

## **Tribute to Ken Preskenis (1940-2002).....Sarah Mabrouk**

(Ken Preskenis died within a week of our meeting at Framingham State last Fall. I missed putting this tribute to him from Sarah Mabrouk in the Spring Newsletter but I hope that people will still want to read this. His death was truly unexpected. I remember talking to him at the meeting. - Newsletter Editor)

A dedicated teacher committed to excellence. A serious scholar. A popular son of South Boston. A gentleman. Ken Preskenis died of a massive heart attack on Thanksgiving Day, 2002.

Ken Preskenis had a passion for mathematics and for sharing that love with others, especially, youngsters. A relentless pursuer of knowledge, he was a regular participant at the weekly seminars in functional analysis at Brown University. To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Weierstrass Approximation Theorem, Ken played a singular role in organizing a two-day conference in 1985 at Framingham State College, which was well-attended by high school teachers and college faculty. His extension of the approximation theorem in 1984 was a significant breakthrough.

Ken was a torchbearer in the promotion of quality in teaching and he had high expectations of his students. In fact, he expected and demanded quality and accountability both inside and outside the classroom. He always encouraged students to excel in their studies and at work.

His mathematical interests, however, were not confined to the classroom or his office. He relayed his love of mathematics to young children through the Mathematics Olympics Program that he initiated at Southie's five parochial schools while he was on sabbatical leave 11 years ago.

A South Boston Little League coach for 43 years, Ken often used baseball to promote mathematics, its power, and its beauty. He would use the sport to instill discipline, patience, and hard work, and to help players to understand mathematics and its intricate nature. An avid storyteller, he would entertain his classes with baseball anecdotes.

Ken served as the Program Co-Chair for the NES/MAA Fall 1990 meeting held at Framingham State College, which had a record number of participants; this record still stands today. A member of the Local Arrangements Committee for the Fall 2002 meeting, he was active at the registration desk, registering participants, telling stories, and meeting new members. He presented contributed papers at nearly every Fall meeting of the Section and at numerous national conferences.

After graduating from Boston College High School in 1957, Ken entered Boston College; he graduated four years later. He received his M.S. in 1967 and Ph.D. in 1971, both from Brown University. Three years later, he did postdoctoral work at Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark.

He joined the faculty at Framingham State College in 1977 after teaching at Newton College of the Sacred Heart and then at Boston College for a total of 14 years. He chaired the mathematics department at Newton College of the Sacred Heart for six years.

An author of a number of articles in analysis and mathematics education, a regular attendee and contributor at MAA/NES meetings, a South Boston Athletic Hall of Famer, and a recipient of the Michael E. Glynn South Boston Community Service Award, Ken and his enthusiasm will be greatly missed by the mathematics community and especially the Section.