

No eraser speedy enough; Menger's is custom built

By Alan Plait

Meet the instructor that can fill a blackboard and erase it faster than anyone on campus—Karl Menger, professor in the Mathematics department. As he paced nervously back and forth in front of the boards in the MC auditorium, students in the first ten rows, attending his lectures before Christmas, could hear Dr. Menger muttering about the inadequacy of standard erasers. This has all been changed, however. "Santa Claus was good to you dis year," exclaimed the ecstatic calculus wizard as he proudly wiped the board clean with a monstrous chemically treated eraser. "He has left me dis eraser in my stocking," he explained.

Dr. Menger's clothes do not seem to keep a press very long. Due to his extreme exertions at the blackboard, even the creases in his suit develop curves. His ties are never a distinctive part of his dress, but one day last week he seemed to be at a loss all day and his students firmly believed that it was because he had forgotten to wear one.

Dr. Menger received his Ph.D. from the University of Vienna in his native Austria and was made a professor in 1927.

In 1930, Dr. Menger came to the United States as a guest lecturer. During the year that he was here, he spent "a memorable New Year's Day with the internationally famous mathematician, E. H. Moore." On his return, he went westward to Japan, and thence home to the dark Austria of 1932. In 1936, Notre Dame sent him an attractive offer, and the doctor packed once again, this time taking his recently acquired family with him. After one year at the university he was made chairman of the mathematics department. During the war he was in charge of the mathematics training of the second largest group of Navy V-12 students in

the country. Chicago and IIT attracted Dr. Menger in 1946 and he came here to live as a permanent resident.

Ever since his arrival in this country the professor has been prolific in more ways than one. Last year, for example, he had eight books and articles for mathematic journals published, including a contribution to the book, "Einstein, Philosopher Scientist." Almost every student of third semester standing or higher is acquainted with his "The Concept of a Function."

With his advent at IIT, the doctor has had less administrative duties and more time to devote to his first love, the theory of curves and dimensions. He is the proponent of the profound Universal curve, which resembles a cube with a lot of holes in it. The theory holds that a curve of any dimension can be made a part of the Universal curve. "It iss zo simple you can vork it almost mitout pencil und paper." (That's all right, I don't understand it either.)

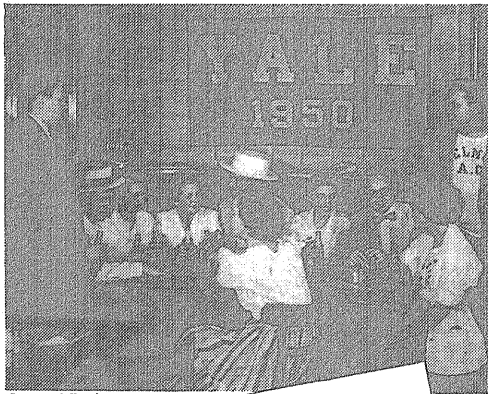
It is in the classroom, however, that the professor really shines through the student. It is reported that Dr. Menger is ambidextrous. Some rabid students claim that, as he paces in front of the blackboards, he writes going in both directions. When this writer attended his calculus class, he could have sworn that this was the case, but his hand is quicker than my eye. So, as the professor would say, "Und dot iss dot."

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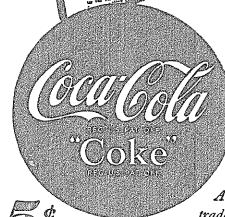


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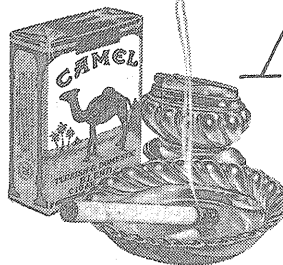
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