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 is 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!"