



Dr. Jerry P. Becker

March 1, 1937 - April 16, 2022

Dr. Jerry Page Becker, beloved husband, devoted father, cherished grandfather, and world-renowned mathematics educator, passed away at the age of 85, surrounded by family, on Saturday, April 16, 2022, at Memorial Hospital of Carbondale, Illinois.

Jerry was born March 1, 1937, in North Redwood, Minnesota, one of four children of Elmer and Florence (Draeger) Becker. Jerry is survived by his wife of more than 62 years, Tedda (Matson) Becker, and their three children, Alison (Eric) Schmulbach, Jeffrey (Renee), and Brian, as well as twelve grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by both parents, his brother, Robert, and his sister, Ramona. He is survived by one brother, Reginald, and several cousins, nieces, and nephews.

Jerry graduated from Redwood Falls High School in Redwood Falls, Minnesota. He earned his undergraduate degree in mathematics at the University of Minnesota, his master's degree in the same field at the University of Notre Dame, and his Ph.D. in mathematics education at Stanford University.

During his early career in education, Jerry taught mathematics at the middle school and high school levels before starting his long career in academia. He held faculty positions at Rutgers University and Northern Illinois University

before joining the faculty at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale in 1979. Jerry served on the faculty for more than 40 years, leading doctoral and master's degree students and countless undergraduate students in addition to international scholars and math teachers from across the state. He remained an active member of the faculty until the time of his death. His legacy and passion for teaching live on through the students and teachers whose lives he touched. His impact on mathematics education is, ironically, incalculable.

Jerry served on the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics board of directors and as the council's representative for International Mathematics Education and served on the Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics board of directors, including a term as chair. He also served as president and as a board member of the School Science and Mathematics Association, served two terms on the U.S. National Commission on Mathematical Instruction at the National Research Council/National Academy of Sciences, and was active in organizing the annual conference, held locally, on teaching mathematics for the Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics - Southern Section and National Conferences of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

For more than 20 years Jerry also taught a 4-week summer institute at the University of Chicago with a focus on continuing education for Chicago area public school teachers. The institutes were well attended, reaching more than 75 teachers each year.

In the global arena, Jerry organized two U.S.-Japan seminars on Mathematical Problem Solving and Computers and one with Japan and China featuring leading educators from all three countries. The results of these seminars have been repeatedly referenced by experts following the publication of proceedings in the 1980s. Jerry was the world's lone mathematics educator to have attended each of the 13 International

Congresses on Mathematics Education, held quadrennially since 1952. Jerry presented lectures in Germany, Korea, Singapore, China, and Japan and authored a litany of articles published in internationally refereed journals. He also authored books and chapters of books, most recently just completing a collaborative effort with Australian scholars, titled "A History of Mathematics Education." Until his passing, Jerry also shared updates and new findings relative to mathematics education with colleagues, educators, and students globally via more than a dozen email distribution lists.

In 2021, Jerry received the Distinguished Life Achievement in Mathematics Award from the Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics and was the recipient of a Distinguished Alumni Award from the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Minnesota. Within the last two years, two endowed fellowships were created in his honor, one at Rutgers University with an initial contribution by a former student, and another at the University of Minnesota, with an initial contribution by an anonymous benefactor. Jerry was delighted to meet the inaugural fellowship recipients earlier this spring.

Beyond his passion for teaching, Jerry also enjoyed attending Saluki football and basketball games and following the St. Louis Cardinals, the Notre Dame Fighting Irish, and Stanford University Cardinal. He especially loved his Golden Gophers of the University of Minnesota.

Jerry will be remembered not only for his passion for mathematics education but for his integrity, genuine kindness, quiet thoughtfulness, smile, and sense of humor. Jerry's love of family encompassed both his immediate and large extended family in Minnesota.

Arrangements are being handled by Crain Pleasant Grove-Murdale Funeral Home. A private celebration of life may be held at a later date.

Memorials may be made to the Jerry P. Becker Doctoral Fellowship in Mathematics Education at the University of Minnesota (University of Minnesota Foundation, 200 S.E. Oak St., Suite 500, Minneapolis, MN 55455. Donations are possible also via the secure website at <https://makingagift.umn.edu/give/fund.html?id=23823>) or to the Rutgers University GSE Jerry P. Becker Annual Fellowship in Mathematics Education (Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University, 10 Seminary Place, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1183).

