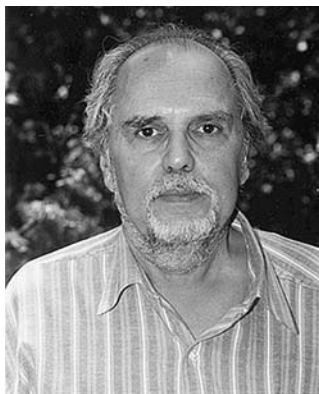


## *In memoriam*

### **In memory of Professor Victor Neumann-Lara**

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Prof. Victor Neumann-Lara  
June 6, 1933–February 26, 2004

It is with great sorrow that we bid farewell to Professor Victor Neumann-Lara, to whom this special issue is dedicated. Professor Neumann-Lara passed away while delivering his talk at the 19th Coloquio de Teoría de las Graficas, Combinatoria y sus Aplicaciones on February 26, 2004. Victor was the founder and leading researcher in his beloved Mexico of a very dynamic and important school of graph theory and combinatorics. He was born on June 6, 1933, in the city of Huejutla, Hidalgo, Mexico. In 1942 he moved to Mexico City, where he would complete his studies in mathematics in the Faculty of Sciences at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) in 1958. From 1959 on, he held several teaching positions at the UNAM, and in 1980 he joined the Instituto de Matematicas at the UNAM, where he stayed for the rest of his life.

Professor Neumann-Lara was a charismatic, generous, and gifted mathematician who, like a good wine, became better with age. As one of his last students, Amanda Montejano, said, he tricked us into believing that he was immortal. His research activity increased as he aged; it could be said that he passed away at the

pinnacle of his career. His most productive years were the last of his life; in fact the year that he published the most was 2004. Paul Erdős used to say that the ideal way for him to pass away would be at the end of a talk after posing an open problem for future generations to solve. Victor, who was a great admirer of Paul, did this almost to the word, for he died during his talk while solving a problem whose solution had evaded him for many years. As Paul would have liked to do, Victor left us wondering what he was about to prove. It is hard to imagine a better way for Victor to have left, in the middle of the conference he had founded and directed so many years, and surrounded by many of the people he loved the most, his students, colleagues, and doing what he liked best in life, mathematics.

Victor was interested in several topics in graph theory, such as clique graphs—which he started with his first graph theory student, Fernando Escalante (1946–1974), around 1969—kernels of digraphs, the dichromatic number, and acyclic sub-tournaments. He published close to 80 papers, most of them co-authored with his students and colleagues, among them B. Abrego, J. Arocha, J. Bracho, S. Fernandez-Merchant, M.E. Frias-Armenta, H. Galeana-Sanchez, S. Hazan, F. Larrion, L. Montejano, J.J. Montellano-Ballesteros, M. Pizaña, E. Rivera-Campo, and J. Urrutia. He was also interested in topology, an area in which he published at least 13 papers with R. Wilson and I. Puga. Victor's interests, however, extended beyond mathematics: he loved life, nature, and poetry. In 1986 he published a booklet of poetry, *Lineas en el Agua*, containing 18 poems written between 1980 and 1985. A different and complex aspect of his personality is revealed to us here.

This special issue of *Graphs and Combinatorics* contains a selection of the papers presented at the 18th Coloquio de Teoría de las Gráficas, Combinatoria y sus Aplicaciones, held February 24–28, 2003, in which we also celebrated Victor's 70th birthday. A number of Victor's friends from abroad, including J. Akiyama, J.A. Bondy, H. Fleischner, P. Gruber, F. Hurtado, W. Mader, J. Pach, and A. I. Weiss, delivered a series of invited lectures.

Several of the papers published here include as co-authors some of Victor's former students: "A lower bound for the rectilinear crossing number" by B. Abrego and S. Fernandez-Merchant; "Graphs of triangulations and perfect matchings" by M.E. Houle, F. Hurtado, M. Noy, and E. Rivera-Campo; "Monochromatic paths and at most 2-coloured arc sets in edge-coloured tournaments" by H. Galeana-Sanchez and R. Rojas-Monroy; and a paper co-authored by J.J. Montellano-Ballesteros and V. Neumann-Lara, "An anti-Ramsey theorem on cycles".

In addition we have the following contributed papers: "On edge-colored graphs covered by properly colored cycles" by H. Fleischner and S. Szeider; "Latin squares, partial latin squares, and their generalized quotients" by Glevsky L. Yu and Carlos J. Rubio; "Integer roots, chromatic polynomials of nonchordal graphs, and the Prouhet-Tarry-Escort problem" by S. Hernandez and F. Luca; and "Topological graphs with no large grids" by J. Pach, R. Pinchasi, M. Sharir, and G. Toth.

We would like to thank all the participants of the 18th Coloquio de Teoría de las Gráficas, Combinatoria y sus Aplicaciones and those who submitted papers to this special issue in honor of Prof. Neumann-Lara. Special thanks are due to the organizers of the Coloquio: Professors Javier Bracho Carpizo, Gilberto Calvillo Vives,

Isidoro Gitler Goldwain, Luis Montejano Peimbert, Eduardo Rivera Campo, David Romero Vargas, and Gelasio Salazar Anaya.

While physically Victor is gone, the school of mathematics he founded, his love for life, his poetry, and his mathematics remain with us. He was above all a warm person who gave us the gift of his friendship and companionship. Let us rejoice in the knowledge that we were lucky to have among us a great teacher and mathematician who will continue to lead us for many years to come.

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