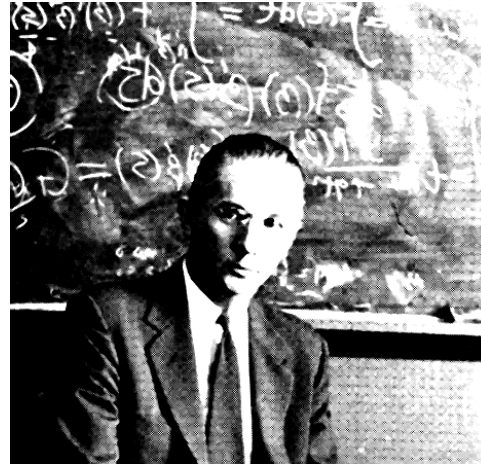


MARVIN B. SLEDD MATHEMATICS

Marvin Sledd was an outstanding teacher of mathematics, a master of applied mathematics, a problem solver, a contrarian and a model for the future of mathematics faculty at Georgia Tech.

The courses in mathematics taught by Marvin Sledd were well populated by students in both engineering and science. The courses were not easy but the subject matter related well to the disciplines and students soon recognized that success in courses taught by Marvin Sledd translated into success in their specialties. Mathematical physics was a popular course at many graduate level institutions but when the course was proposed at Georgia Tech, the physics faculty pointed to the courses taught by Sledd and the proposal was abandoned.



MARVIN B. SLEDD
1959 BLUEPRINT

Marvin had a unique background which qualified him to relate to Georgia Tech students and provide an educational experience which prepared students for industrial applications. Marvin was born on August 24, 1912 in Greensboro, Alabama, the son of Andrew Sledd and Annie

Florence Candler Sledd. He graduated from Emory University with AB in 1935 and an MS in mathematics in 1936. He was employed as an electrical engineer by General Electric from 1937-40. He was a graduate of the A,B., and C Advanced Courses in Engineering taught by the General Electric Company. From 1941 through 1943 he was an instructor in electrical engineering at M.I.T. From 1943 through 1946 he was a radar officer in the US Marine Corps Reserve. In 1944- 1946 he was an assistant professor of mathematics at Emory University. He returned to MIT in 1946 as an Assistant Professor in Electrical Engineering and received his M.S. in electrical engineering from MIT in 1948. He returned to Emory University in 1948 as assistant professor and left as an associate professor in 1950. He returned to MIT in 1950 to work on his Ph.D. in mathematics . By 1951 he had finished all of the requirements except his dissertation. He was employed by Georgia Tech in 1951 as an associate professor of mathematics. He returned to MIT during 1953-54 to complete his Ph.D. His unique experience and educational background in electrical engineering and mathematics gave Marvin Sledd a valuable insight into the role of mathematics in engineering and science.

In a letter from Herman K, Fulmer, the Acting Director of the School of Mathematics at Georgia Tech, to Dean Hefner, a request was made to promote Dr. Sledd to professor. Some excerpts from the letter by Professor Fulmer indicate the regard of the Georgia Tech community for Marvin Sledd.

“----The general opinion is that he knows more mathematics and electrical engineering than any other man in this region. He is co-author of the syllabus used as the text in Electrical Engineering at MIT He is easily the top man in our department. Faculty members from the engineering schools come to him for advice, and people from the Engineering Experiment Station refer to him many of their difficult decisions. He is doing more than any other man in our department to advance our reputation and prestige among others. -----So far as all-round qualifications are concerned, we believe Dr. Sledd will easily merit a Regent’s Professorship within the next few years”.

Marvin Sledd was promoted to the rank of full professor in 1955. In 1957 he assumed the position of Director of the School of Mathematics at Georgia Tech. Many stories abound about Marvin and code of ethics. Honesty was a very high priority with him. At the time Marvin was Director, the State of Georgia would not allow tips for services rendered while on travel on State business. Many employees disguised the gratuities by including them as part of the cost of a taxi. Marvin’s request for travel reimbursement always listed the tips separately as part of his travel expenses. The expenditure would be denied. When other administrators suggested to Marvin that he include the tips in other allowable expenses, he refused and accepted the reduced amount.

Marvin Sledd tired of the position of School Director and on November 8, 1961 he submitted his resignation to President Harrison through Dean Hefner and Paul Weber. In his usual candid manner he submitted a list of handwritten reasons for his resignation. The list included the following.

1. *J.W. Mason*
2. *Lack of understanding of the job on the part of the administration and consequent (>) absence of the support they would give if they did understand*
3. *Insufficient budget*
 - (a) *Teaching of undergraduates by other undergraduates*
 - (b) *Repeated complaints by the engineering schools about the quality of the job we do coupled with claims that the engineering schools should get the lion’s share of the money at budget time*
 - (c) *Insufficient staff and inadequate salaries (particularly for the abler men)*
4. *Excessive and unnecessary paper work*
5. *Difficulties of recruitment (money; relief of the director from teaching duties during the fall and winter quarters)*
6. *Pressure to give favored treatment to athletes*

Minor Concerns

1. *The widely accepted axiom that in any controversy the School of Mathematics is always wrong*
2. *A more realistic appraisal on the work load of time devoted to thesis supervision*
3. *Lack of coordination in the deadlines set by the President, Dean Weber, Dean Mason, Dean Hefner, Dean Goglia, the Registrar, the curriculum committee, etc.*

President Harrison talked with Dr. Sledd and Marvin agreed to remain in his position through June 30, 1962. He also requested that Dr. Sledd would reconsider his resignation and continue as School Director. In his letter to Dean Hefner, President Harrison commented on Marvin's concerns as follows: *"I recognize his convictions and problems but continue to hope that as time goes on the differences now existing between various schools on the campus can be resolved."*

Marvin Sledd was awarded the rank of Regent's Professor in 1968. He was a consultant to Lockheed -Georgia. He continued outstanding service to Georgia Tech until his retirement in 1981.

Marvin's wife was Mary E. M. Sledd. They had one child, Charles M. Sledd. Mrs. Sledd died July 5, 1988 and Marvin died October 30, 1988.