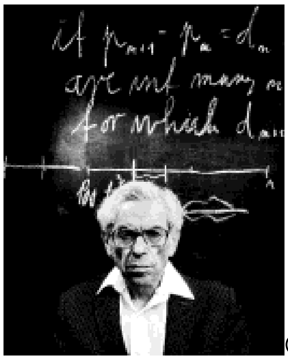

PAUL ERDÖS

Paul Erdös, mathematician, died on September 20 aged 83. He was born on March 26, 1913.

Paul Erdös was regarded by fellow mathematicians as the most brilliant, if eccentric, mind in his field. Because he had no interest in anything but numbers, his name was not well known outside the mathematical fraternity. He wrote no best-selling books, and showed a stoic disregard for worldly success and personal comfort, living out of a suitcase for much of his adult life. The money he made from prizes he gave away to fellow mathematicians whom he considered to be needier than himself. "Property is a nuisance," was his succinct evaluation.

Mathematics was his life and his only interest from earliest childhood onwards. He became the most prolific mathematician of his generation, writing or co-authoring 1,000 papers and still publishing one a week in his seventies. His research spanned many areas, but it was in number theory that he was considered a genius. He set problems that were often easy to state, but extremely tricky to solve and which involved the relationships between numbers. He liked to say that if one could think of a problem in mathematics that was unsolved and more than 100 years old, it was probably a problem in number theory.

In spite, or perhaps because of, his eccentricities, mathematicians revered him and found him inspiring to work with. He was regarded as the wit of the mathematical world, the one man capable of coming up with a short, clever solution to a problem on which others had laboured through pages of