



MATHEMATICAL ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

YUEH-GIN GUNG AND DR. CHARLES Y. HU AWARD FOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO MATHEMATICS

The Gung and Hu Award for Distinguished Service to Mathematics, first presented in 1990, is the endowed successor to the Association's Award for Distinguished Service to Mathematics, first presented in 1962. This award is intended to be the most prestigious award for service offered by the Association. It honors distinguished contributions to mathematics and mathematical education, in one particular aspect or many, and in a short period or over a career. The initial endowment was contributed by husband and wife Dr. Charles Y. Hu and Yueh-Gin Gung. It is worth noting that Dr. Hu and Yueh-Gin Gung were not mathematicians, but rather a professor of geography at the University of Maryland and a librarian at the University of Chicago, respectively. They contributed generously to our discipline because, as they wrote, "We always have high regard and great respect for the intellectual agility and high quality of mind of mathematicians and consider mathematics as the most vital field of study in the technological age we are living in."

Citation

Lee Lorch

Lee Lorch's mathematical research has been in the areas of analysis, differential equations, and special functions. His teaching positions have included the City College of New York, Pennsylvania State University, Fisk University, Philander Smith College, the University of Alberta, Howard University, Royal Institute of Technology (Stockholm) and Aarhus University. He was at York University from 1968 until retirement in 1985 and remains active in the mathematical community.

His scholarship has been recognized by election to Fellowship in the Royal Society of Canada; appointment to committees of the Research Council of Canada; election to the Councils of the American Mathematical Society, the Canadian Mathematical Society, and the Royal Society of Canada; and by many invitations to lecture.

Lee Lorch is a remarkable teacher of mathematics and an inspiration to his students. Among those he guided were Etta Falconer, Gloria Hewitt, Vivienne Malone Mayes, and Charles Costley. He has recruited into graduate work and mathematical careers many students who would not have otherwise considered such a path. [See V. Mayes, *American Mathematical Monthly*, 1976, pp. 708–711; and P. Kenshaft, *Change Is Possible*, American Mathematical Society, 2005.]

During the early organization of the Association for Women in Mathematics, Lee gave sage advice about the value of inclusiveness in supporting effective advocacy. He is responsible for the appearance of the preposition “for” in place of the initially proposed “of” in the name of the AWM.

Throughout his career he has been a vocal advocate and energetic worker for human rights and educational opportunities. His interventions, especially in the 1950’s, led to changes in the policies and practices of the AMS and the MAA that ensured that all mathematicians could participate in the official events of these organizations. While his actions have not solved all the problems he addressed, surely his energy has contributed to much progress.

As an example, we cite events surrounding a meeting in 1951 held in Nashville. Lee Lorch, the chair of the mathematics department at Fisk University, and three Black colleagues, Evelyn Boyd (now Granville), Walter Brown, and H. M. Holloway, came to the meeting and were able to attend the scientific sessions. However, the organizer for the closing banquet refused to honor the reservations of these four mathematicians. (Letters in *Science*, August 10, 1951, pp. 161–162, spell out the details). Lorch and his colleagues wrote to the governing bodies of the AMS and MAA seeking bylaws against discrimination. Bylaws were not changed, but non-discriminatory policies were established and have been strictly observed since then.

For his life-long contributions to mathematics, his continued dedication to inclusiveness, equity, and human rights for mathematicians, and especially his profound influence on the lives of minority and women mathematicians who have benefited from his efforts, the MAA presents this Yueh-Gin Gung and Charles Y. Hu Award for Distinguished Service to Mathematics to Lee Lorch.

Biographical Note

Lee Lorch, FRSC, is professor emeritus at York University in Toronto. Born in New York, his undergraduate studies were at Cornell. He holds a PhD from the University of Cincinnati, mentored by Otto Szasz.

While in the U.S. Army during the war and shortly before going overseas, he married Grace Lonergan, a Boston school teacher. She was dismissed for committing matrimony and became the first Boston teacher to contest that policy, but lost. A plaque commemorating her pioneering struggle and celebrating her subsequent civil rights activities now adorns the entrance to a Boston public school. Their participation in the struggle against housing discrimination cost Lorch two jobs in quick succession. Moving south, their efforts to speed the end of segregation in public education, as mandated by the Supreme Court (1954), cost Lorch the last two posts he was able to obtain in the U.S. He was summoned before the House Committee on Un-American Activities and cited for “contempt” for refusing to say whether he had ever been a member of the Communist Party. He was acquitted. Grace Lorch was called before the Senate Subcommittee on Internal Security, where she also refused to answer political questions. Years

later, Lorch received honorary degrees from two of the institutions that had dismissed him. In 1959 the couple moved to Canada. Both have received awards for their civil rights contributions.

Response from Lee Lorch

While this award honors me, it gives me even greater satisfaction that, by making it, the MAA emphasizes its support for equity.

There are all too many proofs that this fight is far from over. One surrounds us here: Katrina and post-Katrina New Orleans. Why was New Orleans left so vulnerable? Why was flood control, so urgently and obviously needed, set aside? Its low-lying areas, overwhelmingly African-American, seedbeds of world famous African-American music, are ruined, their residents scattered and disheartened, their communities in peril of dissolution.

Even the AMS homepage tells us only of Tulane—not of the several afflicted HBCUs. Perhaps no one in these institutions has submitted a report. Maybe they do not feel really part of the mathematical community. Why not? What is being done about it?

“The struggle continues.” Happily, this award is a sign of which side the MAA is on.

Thank you. Thank you very much!