

Gerard P. Weeg

Born October 29, 1927, Davenport, Iowa; died April 10, 1977, Iowa City, Iowa, educator who contributed significantly to the development of early computer science curriculum.



Education: BS, St. Ambrose College, 1949; MS, Oklahoma State University, 1950; PhD, mathematics, Iowa State University, 1955.

Professional Experience: teaching assistant, Oklahoma State University, 1949-1950; teacher, mathematics, St. Ambrose College, 1950-1951; teaching assistant, Iowa State University, 1951-1955; Remington-Rand, Univac Corp., St. Paul, Minn., 1955-1956; Department of Mathematics and the Computer Laboratory, Michigan State University, 1956-1964; University of Iowa: director, University Computer Center, 1964-1977, chairman, Department of Computer Science, 1965-1977

Gerard P. Weeg, a pioneer in the field of academic computing, died in Iowa City, on April 10, 1977, after a long illness. Gerry's career in computing began shortly after he received a PhD degree in mathematics from Iowa State University in 1955. He spent nearly two years working at the Remington-Rand Corporation, Univac Division, in St. Paul, Minn., on the Univac 1101-a machine which later proved to be the forerunner of a long line of Univac products. Then in 1956 he moved to Michigan State University and served in a joint appointment between the Department of Mathematics and the Computer Laboratory. Soon after his arrival on the MSU campus, he became intimately involved in the university's efforts to build its own computer—a copy of the widely known ILLIAC I designed at the University of Illinois. His interests in the project were concentrated in the area of numerical analysis. Over the next few years he published several papers in the area and co-authored a well-received textbook, *Introduction to Numerical Analysis*. Attracted by earlier developments in the use of algebraic models to approach the problems of design and analysis of digital circuits, Gerry soon turned his attention to that topic. He published several early papers in algebraic automata theory, which have been, and continue to be, widely referenced works.

Gerry went to the University of Iowa in 1964 as director of the University Computer Center. He had always voiced strong ideas concerning the administration of a campus computing resource, and shortly after his arrival he began to vigorously assert those ideas. At the same time he initiated efforts to establish an academic-degree-granting program in computer science. Thus, in 1965, Iowa became one of the earliest institutions to formalize such a department. Gerry was named chairman of the new department, and he held these dual administrative responsibilities for many years.

As a teacher and computer science educator, Gerry's contributions were both universal and personal. Known as “Doc” Weeg to all, with the title signifying affection as well as honor, he attracted many bright young minds into the new discipline. As chairman of the department, Gerry guided the development of a sound academic program with solid academic standards through a difficult period of uncertainty as to which direction the new science should take. To his students, he was a superb teacher. His technical expertise and preparation combined with a natural enthusiasm and flair for humor made his classes both an education and a delight. To his colleagues, he was the epitome of a good friend, always supportive and concerned, his boundless energy immediately turned in their direction by the simplest request.

As director of the Computer Center, Gerry was instrumental in the development of grant proposals that brought funding to the university for major equipment additions, and the establishment of a regional computer center to meet the data processing needs of about 15 smaller educational institutions in eastern Iowa and western Illinois. He so forcefully advocated networking as a means of making computing resources available on a broad scale that he was frequently called upon to consult in other states attempting a similar undertaking. He was also instrumental in establishing a computer-to-computer link between Iowa State University and the Iowa campus. His leadership was strong yet flexible and his efforts resulted in the potential of academic computing being reached on the Iowa campus and others, especially as a service to many other disciplines.

Gerry Weeg's ability, expertise, and experience in computing brought recognition throughout the world to him and to the university. At the national level, he was a participant in many ACM activities, serving as a visiting ACM lecturer, 1968-1969; a visiting ACM scientist, 1969-1970, and an ACM consultant, 1970-1972. He was particularly active in SIGUCC (the Special Interest Group in University Computer Centers), having been one of the early promoters of its annual User Services Conference. In addition, Gerry was one of the founders of CONDUIT, a national organization whose mission is the generation and distribution of educational computing materials; and he was a major contributor to the initiation and success of the annual Conference on Computers in Undergraduate Curricula.¹

After he became ill with a brain tumor he wrote a set of rules for his children to follow:

Rules that my kids would receive to see them through to a happy old age:

1. Be pleasant, though this does not mean to be pleasant should another person consistently overbear upon you.
2. Be good. That is, be truthful, patient, and kind.
3. Be forth-right. In other words, be honest and sincere.
4. Be upstanding, that is, be a courageous leader; at least, be a courageous follower.
5. Be not lascivious. That is, be neither an unmarried person that carries romancing too far; nor a married person who seeks a divorce.
6. Be chaste, that is, clean and pure.
7. Be holy, which encompasses all the above.

In 1978 the University of Iowa named its new computing center on campus "The Gerard P. Weeg Computer Center" in recognition of his distinctive and outstanding contributions to the university.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Biographical

¹From Fleck 1977.

Fleck, Arthur C., "A Special Tribute to Gerard P. Weeg," *ACM SIGUCC Newsletter*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1977, pp. 14-15.

UPDATES