

## David R. Stone Recipient of Section Distinguished College or University Teaching Award



*MAA Executive Director Tina Straley and Sue Goodman, chair of the Section Teaching Award Committee, made the following remarks upon presenting the award at the March 11, 2005 Awards Presentation.*

*Tina Straley attended the meeting for the express purpose of announcing that her good friend David Stone had won the Teaching Award. Her remarks follow.*

The Mathematical Association of America recognizes the three areas in which college faculty contribute through its awards programs. We recognize scholarship through awards for writing books and journal articles. We recognize service through Section Service Awards and nationally by the Awards for Outstanding Service to a member of each section on a five year rotation and the highest award given by the MAA for service is the Gung-Hu Award. Excellence in teaching is recognized by the Sections and by the national organization with the Haimo awards. These awards are the most enjoyable of MAA programs. I appreciate being here today and given the opportunity to participate in the presentation of the 2005 Southeastern Section Award for Distinguished College or University Teaching to one of my closest friends and colleagues, David Stone of Georgia Southern University.

I am sure that you are all aware of David's contributions in service to the profession and how much he cares about our profession. David probably holds the record for continuous membership on the SE Section Executive Committee as Newsletter Editor, State Director for Georgia, Section Chair, and Governor. A few years back, David won the Section Service Award. David served on the MAA Board of Governors for many years as Governor representing the SE Section and as Chair of the Committee on Sections. He is one of the first names that comes up for special projects and committee assignments. He is currently Chair of the Liaisons Committee, one of our most important committees. Last year the MAA decided to embark on a new process of strategic planning. The Sectional Governors were asked to name a current or former Sectional Governor to represent sections on the Strategic Planning Steering Committee. I knew that David would be selected even before the Governors met and of course he was chosen. That is just an indication of the

high esteem for David held by all who have worked with him. However, the MAA is not the only beneficiary of David's service and leadership. He led the State Mathematics Coalition for many years and is still active in it, and he has been recognized for his service to GCTM.

David is a mathematician at heart and loves to work on problems. My friend, Dorothy Zinsmeister, who is now an Assistant Vice Chancellor at the Georgia Board of Regents, told me that she sat next to David at a recent meeting and he was doing math. She asked him what he was doing and he said he was working on a problem. David is always working on problems.

But what is not readily apparent to everyone who knows David is that his real passion is teaching. And he is very good at it. Whenever I have a conversation with David, no matter what it starts out about, by the end he is talking about his classes and often about something interesting that came up in one of them. David loves the combination of mathematics and teaching. That is why this award is particularly sweet and why I am so delighted to be given the opportunity to present it to David.

***Sue Goodman then made the following remarks in her citation.***

It is with great pleasure that I recognize David R. Stone's achievements leading to the SE-MAA Distinguished College or University Teaching Award. David received his undergraduate degree from Georgia Tech and his Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina. For the past 36 years, he has set a standard that few can match. His remarkable contributions to the teaching profession, public school systems and the professional community are so extensive that I can highlight only a few.

At Georgia Southern, David has been recognized for his excellence in teaching with the Professor of the Year Award in 2001 and the Award for Excellence in Contributions to Instruction in 1988. He teaches a broad array of courses from College Algebra to History of Mathematics. He established and has taught for many years a mathematics course for Honors students. He has worked with students in the MAA Student Chapter for many years and has counseled and encouraged students in a myriad of ways. He has mentored junior faculty across the country as a member of the Project NExT Advisory Board and as organizer of Project SE-NExT.

David has worked with local schools, coaching math teams for tournaments, served on the Organizing Committee and as State Director of the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, participated in the Georgia Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the Georgia Mathematical Association of Two Year Colleges, and has served as Vice-President of the National Alliance of State Science and Mathematics Coalitions. His outreach efforts have been recognized by several granting agencies, and in 1993 he received the Gladys

M. Thompson Award for Distinguished Service for his many contributions to P-12 education in the State of Georgia.

He has been Chair of the MAA Committee on Sections and member of the Board of Governors and Executive Committee. In the Southeastern Section he has served as Governor, Chair and Newsletter Editor. His exceptional service to the MAA was recognized by the Section's Distinguished Service Award in 1998.

