

Morris G. Sica

1920 - 1993

PROFESSOR OF TEACHER EDUCATION, EMERITUS

B.A., Brooklyn College; M.A., University of Michigan; Ed.D., Social Science
Education, Florida State University, August 11, 1956
California State University, Fullerton From February 1, 1964 To August 22,
1983

Birth: June 3, 1920; Death: September 28, 1993

I first met Morris Sica at the initial meeting of the Division of Education and Psychology before the start of the 1963-64 academic year. Although his appointment to the faculty did not begin until the Spring Semester of 1964, Morris moved to Placentia early so that his wife, Lillian, could undertake the duties of a reading specialist teacher in the La Habra Elementary School District at the beginning of the new school year. His voluntary attendance at all division meetings in the Fall Semester demonstrated his conscientiousness, one of a number of personal qualities that account for the many significant contributions Morris made to the university in his 28 year career here.

Morris was a life-long learner who believed in using his free time to better himself. Besides attending meetings on campus in the fall of 1963, he also took courses at USC taught by Joy Paul Guilford, a renowned educational psychologist. Over the years he attended numerous summer workshops, institutes, conferences and seminars to keep well informed and current in his field. Even in the last weeks of his terminal illness, Morris was teaching himself to play the piano. My most vivid memory of Morris with respect to his conscientiousness was how he volunteered with Paul Kane to write the accreditation report on the Secondary Teacher Education Program for the State Commission on Teacher Credentialing. I remember coming to campus on Super Bowl Sunday, 1973, to do some work on the elementary teacher education report, and there were Morris and Paul in the first of many weekends and evenings preparing their document. This incident was typical of how Morris contributed to the university.

Morris was born and raised in New York City where he attended parochial and public schools. He served in the Army Signal Corps during World War II as a radio operator, rising to the rank of Sergeant. After his discharge at the end of the war, he returned to his undergraduate studies with a major in economics at Brooklyn College. Then he attended the University of Michigan to earn a master's degree in the same subject. He also took courses in education at both institutions to qualify for a teaching credential. He began his teaching career as a middle school social studies teacher at Sarasota, Florida. Four years later he returned to graduate school at Florida State University and completed the requirements for the doctor of education

degree in social science education. He did post-doctoral study at Columbia University in measurement, statistics and research methods.

Prior to coming to CSUF, Morris had extensive work experience in education. He was a research associate for one year with the Florida Education Association. Next he decided to move west and accept an appointment as assistant professor of social science at the then California State Polytechnic College in San Luis Obispo. After one year at Cal Poly, he moved east to become an assistant professor of education at the State University College of Education at New Paltz, New York. Three years later he went to Brooklyn College in New York City. His stay at Brooklyn College was also for three years. It was at CSUF, his next appointment, that Morris found enough career satisfaction in his teaching assignments to stay long term. He was a full time faculty member until 1983 when he went on the Faculty Early Retirement Program. He continued on FERP until 1990, and served on a part-time basis until 1992.

Morris was an outstanding teacher. He was always well prepared before class meetings. His students reported that he was a skilled communicator who offered them many valuable insights into the variety of approaches teachers can utilize. They considered him to be very professional and an effective role model for them to emulate in their own teaching. One of the courses in his teaching load was Research Design and Analysis, a required course for master's candidates. Most students begin the semester they take this course fearful of the mathematics involved in its statistics component. They reported that Morris was helpful, positive and, most importantly, patient. He was probably one of the few statistics instructors in the country who was able to communicate this subject clearly to students without confusing them. Furthermore, he gave them confidence working with statistics as they did their research. In fact, he inspired more than a few of his students to choose a research investigation for their thesis or project requirement. One example of how Morris was current in his teaching was that he was one of the first statistic instructors in the School of Human Development and Community Service to have his students use the University Computer Center to complete their assignments.

In addition to his excellent teaching, Morris established a remarkable record with respect to scholarly accomplishments and service to the university. He published research on the history of the United States of America flag, science learning among blind students in higher education, and the political orientation of Mexican-American and Anglo-American children. He and his associates in the Center for Economic Education, John Lafky and Sylvia Lane, published an economics examination for high school seniors. As I mentioned earlier, he was one of the primary planners of the field based secondary teacher education program that was implemented in 1973 and continues to the present. Morris was also instrumental in developing a "block program" in secondary social studies education which featured team teaching with emphasis on field work application of information presented by the instructional team in class. Ida Coppolino and Jim Cusick worked with

Morris on this pilot project which evolved into the secondary teacher education field based program. This approach to preparing teachers also became the model for the present elementary teacher education block program.

Besides his many professional activities, Morris had a full and rewarding personal life with his wife, Lillian, daughter, Valerie, son-in-law, Mark Johnson, and their two children. He was especially fond of his grandchildren, Christina and Scott. He took them frequently to Disneyland or to his farm in Thermal. Yes, Morris found the time to develop and operate a 40 acre farm where he planted a date garden and raised alfalfa. He loved to go social dancing at Disneyland, and enjoyed camping and communing with nature.

Earlier I mentioned Morris's strong belief in using free time constructively to continue learning and bettering oneself. After his retirement, he enrolled in Spanish classes at Fullerton College. Subsequently he became a volunteer to help Spanish speaking people fill out their income tax forms. He also took real estate and computer courses.

Morris Sica has left a lasting legacy to the School of Human Development and Community Service. He was one of a number of faculty members in the university's formative years who worked hard to help our pre-service and graduate teacher education programs attain state and national accreditation. He will be missed by colleagues who were the beneficiaries of his wisdom which he graciously shared with us.

Submitted by
Bernard Kravitz
Professor of Teacher Education, Emeritus
November, 1993