



Len Pikaart

By Bonnie Beach, Greg Foley, Dave Kullman, and Steve Meiring

Leonard Pikaart III was born in Nutley, New Jersey, on January 4, 1933. After graduating from Chatham High School in 1951, Len was admitted to the US Naval Academy. He left the Academy in 1955 to marry his sweetheart, Connie. Len taught mathematics for a year in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, and he served in the Army for two years before entering the University of Virginia. There he earned a B.A. degree with distinction in mathematics, followed by M.Ed. and Ed.D. degrees in mathematics education.

In 1963, Len joined the faculty in the College of Education at the University of Georgia. Three years later, he was named Head of the newly organized Department of Mathematics Education. Under his leadership, the department created new courses in math education, established a doctoral program, and built a working relationship with the Department of Mathematics. In 1967, the University received an AACTE Distinguished Achievement Award for Excellence in Teacher Education based on a National Science Foundation (NSF) institute that Len directed. He served as Department Head until 1969 and remained at Georgia as a Professor until 1974. During that time, Georgia's reputation grew to become one of the premier mathematics education institutions in the country.

In 1974, Ohio University established an endowed chair to honor Robert Morton, who had served on the OU faculty from 1918 to 1960. Len Pikaart was chosen to be the first Morton Professor and served in that position for eighteen years. During that time a Ph.D. program in mathematics education was established at OU, modeled in large part after the program that Len had helped to create at Georgia. James Schultz, who succeeded Pikaart as Morton Professor, states, "There's no doubt that the work of the faculty Len assembled at the University of Georgia had significant impact not only at OU, but internationally."

Len directed more than twenty federally funded projects, including several NSF-sponsored dissemination projects involving systemic visualization, planning, and delivery that were forerunners of the Statewide Systemic Initiatives. One series of projects brought together teams of mathematics educators, representing five geographic regions of Ohio, to plan and execute three-day conferences on problem solving in the elementary grades (1977), problem solving in the secondary grades (1979), and microcomputers (1981). With the germ of an idea and minimal external funding, Len used the prestige of his position to leverage his own institutional resources and deliver leadership training to the next tier of statewide mathematics education leaders, always in his quiet, collaborative, team-building way.

Len was also a very influential leader in state and national professional organizations. He served as President of the Georgia Council of Teachers of Mathematics (1972-73) and the Ohio Council of Teachers of Mathematics (1982-84). He served on program committees for five different NCTM annual and regional conferences between 1973 and 1985, and he was an associate editor for *The Arithmetic Teacher* from 1967 to 1970. During Len's term as OCTM President, some informal meetings were held that resulted in the Ohio Mathematics Education Leadership Council (OMELC) being formally

established in 1987, and he served as OMELC's first President. In 1988, he received OCTM's Christofferson-Fawcett Award for Lifetime Contributions to Mathematics Education.

Len inspired others through his examples of service and leadership. As a result, an annual Len Pikaart Memorial Session, designed especially for pre-service teachers, mentors, and those new to mathematics teaching, is held during each OCTM Annual Conference. The first Len Pikaart Lecture was presented in 2003 by the OCTM President, Daniel Brahier.

Len Pikaart died of leukemia on April 14, 1992. A tribute to him in the *OCTM Newsletter* characterized him as "an idealist by philosophy, a pragmatist in his approach. He never turned aside from a professional opportunity." The writer went on to say that, "above all else, he was your friend. Len saw opportunities to help others grow to a higher level of expertise and professionalism. He saw in people potential that they themselves might not recognize. By reaching down, he could pull people up to a new level of performance."

