

## MARY ELLEN RUDIN

Mary Ellen Rudin (née Estill), Professor Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA, and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, died on 18 March 2013.



She was one of the greatest figures in set-theoretic topology and her work included solutions of a great number of difficult and well known problems. Among them is the first construction of a Dowker space (in 1955 from a Suslin line and in 1971 in ZFC), the first S-space (from a Suslin line in 1972) and a positive answer to the Nikiel conjecture (1999). The latter was one of her most celebrated results, and it was obtained at the age of seventy five. Mary Ellen's work is characterized by a number of highly imaginative constructions and a great originality, as well as a profound understanding of sophisticated set-theoretic methods.

Born on 7 December 1924 in Hillsboro, Texas in an educated family, she went to the University of Texas, where she got her PhD in 1949 under the supervision of Robert Moore. She then obtained a position at Duke University, where she met a fellow mathematician Walter Rudin (1921-2010), whom she married in 1953. In 1959 the Rudins moved to Madison and spent the rest of their working lives there. They had a lovely family life, including four children, and a huge number of friends and visitors, often staying in their house. Jointly they were a symbol of mathematical openness, while the house, a Frank Lloyd Wright design with no interior walls, was a symbol of the Rudin way of living. Mary Ellen had sixteen graduate students, many of whom became top mathematicians themselves.