

**LUCIEN LE CAM**  
**1924–2000**

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Lucien Le Cam died at the age of 75 on April 25, 2000, at a hospital near Berkeley, California, after a brief illness. The statistical community lost one of its most original thinkers. His work has had a profound impact in our field. Statisticians recognize him as a brilliant mathematician. His students, colleagues and friends remember him for his kindness, generosity and integrity.

Le Cam was Professor of Mathematics and Statistics at the University of California at Berkeley. He stayed at Berkeley for fifty years. His retirement in 1991 hardly interrupted his daily routine. He went to his office every day and was active until the very end. In the last few months of his life, his colleagues noticed his deteriorating health. Yet in January he made detailed arrangements for the award of the “Loève Prize in Probability” and planned the award reception. Perhaps he sensed that his end was near for he labored to finish some editorial work on a festschrift for a former student, Thomas Ferguson. He continued working until the day he was hospitalized. Also, just hours before he was taken to the hospital, he sent me via e-mail a batch of corrections to the second edition of the book *Asymptotics in Statistics* (L1990)<sup>1</sup>. Four days later, Professor Le Cam passed away. The book was published posthumously in August, 2000. As a former student of his, I was most privileged to be his coauthor on this work.

**Un fils de paysans.** Le Cam, the second of three sons, was born on November 18, 1924, in Croze, Creuse, Limousin, in central France. His parents were decent and hardworking farmers with only a few years of elementary school education. Shortly after his birth, the family moved to Felletin, a small town in central France. He grew up on a 75-acre farm that his parents leased. His family was not wealthy but self-sufficient; they owned about a half dozen cows. Sending Le Cam and his brothers to secondary school proved to be a serious financial challenge for his parents; financial considerations played an important role in shaping Le Cam’s future. Le Cam often recalled with regret that although his elder brother, Jean, was a brilliant student, he was deprived of opportunities to further his education. Jean had easily passed the competitive state examinations for scholarships, but the authority denied him the scholarship on the grounds that

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<sup>1</sup>Reference citations preceded by L refer to the list of Le Cam’s publications and writings on pages 683–687.