

IN MEMORIAM: DR. ZOLTAN KENESSEY

1928–1998

On Thursday, June 4, 1998, Dr. Zoltan Kenessey, internationally renowned statistician and leader in the field of statistics, died at Calvary Hospital in New York City after a courageous eleven-month struggle with brain cancer. He will be widely remembered for his academic skills and also for his warm and enthusiastic personality.

Zoltan had enjoyed a long and distinguished career, which brought him to many countries and which enabled him to develop contacts in all regions of the world, contacts that often developed into long-lasting friendships. Born in Hungary, Zoltan began his professional career in the 1950s as an economist with the Hungarian Statistical Office, after having received his Ph.D. in economics from Karl Marx University. Early on, his interest in international cooperation was manifest, and fluent as he was in several languages, he was given responsibility for the international relations of that organization. He was able to bring Hungarian statistics into the broader international arena, which was a unique feat in the context of iron curtain countries. He also started out in two statistical areas that became a lifelong interest; namely, input–output analyses and the history of statistics. Already in those days, his leadership qualities, among other things, became apparent as he created the first working group on the history of statistics and became the founder of the Econometric Laboratory in Budapest. Also, he served as editor-in-chief of the *Statistical Review* (from 1939 to 1967), and he published widely.

In 1967 he decided to further spread his wings and became Assistant Director at the United Nations Statistical Office in New York, a position that he held until 1975. One of his outstanding achievements during that period was his work on international prices and rates of exchange. He initiated a ground-breaking study in this area, and the resulting publication of *The International Comparison Project*, co-authored with Irving Kravis of the University of Pennsylvania, remains a classic. The international statistical community owes him a good deal for this initiative, as do analysts all over the world (both in international organizations and in academia) in view of the enhanced international comparability of statistics that came about as a result.

A next important step in his career came in 1976, when he moved to the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System in Washington, D.C., where he became Senior Economist. In this position, his responsibilities included capacity utilization statistics and publication of the monthly Industrial Production Index.

In 1991 he retired from the Federal Reserve System. While others would have judged such a long and outstanding career a more than sufficient contribution to society, Zoltan decided to embark on yet another important mission. He assumed the Directorship of the International Statistical Institute (ISI), headquartered in the Hague, the Netherlands, and he served that organization from 1991 until his

retirement at the end of 1997. He brought important changes to the ISI, modernizing it and transforming it into a leader in its field. He was particularly proud of his achievement in putting the ISI on financially sound footing again, as was needed to develop the statistical initiatives to be expected from such a leading institution as the ISI. Thus, he was able to initiate Cutting Edge Conferences addressing the most acute end-of-the-century problems in statistics, such as relevance–quality–timeliness, statistical confidentiality, the future of statistics, and stock market indices. He greatly broadened the geographical reach of the ISI and, establishing a series of annual briefing seminars for the heads of statistical institutions, he was able to achieve a new equilibrium between developed and developing nations.

Dr. Kenessey was not only active in his official positions. He also contributed greatly to the international community of statisticians. He was a long-standing and very active member of the IARIW and served as a member of the Editorial Board of the Review, as a member of the Council of the Association, and as Chair of the Council. He was much in demand as organizer of sessions for the Association's biannual conferences and as discussant and author of papers for these occasions.

He published, lectured and taught widely during his career. His book *The Process of Economic Planning* advocated a market-oriented, flexible participatory approach to the controversial issue of planning in capitalist democracies; most recently, he edited *The Accounts of Nations*, to which he contributed a history of national accounts. In his numerous articles, he explored the development of the concept of statistics, with valuable studies of outstanding individuals in the history of the field. At various times, he was adjunct professor of economics at New York University, Columbia University, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of the District of Columbia.

Zoltan Kenessey will be remembered by many, not only for his contributions to the development of statistics, but also as a warm and enthusiastic person, always ready to encourage new ducklings in the pond. I personally cherish the recollection of the first occasion I met him, at the 1983 IARIW conference in Noordwijkerhout, where he invited us warmly to come and visit him and his spouse Stephanie in the States. Little would we know then that the future would bring him to Holland, and us to the States. Nevertheless, we remained in close contact, and I look back in fond memory of the frequent occasions on which we discussed so many topics of mutual interest.

He is mourned by his loving wife Stephanie, of Chevy Chase; his children Stefania, of New York City, and Alec, of Budapest; his son-in-law Andrew; his brother, Valentin, of Zurich, Switzerland; and two grandchildren, Dora and Jordan.

The funeral service, which was held on Tuesday, June 9 at 10:00 A.M. at the National Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C., was a moving occasion, in particular through the eulogy by his son, the music composed by his daughter, and the poem read by his granddaughter. The burial took place later that afternoon at the Wesley Cemetery in Prince Frederick, Maryland.

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TRAVEL GRANT
for the
IARIW 26th GENERAL CONFERENCE IN CRACOW, POLAND
27 August–2 September 2000

The *Nancy Ruggles Memorial Fund* provides a grant for one person to attend the General Conference of the International Association for Research in Income and Wealth. The next conference will be held in Cracow, Poland, 27 August through 2 September 2000. The grant will be awarded competitively on the basis of a paper judged by the Trustees of the Fund.

Applicants for the grant should:

- * Submit to the IARIW Secretariat an unpublished single author original paper on a subject relevant to the interests of the Association. (See the inside cover page of the *Review* for the address and a description of the Association's fields of Interest.) A C.V. should accompany the paper. The deadline for paper submissions is February 15, 2000.
- * Be working, on a permanent basis, in a country outside Western Europe, North America, Japan, Australia and New Zealand.
- * Be under 35 years old.

The grant is intended to contribute to the cost of airfare, conference fees and hotel accommodation up to a limit of US \$2,500. The successful applicant will be expected to present his, or her, paper at the Conference.

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