

Obituary: Kenneth Mei

Professor Kenneth Mei was born in Shanghai, China, on May 19, 1932, and died in Oakland, California, on Feb 16, 2017, from health complications at the age of 84. He was the son of Ling Peifang and Denis Mei, and was the third oldest sibling of seven. Professor Mei attended Taiwan University as a student in the Department of Physics for a year before serving as an interpreter in the Korean War from 1952-54. He then moved to Madison, Wisconsin, to study and went on to obtain his bachelor's and master's degrees, as well as a Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin, completing his studies in 1962. That year, he joined the Faculty of Electrical Engineering of the University of California at Berkeley as an acting Assistant Professor. In 1973 he became a Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at Berkeley, and in 1992 he was also appointed as Professor of Buddhist Studies. He retired from UC Berkeley in 1994 and came to the City University of Hong Kong in Kowloon first as a visiting Professor, later becoming an Honorary Professor. At that time, he was also appointed Adjunct Professor at Shanghai University in China.

Professor Mei was one of the most innovative researchers in computational electromagnetics. His work over four decades led to solutions in electromagnetic problems that would have otherwise been too large even for computers to handle. Dr. Mei's Ph.D. work on formulating Maxwell's equations into integral equations, now known as the "method of moments," is credited as the beginning of the era of computational electromagnetics and perhaps one of the most important and widely used numerical analysis techniques for analyzing scattering, antenna and microstrip circuit problems. He invented the superabsorption method in 1989 and the measured equation of invariance (MEI) in 1992. The MEI method has so drastically reduced computational effort that many previously difficult large problems that were resolvable only with the service of a supercomputer can now be solved by a personal computer using the MEI method.

Professor Mei is survived by his second wife Chiu Huei-Chun from 1989, and his children (Cynthia, Audrey, and Ankai) and grandchildren (Malena Caszarry and Pia Hoffmann). He lived most of his life in Berkeley, California, and lived abroad in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Taiwan between 1994-2012.