Tribute Wall



“ *Dr. Jerry P. Becker*

October 23, 2023 at 06:26 AM



“ *Jerry, in my heart forever. I will miss his important messages always with a pertinent math education information for all of us. Alison Schmulbach, I am very saddened to hear of your loss. My thoughts are with you. You have a sincerely friend in Mexico City. Best regards*

Yolanda Campos Campos - June 03, 2022 at 12:41 PM



“ *I completed a mathematics course with Jerry Becker, and I found his class to be amazing. In fact, he was the first teacher to demonstrate so many strategies in solving a single problem. Mr. Becker was truly unique and he will be missed immensely. My condolences go out to his family. ---Cora Pina*

Cora Pina - May 09, 2022 at 01:49 AM

SS

“ As the mathematics education faculty at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, we offer our condolences to the family of Professor Jerry Becker. While we did not have the honor of meeting him in person, we each shared in the global scholarly community that he created through his electronic newsletters. We are grateful for his continuing contributions to mathematics education in Minnesota and to the coming generations of scholars who will build upon his legacy.

*Lesa Clarkson
Sue Staats
Terry Wyburg
Erin Baldinger*

Sue Staats - May 05, 2022 at 04:36 PM

TC

“ I am sorry to hear of your loss. I grew up in a military family, and that experience ingrained in me the importance of connectedness. I hope your family recognizes that Dr. Becker's service to mathematics educators was integral to our community. Seeing one his emails in my inbox was a constant reminder that I am part of a larger cause. My sincere condolences. ~ Tutita Casa

Tutita Casa - May 05, 2022 at 08:24 AM

JL

It's incredible to hear the bad news. I just received the information you shared on April 15. I got your help and joined your email list when I was a doctoral student more than 20 years ago, really benefited a lot. My sincere condolences.

Jianhua, LI - May 08, 2022 at 11:31 AM

BR

“ I was privileged to know Dr. Becker during my studies at Rutgers preparing to teach mathematics. With sympathy, Rosemary Brown

Brown Rosemary - May 04, 2022 at 08:47 AM

LA

“ I am so saddened to hear of the passing of Dr. Becker. I was lucky enough to be one of his students at the University of Chicago. I took every class he offered and kept in touch with him long after, even exchanging emails a couple of months ago (18 years after our first meeting). I enjoyed his sense of humor and his teaching style so much. He completely reframed mathematics for me, and changed the way I thought about myself as a teacher and a student. He made me a better teacher, a better student, a better parent, a better person. He was also the first person I knew to own an electric vehicle back in 2005 -- boy, he loved that car! I hope these memories and tributes provide comfort to his family and friends. What a gift it was to know him.

Laura - May 03, 2022 at 02:07 PM

SW

“ Dr. Becker was a dedicated mathematics professor who contributed greatly to the field of mathematics education. We truly appreciated his time and hard work in maintaining the worldwide professional network in mathematics education. Through his consistent support, the field of mathematics education around the world is well connected. Thank you very much for your wonderful contribution to the mathematics education field! Wherever you are, you will always be in our hearts.

Shuhua An & Zhonghe Wu, California

Shuhua An & Zhonghe Wu - May 02, 2022 at 12:31 AM

WY

“ I am sorry to hear of the demise of Professor Jerry Becker and wish to send my deepest condolences to his family. In 2005 he was one of the external examiners of my PhD student in math education, and I am grateful for his contribution to this examination. For the past 20 years, he had informed math educators from numerous countries about new developments in math education through his distribution lists. His generous and outstanding effort will be sorely missed. (Dr Wong Khoon Yoong, Singapore)

Wong Khoon Yoong - April 29, 2022 at 11:11 PM



“ So sorry to hear that Jerry won't be with us anymore. I am a junior researcher who received a PhD in maths education two years ago. Being on his mailing list helped me a lot in my maths education career. I didn't know how old he was and didn't have a chance to meet him face-to-face. Just emailed him last week to ask for advice. Feeling quite emotional and sad to lose him. Ipek Saralar-Aras

Ipek Saralar-Aras - April 29, 2022 at 05:29 PM

AZ

“ I knew Jerry as an excellent teacher. I knew Jerry for his wonderful service to his University, his State, and his Country, and his World. I knew Jerry as a guiding mathematics educator. But my best memories of Jerry was of his nurturing abilities. He was so thoughtful, kind, and respectful. I will miss Jerry.

Alan Zollman - April 29, 2022 at 10:52 AM

BJ

“ Jerry contributed "immeasurably" to mathematics education with his list-serve, read by every one of my math-ed friends. Many years ago I was expecting to dine alone in Seattle during the NCTM National conference. I hate to dine alone--shared meals are a blessing. Among the crowd at McCormick and Shmicks I spotted Jerry, also dining alone. As I passed his table we made eye contact and he asked me to join him. I did, and we had a great time sharing stories only math nerds could.

