

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION STEVEN H. CHAFFEE

(1936-2001)

Steven Chaffee, Janet M. Peck Professor of International Communication Emeritus, died suddenly in Santa Barbara, California on May 15, 2001 of a circulatory disorder at the age of 65. He retired from Stanford in 1999 to be the first holder of the Arthur N. Rupe Chair in the Social Effects of Mass Communication at the University of California Santa Barbara.

Steve was the pre-eminent figure among his generation of communication researchers. He was a generalist whose interests cut across the entire breadth of the field, but whose knowledge, ability, and intellectual rigor enabled him to work with the skills of a specialist in whatever field of research he pursued.

Steven Chaffee was a native Californian, born in South Gate. He first came to Stanford as a doctoral student after earning a bachelor's degree in history at the University of the Redlands, a master's degree in journalism at UCLA, working as a reporter and editor for several small newspapers in Southern California, and serving in the navy. He earned his Ph.D in Communication at Stanford under Wilbur Schramm and Richard Carter. In many ways his approach to the field was deeply influenced by Schramm's immense catholicity of interest and Carter's philosophical and methodological rigor and insistence on exhaustive explication of theoretical concepts.

Steve left Stanford for the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where he rose in rank to become Vilas Research Professor and Director of the school. At Madison, he began an extraordinary program of intellectual inquiry that echoed a reply that his mentor, Wilbur Schramm, gave to a Stanford administrator who inquired about the scholarly program of the Institute for Communication Research, which Schramm headed. "Our program of research" said Schramm, "is whatever the researcher happens to be interested in at any particular time." And so it was with Steve, whose research at Madison extended from studies of media effects to family communication patterns, and on to what became his great intellectual passion, political communication, for which he received the Murray J. Edelman Career Achievement Award from the American Political Science Association in 2001. Steve Chaffee was to become one of the great shapers of the field.

In 1981, Steve returned to Stanford to take on the post that Wilbur Schramm established, Director of the Institute for Communication Research, and several years later he was appointed to the chair that Schramm once held, the Janet M. Peck Professorship. In subsequent years, Steve was to serve as department chair.

There was no better teacher and mentor of doctoral students in communication research than Steve Chaffee. He spent untold hours talking with doctoral students about their research, whether for his own seminars, those of his colleagues, or dissertation projects. His knowledge of the field was comprehensive and generally far ahead of the academic journals in the field because of his work as a reviewer of manuscripts. He was a stickler for precision, detail, and clear-headedness from his students, but in return he was

lavish with his time and attention. No fewer than 50 of his students currently hold tenured professorships in the field. Steve was a firm believer in the apprenticeship model of graduate training, and it was common for his doctoral students to publish jointly authored articles, often with Steve as second author.

There was no more visible person in his field than Steve Chaffee. He served as President and was elected a Fellow of the International Communication Association (ICA). In 1992 he received the ICA's B. Aubrey Fisher Award for service to his students. Among his many other honors was the 1999 Paul Deutchmann award for excellence in research from the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

Steve edited *Communication Research*, one of the most prestigious journals in the field, and served on the editorial boards of many of the leading journals. He was as generous with his time as journal editor and manuscript reviewer as he was as mentor to graduate students, and he conducted lengthy and detailed correspondence with authors to ensure that their articles were both methodologically sound and carefully written. His reputation as a reviewer of manuscripts was extraordinary. It is estimated that he reviewed well over 1000 academic manuscripts, with the certainty that he improved every one, whether or not it was accepted for publication.

An endorsement from Steve Chaffee was absolutely reliable. He was scrupulously honest, and as a result, his judgment was absolutely dependable. By training, experience and personal predilection, he was an empiricist, but whether out of intellectual curiosity or a feeling of responsibility for the field, he familiarized himself with qualitative, theoretical, and other non-empirical approaches. While he would never become a convert, his view of the field was generous enough to accept the existence of methodological approaches that he did not personally embrace.

Steve was deeply and personally engaged with his work, and with his colleagues and students. In recent years he worked on the intellectual and institutional history of the field of communication research, and almost every day he would appear in a colleague's office doorway with a broad smile, and begin a sentence with "Did you know that ... T" as he went on to narrate a new discovery. For a while he conducted noon-time departmental volleyball games, and his favorite sport seemed to be two-person volleyball, a brutal game that he pursued with the same intensity as his research. He was rarely defeated by any of the graduate students, and none of his faculty colleagues was brave enough to challenge him.

He loved words and facts, and his memory for both was so passionate as to be almost promiscuous. He was addicted to Scrabble, and he seldom set foot out of the house on Sunday mornings before completing the San Francisco Chronicle and New York Times crossword puzzles. He took unseemly delight in challenging a crossword-addicted colleague with questions such as "Wasn't 43 across in yesterday's Times clever?" on most Monday mornings. He could do the same with baseball and football, and he seemed to have remembered the dialog from every movie he had ever seen.

Steve managed to balance the seriousness and intensity with which he pursued the academic life of the mind with a puckish wit, of similar intensity, with which he pursued recreation. He looked forward to the annual gathering of his extended family in Yosemite Park, where no trail went unwalked, no vista unviewed, no volleyball unsmashed.

Leaving Stanford was not an easy decision, and true to form, Steve explained it to his colleagues using the dialog from the film "Godfather," as "an offer that you can't refuse," by which he meant among other things, that there would be considerable resources at his disposal to support interesting research. Steve hated writing research grant proposals, and considered them a waste of time that could better be spent actually conducting research and working with students.

Steven Chaffee is survived by his wife Debra Lieberman, and their son Eliot, three adult children from an earlier marriage, Laura Friedrichs, Adam Chaffee, and Amy Chaffee, three grandchildren, a sister, Elaine Kem Brooks, and a brother, Henry Kem Kinghorn.

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