

EDITED Sobel Tribute transcription-Stephanie Cooperman

Back in 1960 I attended Montclair State College as a Math major. I ended up as a Math Ed major because mother suggested that getting a teaching degree would most likely always provide me with a job. That was very fortunate because I moved down south and teaching was the only job a woman could have (sic) that was good. I hope things have changed. I had many excellent teachers at Montclair College but in particular I was mentored by two giants in the field of Mathematics Education, Dr. Max A. Sobel and Dr. Evan Maletsky. They were enthusiastic and engaged in ways of presenting important mathematical concepts made a lasting impression upon those of us fortunate enough to have them as our teachers for our Math education courses. Additionally, I had great good fortune as being hired as their student assistant for the Science Foundation Math Summer Institutes. One of my major responsibilities was to transcribe and type the galleys of the first book in which they collaborated. "Math E. Matics" was the young student featured in most of the lessons which emphasized student discovery and group problem solving activities. Sounds like the modern times doesn't it? Max signed one of these books for me which I treasure to this day. We often investigated interesting Math relationships such as those modeled by Pascal Triangle and Fibonacci sequence which is one of my favorites. I will never forget the time when my friend Evelyn and I decided to decorate Dr. Sobel's office to show him how interesting the sequence was. We taped in inordinate number of paper bunnies on the walls, in the windows, around his desk knowing that he would be charmed and amused by our engaging and creative decorative efforts. Dr. Sobel had a wonderful sense of humor and we knew that he could only be delighted by the new office ornamentation. However, we were not aware that he would be returning to his office for an appointment where he was the subject of an extremely important interview. So here this esteemed and respected Jewish (sic) scholar in Math

education ended up being interviewed surrounded by a plethora of Easter bunnies. To this day I am not sure if he will ever forgive us. I have a picture of this but could not locate it last night. I wanted to bring it and show you. The method courses with Dr. Sobel were the best classes I took over the four-year program. He never ceased to amaze us and he instilled in us a desire to take every opportunity to engage our students in interesting, challenging and thought-provoking problems that would enable them to grasp the meaning and the concepts behind the beauty of the Mathematics and to develop the understanding that served to underpin the procedures and process that lead to solutions. The development of our student's skills was predicated upon on the core of conceptual awareness that made the learning fun and easy. Like isn't it great when a kid comes and tell you that you are their favorite Math teacher and that they always hated Math before your year. You made that much of an impression and you are a tough teacher but you made it fun and interesting and they remembered. This has been a cornerstone of my teaching for my entire career--now approaching fifty years in the classroom. Dr. Sobel's love of Mathematics motivated me to be creative, look for the way to teach outside the box and give my student the same love of Mathematics that Dr. Sobel instilled in me. His enthusiasm, excitement is at foundation of every problem, challenge and project that I have created over the years to make Mathematics enjoyable yet substantive for my students. Dr. Max Sobel has been my teacher, my mentor and my friend. I would have not become the teacher that I am without his guidance. I know I am only one of thousands that have profited from his expertise, his caring and his advice. His leadership at the State, National and International levels is unparalleled. His response to a nation at risk lead the change for ensuring that the learning of Mathematics should be based upon conceptual understanding and not rote-repetition of procedures in order to arrive at solutions without knowing why. Although his voice has been stilled, his influence will permeate

throughout the ages. I for one have been blessed to have learned from one of the best and have counted him as one of the greatest inspirations in my professional life. I am sure that I speak for all of us when I say he will be missed, he was unique and we are all honored to have benefited from his creativity. From all of us, thank you Max.