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Mientka, Walter E.

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1

Walter E. Mientka, 88, of Lincoln, passed away on June 1, 2014; born Oct. 1, 1925 in Amherst, Mass. His most cherished early memories were as a nature counselor at Camp Menatoma, Kents Hill, Maine. Walter built a motorbike using parts scavenged from the local dump on which he rode 250 miles to and from camp for nine summers. Walter's love of camping and nature inspired him to earn an Eagle Scout. He was also a dropforge worker and milling machine operator at the Armory in Springfield, Mass. during WWII.

Walter obtained a BS from the University of Massachusetts, MA from Columbia University, and Analytic Number Theory Ph.D. from the University of Colorado where he met his wife, Gretel Muenzinger. Following teaching positions at the University of Massachusetts and Nevada he had a distinguished 45 year tenure as professor of Mathematics at the University of Nebraska from 1957-2002. During his career, Walter continued his research, taught 1000's of students, and participated in a multitude of mathematical education and service activities.



Walter E. Mientka

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His Ph.D. students included the first woman to receive a Ph.D. from the UNL Math department. He served as executive director and president of the Nebraska Academy of Sciences, president of Sigma Xi, faculty senate secretary, department liaison for Women in Science, director of the Junior Mathematics Prognosis program and executive director of the American Mathematics Competitions for 22 years and four years as executive director of the USA International Mathematical Olympiad.

Numerous honors included the UNL Distinguished Teaching Award and Nebraska Association of Teachers of Mathematics Milton Beckmann Lifetime Achievement Award, "In special recognition for a career of outstanding contributions of mathematics education in the State of Nebraska."

Walter greatly appreciated the developmental opportunities he had during his tenure at the University of Nebraska and support he received from the Mathematics department faculty, American Mathematics Competitions support staff, College of Arts & Sciences, University administration, and Mathematical Association of America. He especially wanted to recognize the excellent work of his former students and all students at large he had the privilege and honor to teach.

Walter is survived by his wife of 59 years, Gretel; his sons, Andre' and Bennet; daughter, Rebecca Whitaker; daughters-in-law, Margaret, Kathryn, and Sandra; son-in-law, Brent; and ten beloved grandchildren, Gabriel, Stephanie, Christopher, Marinda, Rosemarie, Brianna, Sarah, Duncan, Chloe, and Ethan. He was preceded in death by his second son, Timothy.

A life celebration will be held at 2 to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, June 14th, at Hilltop House, 1020 Hilltop Road, Lincoln; parking on Morton Road; handicapped parking on Hilltop Rd. Memorials may be made to the indiancenterinc.org. Condolences may be submitted online at www.roperandsons.com.

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