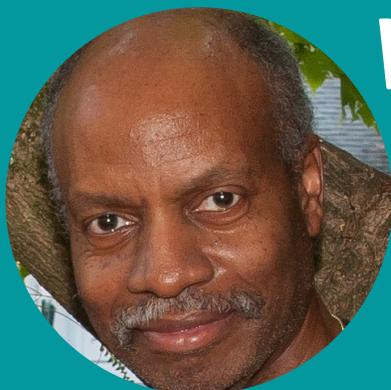


Alumni Colloquium

Sponsored by the Pitt Department of Mathematics and
Department of German

Friday, March 12th, 2021, 3:30 p.m.

CAREER: HAVING YOUR CAKE & EATING IT TOO WITH MEL CURRIE, PH.D.



Dr. Currie is a native Pittsburgher who earned a B.A. in Mathematics and Economics from Yale and his MA and PhD degrees in Mathematics from Pitt. He taught math in Germany for years, held professorships at Auburn U. and U. Richmond and then worked at the National Security Agency (NSA) for 25 years, becoming Chief of the Cryptographic Research and Design Division (The Codemakers). He received the NSA Director's Distinguished Service Medal and, in 2019, a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Association of Mathematicians. His book *Mathematics: Rhyme and Reason* was published by the AMS and MSRI in 2018 and he recently published the novel, *Just Before Too Late*.

From Mel Currie:

My meanderings began as a child in what was then called Little Italy, Pittsburgh's East End. In the generation before mine, the East End was fertile ground, on which some of the great African American musicians of the twentieth century rose up, Billy Strayhorn, Mary Lou Williams, Erroll Garner, Billy Eckstine, and my uncle, Ahmad Jamal. I followed in their wake. But their path would not be mine.

In this talk, I will try to capture the mindset that I believe was essential in balancing my interests as a human being with tending to the matter of "livelihood." I followed my nose to Yale, Gulf Oil Corporation, Germany, the University of Pittsburgh, the academic life of a mathematician in the American South and, finally, the National Security Agency, where I spent a quarter of a century. Along the way, I've tried to stay open to good things happening. I doubt that I would have become a mathematician had I not left Gulf Oil Corporation and followed my love of the German language to Germany.

Moments of creativity are rare and precious. These moments are less likely to occur if we are not flexible enough to be open to them or if we have preconceived notions about when and where they should happen. If we wish to be whole, we need creativity not just in the activities that we engage, but also in choosing which activities to engage. Most of us care about more than one thing, music, mathematics, literature, you name it.

Register for the meeting on Zoom through the following link: <https://pitt.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJEqcu-grjstGdNKqcYuij4i6YugSGo3kKxh>