So many of us are glad Jerry was in our lives. What a "great guy" he was.

Bill Juraschek

University of Colorado at Denver (emeritus)

Bill Juraschek - April 28, 2022 at 02:05 PM

CW

“ Dr. Becker taught an University of Chicago / CPS class I took. It was amazing watching this large class of adults who were in awe of Dr. Becker. He was definitely a Master teacher. One day we saw People's Gas trucks outside...we were trying to figure out how to tell Dr. Becker we should evacuate the building. We never did. (Lol... We stayed in those seats! I laugh every time I think of it. Almost 100 adults! That's the kind of respect we had for him. We were validated. Never invisible in his class despite the large class size. My condolences to the Becker family. I will miss his emails but forever remember his excellence, kindness and love of teaching.

Colette Wright - April 28, 2022 at 04:31 AM

BK

“ Jerry Becker was known and appreciated by colleagues in mathematics education around the world. Although we did not all know him personally, we were fortunate that he created and maintained Jerry Becker's List, which was regarded by many as the unofficial bulletin board for our profession, recording key events and activities. His selfless work connected many people together across international borders, and was appreciated by us all. Our condolences to his family. May he Rest in Peace.

Barry Kissane, Western Australia

Barry Kissane - April 28, 2022 at 12:26 AM

MM

“ We all have friends who feed our mathematical intellects; but Jerry Becher fed our mathematical souls. Condolances to his family, friends and all of us who realize we will now miss that little warmth of humanity we felt when we opened our email and found among the requests for our attention, a document, an answer, money, etc., a note from "Becker, Jerry P" sharing a thought or bit of information or invitation to another convening of mathematical minds. God bless you, Jerry.

Marilyn Mays

Marilyn Elaine Mays - April 27, 2022 at 10:27 PM



“ *Dr. Becker appeared in my life about dozen years ago in the form of an email. My mathematics professor for my MA required us to join this email group. Dr. Becker began a part of my life. I would forward his articles and I would pass on his wisdom. Thank you, kind stranger. But, you weren't a stranger. You were a friend and colleague.*

Robb Paulak - Pasadena, CA

Robb Paulak - April 27, 2022 at 06:50 PM

CA

“ *It is a rare thing when the passing of someone you hardly knew has such an impact. For much of my career as a math teacher, Dr. Becker's list serve kept me on top of absolutely everything worth knowing in the field of math education (and some other pretty enjoyable stuff too). I would also attend his sessions at NCTM conferences and was always struck by his willingness to chat with me and other attendees. As busy as he was, he always took time for us teachers. I had no idea he was a Minnesota boy. I grew up in the Twin Cities and would have mentioned it to him had I known. My heart goes out to his family. What a loss for you. What a loss for our math world.*

Cathy - April 27, 2022 at 06:35 PM

RR

“ Although I never had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Becker, I looked forward to receiving the education articles and announcements he shared with all of us higher education folks. My heart is heavy and I will miss him dearly!

*Ruth Rhodes
Professor of Music Education
VanderCook College of Music*

Ruth Rhodes - April 27, 2022 at 06:07 PM

ES

“ Dr. Becker was integral to my development as a mathematics educator. He opened my eyes to alternate viewpoints, challenged me, made me work longer and harder than I thought I could on my dissertation, and I’m so grateful I had the opportunity to learn from him. I remember he said (regarding my dissertation once it was nearly finished and I was fussing over details) “Erin, this is not your opus, this is just the beginning.” He was right. I hope I made him proud.

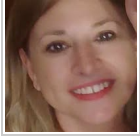


Erin Sagaskie - April 27, 2022 at 05:49 PM

PM

“ My condolences to the friends and family of Dr. Jerry Becker. I have been the lucky recipient of his emails over the years and he will be greatly missed. Please take comfort in knowing he touched so many lives.

