

# A. Everett Pitcher (1912–2006)

*Steven H. Weintraub*

Arthur Everett Pitcher was born in Hanover, New Hampshire, on July 18, 1912, and died on December 4, 2006, at the age of 94.

Everett (as he was always known) grew up in Cleveland, where his father was head of the mathematics department at Adelbert College of Western Reserve University until his premature death when Everett was eleven. Everett received his A.B. from Western Reserve University in 1932, which later awarded him an honorary D. Sc. in 1957. He remembered with great fondness throughout his life how the mathematics department at Western Reserve University took him under its wing. He received the degrees of M.A. (1933) and Ph.D. (1935) from Harvard University, where he was a student of Marston Morse. After two years as a Benjamin Peirce Instructor at Harvard, Everett came to Lehigh University in 1938. During World War II he served in the U. S. Army at the Ballistics Research Laboratory at Aberdeen Proving Ground and later in scientific intelligence in the European Theatre. Everett served on the Lehigh faculty for forty years, retiring in 1978 as University Distinguished Professor of Mathematics. Even after his retirement, he continued his close connection with the Lehigh math department. Until shortly before his ninetieth birthday he came into Lehigh every day (driving himself), and even afterwards he was a regular attendee at the weekly departmental colloquia and colloquium dinners. Those of us who attended these dinners will remember what a great raconteur he was.

Everett married Sarah Mathiott Hindman in 1936. They had two children, Susan Pitcher and Joan Pitcher Morrison. Sarah passed away in 1972. Everett married Theresa Sell in 1973. Terry died in 2001.

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Everett's scientific work was mostly in topology, and especially in applications and extensions of Morse theory. *Mathematical Reviews* lists 16 publications by him, but this listing is incomplete, as Everett's earliest works predate the founding of MR in 1939. Everett gave an Invited Address to the AMS in 1955, published as "Inequalities of critical point theory", *Bull. Amer. Math. Soc.* **64** (1958), 1–30. Also particularly notable is his paper with John L. Kelly "Exact homomorphism sequences in homology theory", *Ann. Math.* (2) **28** (1947), 682–709, which marks the first appearance in print of the term "exact sequence", now ubiquitous in algebraic topology. (This term had been invented by Eilenberg and Steenrod and was to appear in their book *Foundations of Algebraic Topology*, which was first published in 1952.)

Everett chose to devote his energies principally to service, rather than research. This service was in two forms, local and global.

Locally, Everett assumed the position of head of the Lehigh Department of Mathematics and Astronomy in 1960, and held this position until retiring as chair of the Lehigh Department of Mathematics in 1978. In addition to direct leadership as department chair, he served on countless committees and acted as mathematical advisor to several Lehigh presidents. While Lehigh awarded its first Ph.D. in mathematics in 1939, before Everett's tenure as chair the Lehigh mathematics department was primarily a service department. He deserves the



**Everett Pitcher**

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**Tree dedication ceremony at Lehigh, spring 2007. Left to right: Pitcher's daughters Susan Pitcher and Joan Pitcher Morrison, and Steven H. Weintraub, Lorraine Wiedorn, Bruce A. Dodson, and Donald M. Davis of Lehigh.**

bulk of the credit for transforming it into one that is heavily involved in mathematical research.

Everett and his second wife Terry made a great financial contribution to the Lehigh math department as well, and as a result of their generosity we have the A. Everett Pitcher Professorship of Mathematics (a chaired senior position), the A. Everett Pitcher Mathematical Research Scholar Position (a rotating post-doc), and the annual Pitcher Lectures, our distinguished lecture series. This year's Pitcher Lectures were given by George Andrews, and before the second of the three lectures a tree dedication ceremony was held in Everett's memory. (This tree, bare at the time of planting, is now in full bloom and visible from the window of my office as I write this.)

It is Everett's global service that made him one of the most well-known figures in the American mathematical community. Everett served the AMS as an associate secretary for seven years, from 1959 to 1966, and then as secretary for a further twenty-two years, from 1966 to 1988. He was one of the founders of the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics (SIAM) and served on its board of trustees from 1961 to 1963. In 1985 he received the Award for Distinguished Service from the Mathematical Association of America (MAA). Everett's work for the AMS is described in his reminiscences (both personal and about the AMS) "Off the Record", in *A Century of Mathematics in America, Part III*, Peter Duren, ed., Amer. Math. Soc. 1989, which make for interesting reading.