I'd like to quote a couple of past students of David's who speak so eloquently of his extraordinary abilities in teaching.

"Having been asked to write a letter of recommendation for Dr. David Stone I find myself overwhelmed with excitement, for my story is not one that you hear about everyday. Throughout my career as a student only one subject could bring tears to my eyes and fear into my heart, and that was mathematics. From early on, the subject completely mystified me and for some reason no matter how hard I tried I seemed to always be confused. Shortly after registering at Georgia Southern University, I decided a career in computer science would be very enjoyable for me, until I discovered the series of math classes I was going to have to take. I was horrified at the thought of taking several semesters filled with math but I decided I would just have to do it. Somehow my first few semesters weren't so bad and I found myself making A's in my math classes and not hating them even though my severe anxiety showed its ugly face at every test. Then I registered for Calculus III with Dr. David Stone, a legacy in the math department at Georgia Southern University. I heard stories about how challenging the tests were going to be and how difficult the subject was but somehow even the students whose grades weren't so good seemed to have taken something away from the class that I couldn't quite pinpoint. Little did I know my life was about to completely change.

Each day I rushed across campus to make it to class on time, and to get a good seat at the front of the classroom I found myself utterly amazed with my professor. Dr. Stone would always walk into class and begin the lecture with what seemed like small talk, but somehow within five minutes every student was enthralled in the discussion and to our surprise, it always turned out to be three-dimensional Calculus. No words can describe the atmosphere in one of Dr. Stone's classrooms but if you could be a fly on the wall you would never want the class to end and yes let's not forget a math class. I will forever believe that Dr. Stone is by far the greatest professor, of any subject, that I have ever had. He has the ability to capture the attention of his students and lead them gently through the mathematical expanse that lay before them, not forcing the information into their heads, but guiding them along the path to mathematical maturity. The last day of class I walked to the registrar's office and changed my major to mathematics."

This was written by a student who continued working with David to do an Honors project in number theory, winning second place at the regional MAA meeting in 2003, and is now doing graduate work at the University of South Florida.

Another, from a student who has since completed her Education Specialist Degree in Mathematics Education and is teaching in the Georgia public schools.

“Dr. Stone is a very challenging teacher. He definitely takes thinking to the next level. He always answered my question with a question and made me think about concepts more in depth. His enthusiasm for mathematics was just phenomenal whether he was lecturing during class or carrying on a conversation outside of class. Dr. Stone is a person that gets you excited about what you are learning and knows that one is capable of thinking at the next level. Now that I look back and have taken many methods courses in Education, Dr. Stone's teaching methods were just superb. . . . Due to the fact that he made me work so hard, I felt like I was able to take a lot away from each course. I felt as though I just was not memorizing concepts. I really learned what was taught. . . . As a result of taking his courses, I feel like I have brought a lot of his knowledge into my own classroom.”

***David Stone's response to the section follows.***

We all get into this business of teaching mathematics because we like mathematics and we love sharing it with others. Then we discover how much we like to work with students – we like to see the excitement and interest and the thrill of victory when a solution is found. We love to see students grow and mature, personally and mathematically, then go out into the world and do great things. We hate grading papers, but we endure that dreary task and even try to make the results a part of the teaching process – kids who have labored over homework problems come to class primed for what's next (or primed for a fight, if the assignment was “too much”). A mathematician never runs out of neat problems to think about, all the while realizing that the subject will eventually humble anybody -- passing these experiences on to the next generation is the best job in the world.

To be recognized for doing what I love by my mathematical family -- the Southeastern Section -- is the maximum reward. I want to thank the Section and the members of the Committee for this honor. I have had many teachers who helped and guided and inspired me, but I would like to give special thanks to Ed Enochs, my major professor, and to Coach Ensminger of Hot Springs High School (who was more successful as a math teacher than as a football coach). Thanks also to my friend and colleague and now Department Chair, Martha Abell, who prepared the nominations package, and to generations of Georgia Southern faculty and students, from whom I have learned much.