

"Paul Erdős - one of the most influential
mathematicians of our times"
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Abstract:

Paul Erdos (1913-1996) was one of the most influential mathematicians of the twentieth century. This is his 100-th birthday year. A Hungarian by birth, Erdos had no permanent home. He traveled around the world constantly, lecturing at hundreds of universities, and seldom staying at a place for more than a week. On these trips he collaborated with both mathematicians and students. He was an annual visitor to UF in the Spring from the mid-seventies until 1996 and collaborated with several of our mathematics faculty. Of his research papers that exceed 1500 in number, more than half are in collaboration. While traveling, he was constantly on the look out for very young and talented mathematicians with whom he would collaborate and mold their careers. In a remarkable career that spanned the entire twentieth century, Erdos made pioneering contributions to number theory, combinatorics, graph theory, set theory and geometry. After describing his unusual life and some of his charming idiosyncracies, we will discuss some of his most fundamental contributions and ideas in prime number theory and probabilistic number theory. Both the story of the elementary proof of the prime number theorem and the creation of probabilistic number theory are fascinating, and will be described. Finally, I will also briefly describe how I met him, and how we collaborated.