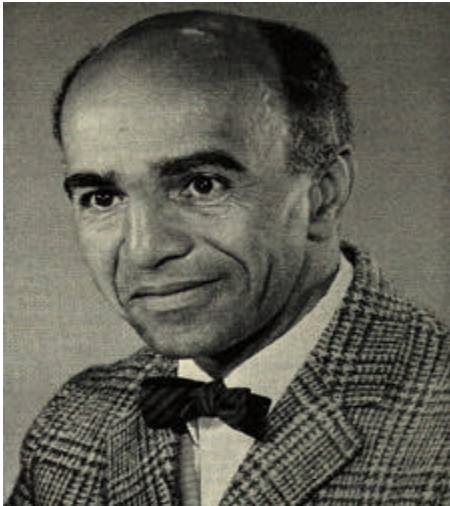# What kind of Mathematician is Blackwell?

Blackwell is a statistician. He is big on research and dives into problems as thoroughly as possible. He did a lot of research while at the University of Berkley and retired with over 80 papers and two books.

His parents who expected him to work hard and accomplish big things supported Blackwell. Not until Blackwell's junior year, after taking an elementary analysis course, did he decide that mathematics was for him. Blackwell did not like Algebra or Calculus because he felt they were useless, but loved Geometry. I assume that Blackwell is at visualizing since he likes Geometry more then Algebra and Geometry.

All through Blackwell's schooling he experienced no racism. Once he entered into the real world he faced his first barrier as a black man. He was appointed a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study in

1941, which made him visiting fellows of Princeton University. This made the president of Princeton very mad and Blackwell only lasted a year because the president did not want him to stay. Then Blackwell applied to 105 black universities because he knew he would not be hired at a white university. He was a professor at Howard University for ten years. He was loaded down with a heavy class schedule and administrative duties. He was unchallenged and not stimulated at Howard University. He still managed to write more than 20 papers and make a name for himself. Finally, he was hired at Berkley University where he was no longer burdened with his African-American heritage.

Blackwell sees his research as not so much research but trying to understand. He is not interested in research but to just understand. He works some by himself and some with others. His book <u>Theory of Games and Statistical Decisions</u> is collaboration with M. A. Girschick.

Blackwell is regarded highly by other Mathematician. He is highly requested as a lecturer or guest speaker both nationally and internationally. Both students and professor alike enjoy being in his audience. He is regarded as one of the greatest black mathematicians of his time.

Blackwell has advised more than 50 Ph.D. students including Wesley Thompson. This is an example of how excellent a teacher that Blackwell is. He is considered a natural born teacher. Until his retirement he taught every semester teaching from the most elementary of classes up to graduate level seminars. He finds every level of mathematics fascinating.

He spends the average day picking at different topics trying to understand. His papers are published on the topics of Baysian statistics, probability, game theory, set theory, dynamic programming, and information theory. At the time of an interview he said he was dabbling with "understanding two forms of the category 0-1 law (a probabilistic meta-theorem). That's at a rather high abstract level. [I was also] trying out programs for minimizing a function of five variables, looking at curves and trying various techniques (Curnutt).

Blackwell is a well-rounded mathematician. He not only can research and understand many kinds of mathematics but he is a natural born teacher. He is able to work with others on projects. With all of the research that he accomplished along with the publications he still kept his students first.

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