



Eugene Smith

By Margie Raub Hunt

Eugene P. Smith was born in Obetz, Ohio on September 30, 1919. After graduating from Hamilton Township High School in 1937, he enrolled at The Ohio State University (OSU). He graduated with a B.S. in 1941 and began teaching junior and senior high school mathematics in Ohio's public schools. Eugene married his charming wife, Clara, in 1943.

Although Smith is best known for being an outstanding mathematics teacher, he also taught gunnery and tactics, along with mathematics, at the Candidate Prep School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma during World War II, rising to the rank of Captain. He returned to Ohio after the war and continued teaching while working on his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees at OSU. He was chairman of the mathematics department at OSU's University High School for 10 years. He also served as the Supervisor of Mathematics in the Wilmington, Delaware, Public Schools for two years.

In 1961, Dr. Smith moved to Michigan, where he served as Professor of Mathematics Education at Wayne State University for 30 years. He was also a Visiting Professor in the Department of Mathematics at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. He retired in 2000, after 59.5 years of teaching.

Dr. Smith was very influential in the establishment of the Ohio Council of Teachers of Mathematics (OCTM). He was one of the twelve mathematics educators that Dr. Harold Fawcett assembled on November 4, 1950 to establish OCTM. At the time Smith was teaching at University High School and working on his advanced degrees in mathematics at OSU.

At the first OCTM conference, held at OSU on April 4 and 5, 1952, Smith was in charge of registration and arrangements. (OCTM annual dues that year were \$1.00, and one-night hotel accommodations at the Hotel Southern in Columbus (running water — no bath) cost \$5.50 for single and \$7.50 for a double bed.) At the 1953 OCTM conference, held at Capital University on April 24 and 25, Eugene Smith was in charge of the Exhibits and was the discussion leader for Junior and Senior High Arithmetic. (The dinner reservation at this meeting was \$1.75, and the luncheon was \$1.25.)

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) held its annual conference in Cincinnati from April 21-24, 1954 at the Hotel Sheraton-Gibson. OCTM held its annual spring meeting in connection with NCTM that year. At that meeting, Smith was elected First Vice-President of OCTM, and he went on to serve as President of OCTM from 1956-1958. Throughout the OCTM archives, Eugene Smith's name is found in the listings of presentations at state and national conferences. He spoke at the NCTM 1955 annual conference in Boston, and the 2005 annual conference in Anaheim, CA.

Smith was highly respected by numerous mathematics educators, because of his diligence, knowledge, leadership, and caring concern. As a result, he was asked to run for NCTM offices. He served as Vice President from 1962-1964 and President of NCTM from 1972-1974. He also served as President of Mu Alpha Theta, a national high school and two-year college mathematics honor society, from 1981-1983.

Dr. Smith was the major author of a variety of mathematics books, including *Discoveries in Modern Mathematics, Books One and Two* (Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc.), *Retriev-O-Math* (Midwest Publishing Company), *Computer Mathematics* (Midwest Publishing Company), Chapter 4 in the NCTM Twenty-Fourth Yearbook: *Linking Mathematics Education to Career Education*, and *Career Education in the Academic Classroom* (Olympus Publishing Company). Eugene was the sole author of *Creative Practice Through Magic Squares* (Midwest Publishing Company); "Strengthening Mathematics Programs for the Early Adolescents;" a chapter in *Early Adolescence, Perspectives and Recommendations* (National Science Foundation); and "Some Puzzles for Thinkers," a unit in the *NCTM Twenty-Seventh Yearbook*.

Many honors have been given to recognize Eugene P. Smith's contributions to mathematics education and leadership in the mathematics community. Among those coveted honors are OCTM's prestigious Christofferson-Fawcett Award for Lifetime Achievement in Mathematics Education. Dr. Smith received that award in 1987, and for more than 20 years he and Clara would travel from Dearborn, Michigan, to attend the annual selection committee meetings in Columbus.

Smith also received NCTM's Mathematics Education Trust Lifetime Achievement Award for Teaching (1994), and Mu Alpha Theta's Award for Wise Counsel and Leadership in Mathematics Education (1984).

Imagine the thousands of students and teachers who had an opportunity to learn mathematics from Dr. Eugene Smith during his 59.5 years of teaching mathematics. If you were among the lucky ones, then you were truly blessed to have had such an outstanding teacher. Eugene was truly a gem and a giant in mathematics education. He was an exceptional teacher, an excellent leader, an endearing friend to many, and an exemplary family man. Eugene and Clara were married for 71 years. They were blessed with one son, two grandchildren, and three great grandchildren. Eugene died on September 14, 2014 at the age of 94.

Thank you, Dr. Eugene P. Smith, for all that you have done for the mathematics community.

