

JACK CARL KIEFER 1924–1981¹

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On August 10, 1981, we learned of Jack Kiefer's death. The initial shock gave way to a dismay that has not been dissipated by time, so that the loss and sorrow is felt as deeply now as then. Though what I say comes from my own experience and emotion, it is no exaggeration when I express a communal feeling that we have lost a central figure in our profession and in our lives. The personal memories that continue to flash, of times and events peripheral to our work, nonetheless connect with it and remind us that science is not a coldhearted private activity.

Each of us who knew Jack was aware of a wonderful spirit which pervaded not only his being but also the contributions he made to our field. The complete integrity and honesty we find in his written work was ever present in his personal life. The principled and nondogmatic view he had of life was the same view he had of science. Everything he did was expressed with such grace and style that our despair is due not only to having lost an intellectual force but, even more, of having lost a presence and vitality which revealed what a creative spirit is about.

His dedication to distinguishing right from wrong in science, be it in setting straight statistical methodology in the classification of mushrooms, or in combatting misunderstanding of the implications of mathematical facts about experimental designs, was the same dedication he brought to working actively to right the human wrongs of the Vietnam War and of the repression of Jews and dissidents.

The spirit which he brought to local politics in Ithaca and Tompkins County was the same spirit that covered his continual and effective activities in the Institute of Mathematical Statistics, his department, college and university (perhaps with less success since he failed to win election to the New York State Assembly as the Liberal Party candidate in 1968 though, intelligent statistician that he was, Jack had assigned zero prior probability to that event).

Jack didn't stop at arbitrary boundaries but was compelled to push to the frontiers of anything he touched in order to understand what we knew and, most importantly, what it was that we did not know. His work in statistics stands as testament to the scope of this quality—there is no shallow generalization, only deeper and deeper exploration no matter how intricate and formidable the task.

Even his hobbies would carry him well beyond casual dalliance. Jack's introduction to the fascination of mushrooms by Jacques Deny in the early 60's grew rapidly into a passion and eventually brought him from amateur status to

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¹ These three articles were presented as Invited Addresses at the Jack Kiefer Session held at the August 1982 joint meeting of the IMS and ASA in Cincinnati, Ohio. The session was chaired by Ingram Olkin.

The complete bibliography of Kiefer's works, referred to in these articles, appears on pages 424–430 and was prepared through the efforts of Roger Farrell and Ingram Olkin.