

A Conversation with William Kruskal

Sandy Zabell

Abstract. William Henry Kruskal was born in New York City on 10 October 1919. His basic education was primarily in the public schools of New Rochelle, New York, a suburb of New York City. He attended Antioch College for two years and then transferred to Harvard College, from which he received the S.B. degree in 1940 and an M.S. in mathematics in 1941. Then he went to the U.S. Naval Proving Ground in Dahlgren, Virginia, first as a civilian and later with a USN commission.

After World War II, he worked toward the Ph.D. in mathematical statistics at Columbia University, but joined the faculty of the newly formed statistics group at the University of Chicago before he completed and received his degree in 1955. He has remained at Chicago except for a summer at Harvard University and visits to the University of California at Berkeley and the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford.

Kruskal's research and teaching are closely linked. Among his primary research areas have been linear structures, nonparametric procedures, the taking of censuses, government statistics in general, the history of statistics, clarification of such concepts as representative sampling and normality, miracles and statistics, and the relative importances of cause-like variables.

From 1958 to 1961, Kruskal was the Editor of *The Annals of Mathematical Statistics*. He was a member of the 1970–71 President's Commission on Federal Statistics, out of which grew the present Committee on National Statistics in the National Academy of Sciences–National Research Council. Kruskal headed this Committee during its first six years. A different kind of activity was his editorship of the statistical part of the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* and his co-editorship (with Judith M. Tanur) of the *International Encyclopedia of Statistics*. He has for years been a trustee of the National Opinion Research Center (NORC).

He held a Senior Postdoctoral NSF fellowship and was a Fellow of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. He has held a number of offices in professional organizations, including the presidencies of both the Institute of Mathematical Statistics and the American Statistical Association.

At the University of Chicago, Kruskal chaired the Department of Statistics for six years and later was Dean of the University's Division of the Social Sciences for nine years. He also served in 1988–89 as Dean Pro Tempore of what is now the Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies. Since 1973, he has been an Ernest DeWitt Burton Distinguished Service Professor (now Emeritus).

In 1942 he and Norma Jane Evans, alas no longer alive, were married. There are three children: Vincent Joseph, Thomas Evan and Jonas David.

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