

Math Musings

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NEW MATH CHAIRMAN NAMED SKIP ALLIS SUCCEEDS JEFF CLARK

Dr. James "Skip" Allis has been named the new Mathematics Department Chairman, succeeding Dr. Jeff Clark on June 1. Skip has been with the department for five years teaching a variety of classes. He is a native of Ithaca, New York, and received his B.A. degree in mathematics from the State University of New York College (SUNY) at Potsdam. He received his masters' degree from the University of South Carolina (USC) and then returned to New York for two years to teach at Mohawk Valley Community College. He received his Ph.D. from USC with his dissertation in functional analysis.

At USC, Skip met his wife Celeste, who was working on her master's degree in mathematics. They were married in 1995. Celeste teaches mathematics at Rockingham Community College in Wentworth NC. They have no children, but have a burgeoning family of 11 cats. Check out the family photos at www.netpath.net/~allis/cats.htm. Besides his interests in cats, Skip's hobbies include woodworking and watching sports, particularly football and stock car racing.

When asked about why he chose to work at Elon, Skip said he loved the area. He enjoys working with other members of the department and especially the Elon students. Students enjoy his classes because they do not always follow a traditional format. He keeps his classes informal and encourages his students to question the lessons presented in the classroom. He says, "Students think they are never supposed to ask why a math problem is the way it is. They think they are just supposed to accept it and memorize the formula." He is constantly trying to change that misconception.

For the past two summers, Skip has pioneered a World Wide Web class at Elon, in which students can earn credit for their general studies math requirement at Elon from the comfort of their home. He says that the classes went well, but admits that he missed the interaction with the students found in the regular classroom.

Skip welcomes your visits, phone calls or comments. Visit his Web page at <http://math.elon.edu/~clyde/> or his office which will move to Duke 209F this summer. His phone number is 336-278-6250.

J. WESLEY ALEXANDER 1931-2000

J. Wesley Alexander, retired professor of mathematics, died suddenly on May 25, 2000, at UNC Hospital in Chapel Hill from complications of a head injury. He taught at Elon College for 33 years and chaired the Math Department for 12 years. For 25 years he served as the faculty representative for Elon College on the NAIA and was the eligibility chairman for NAIA District 26. He was a member of the Elon College Sports Hall of Fame and the NAIA Hall of Fame.

The son of a tenant farmer, Wes was the first in his family to graduate from college. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees from Appalachian State University. He also held a master's degree from New Mexico State University. He was known for his gentle spirit and always showed courtesy to his students and peers. He was always honest and insisted on strictly following the rules of the NAIA. It was said that he was "so straight that he made a plumb line look crooked." His classes were not easy, but he was known to be fair and always expected the best from his students. He gave all that he had to help his students grow.

Wes served as a deacon and sang in the choir at the Elon College Community Church. He enjoyed mountain music and played the guitar. Gardening was his therapy. He loved all plants and even thought that weeds should be treated with respect. Survivors include his wife Jane, two daughters, three sisters, a brother and two grandchildren.

The funeral was held on May 29 at Elon Community Church with burial in Magnolia Cemetery. Condolences may be sent to his wife at PO Box 607, Elon College, NC 27244. The family has requested that memorials be sent to Elon College Community Church, 271 Williamson Avenue, Elon College, NC 27244.

