



IN MEMORIAM

David Cohen
Senior Lecturer of Mathematics
Los Angeles
1942 — 2002

David Cohen was born on September 8, 1942, in Buffalo, New York. Later the Cohen family moved to California and Dave attended UCLA, graduating in 1965 with a B.A. in mathematics. After obtaining a secondary teaching credential, Dave spent two years in the Peace Corps teaching in a secondary school in Nigeria and helping to revise the school mathematics program there. After his return, he began graduate work in mathematics, first at California State University, Long Beach, and then at California State University, San Francisco, where he received an M.A. in 1971. His skill as a teacher already was very much in evidence when he transferred to the University of Hawaii in 1972, where he worked as a T.A. and completed one year of work toward a Ph.D.

Beginning in September of 1973 Dave assisted in the mathematics tutoring activities of the UCLA Academic Advancement Program. When an opening occurred in January 1974, he was hired by the UCLA Mathematics Department as a lecturer in charge of the department's newly organized remedial program. He quickly established himself as a very successful teacher of pre-calculus, college algebra, and calculus. Over the years Dave taught more lower division students than anyone else in the department and as one department chair remarked "he taught them better than anyone else in the department." The students found him both inspiring and demanding and also very down-to-earth. In his teaching evaluations, students often commented that he was the best college teacher they had ever had.

In addition to directing the Mathematics Department pre-calculus program, Dave was in charge of the mathematics offering of the Freshman Summer Program and the often participated in outreach activities for secondary school teachers. In 1986 he received the UCLA Distinguished Teaching Award for University Lecturers. In 1989 he was awarded the Gold Circle Award by the Undergraduate Mathematics Students' Association for his outstanding commitment to undergraduate mathematics education. In 1993 the Southern California section of the Mathematical Association of America awarded Dave their Distinguished Teaching Award. Dave was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1999.

An important part of Dave's success as a teacher was the large collection of problems on a variety of subjects that he presented to his students. From the very start of his career, Dave had collected and developed problems, which became the basis for two very successful textbooks, Pre-Calculus with Unit Circle Trigonometry, and College Algebra. A reviewer for the Mathematics Teacher commented on the Pre-Calculus book, "The wealth of problems included in the text is amazing – the breadth of applications makes it almost certain that every student will find mathematics impinging on some topic in which he or she has had a real interest. On the dimensions of clarity, completeness and richness [the book] is a real winner."

Dave died on May 21, 2002 after a long battle with leukemia which he had fought for several years. He is survived by his wife, Annie, his daughters, Jennifer and Emily, and his son, Andrew. UCLA has lost a spectacular teacher who was completely devoted to his students. All who knew him will remember well his many contributions to mathematics education at UCLA. Through his textbooks he has made a lasting impact on the teaching of pre-calculus mathematics in the United States.

Kirby A. Baker
Philip C. Curtis, Jr.
Theodore W. Gamelin