

What Kind of Mathematician?

Doris Schattschneider was born a daughter of two professional parents, there was no question that Doris and her siblings would be fully educated and that family expectations would be very high. For example, during Doris's youth, the Wood household revolved around lively dinner table discussions in which her father always wanted to know what had happened that day in school. If anyone would ask a question about the meaning of a word or topic, the questioner had to leave the table and look up the answer before dinner could proceed. Thus, Doris and her siblings were introduced to research skills at the dinner table. Her parents continued to support her while she went on to earn her A.B, M.A and PhD.

Mathematics came easily to Doris, and she enjoyed its challenges. In high school she tutored her peers for the mathematics portion of the Regents examinations. Teaching was in her blood, not only because her mother was a teacher, but her grandfather had been a schoolteacher as well. She was encouraged by her high school mathematics teacher; a woman who tantalized her with the suggestion that some questions not answered by algebra would be answered when she learned calculus in college. In college she enjoyed physics, but that instructor did not encourage her to pursue it. Studio art and sculpture were also her favorite activities. Doris wanted to create work rather than analyze the works of others. She finally decided to study mathematics and received her A.B. degree from the University of Rochester. She went on to receive her M.A. and PhD in mathematics from Yale University with a dissertation on "Restricted roots of a semi-

simple algebraic group.” She is internationally known for her work with tessellations of the plane and her exposition of Dutch artist M.C. Escher.

She is currently a Professor of Mathematics at Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and has taught for over thirty years.

Doris Schattschneider had more opportunities than some of the other women mathematicians that we have seen. Her parents’ support helped her and the fact that she was growing up at a time when women were being accepted more at institutions of higher learning gave her these greater opportunities.