Pam Miller - April 27, 2022 at 05:49 PM



“ *Sincere condolences
I have not met your father closely, only through his work.
I am very sorry for your loss*

Eleni Tsami - April 27, 2022 at 05:45 PM

AB

“ *I will remember Professor Becker as an
amazing teacher! I was blessed to take one of
his math courses at the University of Chicago!
May God rest his beautiful soul!* 🙏



Alyssa Blanchard - April 27, 2022 at 05:22 PM

SS

“ *Dear Becker Family,
I am so sorry for your loss.
I am a Middle School teacher and was introduced to his newsletter
emails many years ago and have enjoyed them immensely, even
though I stopped teaching Math alone 13 years ago (I've taught
Science & Social Studies for 13 yrs.)*

My sincere condolences,

*Mrs. Susan Smith
Cloverdale Middle School
Cloverdale, IN*

Susan Smith - April 27, 2022 at 05:13 PM

AS

“ *Que tristeza, gracias a él la comunidad de educadores e investigadores hemos estado virtualmente conectados. Descanse en Paz.*



Antonio Codina Sánchez - April 27, 2022 at 05:02 PM

BE

“ *I was aware of many conferences, events or Post Doc situations as a young math educator with the e-mail network created by Dr Jerry. He will be missed. Our prayers will be with Dr Jerry. I send our sincerest condolences to the family.*

Begüm..

Begüm - April 27, 2022 at 04:35 PM



“ *Dr. Becker was a very gentle, really loved what he has done over the years with retirement as a Math educator and researcher. It inspired all math teacher and educators. All loved him, he will be very much missed a lot. We all send our sincerest condolences to the family,*

SGLee

Sang-Gu Lee - April 27, 2022 at 03:55 PM

KJ

“ I will forever remember Dr. Becker as an amazingly kind person and a great educator! Thank you, Dr. Becker, for your help and support whenever I needed it. I also give the family my heartfelt condolences. -Kyungsoon Jeon

Kyungsoon Jeon - April 27, 2022 at 12:14 PM

BB

“ Love you so much, Gramps. We miss you.



Blake Matson Becker - April 24, 2022 at 11:16 PM

VM

“ Dr. Becker helped build a community of mathematics educators around the world, and maintained us informed of events, positions, conferences, newspaper stories worth reading about mathematics, school mathematics, mathematics education, research, policy... He will be missed.
we send our sincerest condolences to the family,
Vilma Mesa

Vilma Mesa - April 23, 2022 at 07:13 PM

AP

“ Jerry's contributions to math education were transformative. We remember his dedication to keeping us all informed and connected. It made us better teachers and learners. Jerry will be missed by all his colleagues in Illinois mathematics education who feel tremendous gratitude for having known and worked with him. Here is a link to an article that was written about his contributions published in December 2021: <https://news.siu.edu/2021/12/120821-Longtime-SIU-mathematics-educator-honored-for-his-contributions.php>

Adam Poetzel - April 23, 2022 at 08:57 AM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Dr. Jerry P. Becker.



April 21, 2022 at 12:34 AM

AP

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Adam Poetzel - April 20, 2022 at 09:16 PM

NO

“ Dear Tedda & family,
I just learned of Jerry's passing. I am so sad but realize he certainly spent a life well lived up to the very end. Not many of us are able to live such an admirable life time. He was such a kind soul. My condolences to you and yours.
Noreen Melges Bandh

Noreen - April 20, 2022 at 02:25 PM

RL

Dear Alison:

I am very sorry to hear that your father has passed away. I was on his list serve for many years and loved the information and mathematical treasures that he shared with everyone on a weekly basis.

Your father invited me to give the keynote address at the 22nd Annual Conference on Teaching Mathematics that he organized in 2006. He took great care of me long before the conference began all the way through to the end. It was a pleasure spending time with him and I was thrilled that he picked me to give the main talk.

In 2003 I was invited to give a featured talk during the NCSM Breakfast at the Northwest Conference in Whistler, British Columbia. The topic was on the recently revised NCTM Standards. Although I was one of the writers of that document, I felt completely out of my league and knew in advance that I was going to have trouble answering many of the questions. Your father came to the talk and provided me with a great deal of support by answering many of the questions and guiding me along. I have no idea if he knew how I was feeling but he made all the difference in the world to the way that talk went.

I will miss your father.

Ron

Ron Lancaster - April 27, 2022 at 08:35 PM

EB

Dear Alison and Family,

Thank you for sharing the very sad news on Jerry's list-serve. My heart has been heavy since I read your eloquent letter. I joined Dr. Becker's list-serve as a student teacher in 2002 and read every article he sent me since then. I grew as a mathematics teacher and as a person from reading the articles he shared. His compassion, empathy, and intellect shined through each email. Dr. Becker's spirit lives on in every mathematics educator who was on his listserve. We have all lost a friend and colleague. Blessings to the family, and thank you for sharing your husband, father, and grandfather through the last 60 years.

Elizabeth Ball - April 28, 2022 at 12:02 AM