

John F. Henry: 17 April 1943–26 September 2020: A tribute

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With the death of John Henry at the age of 77, the economics profession lost a fine scholar and the dissenting economists' community, one of its most courageous and outspoken voices. I first met John when he was doing a PhD at McGill in the 1970s with my great friend and contemporary, Athanasios 'Tom' Asimakopulos, as supervisor. I read and commented on drafts of his dissertation on JB Clark and the origins of neoclassical economics as they emerged. Thus began our deep friendship of nearly 50 years.

John was first and foremost an extraordinary teacher as the testimony of former pupils and teaching awards he received confirms. Because of his correct but unfashionable views he was unable to get a job in Ivy League or leading state universities, so he taught at Sacramento State College from 1970 till 2003 with a teaching load at least twice those of the 'top' universities. This did not prevent John from writing two classic books, *John Bates Clark*, published by Macmillan in 1995 and *The Making of Neoclassical Economics*, published by Unwin Hyman in 1990 and reprinted by Routledge in 2011. He also published many articles on the history of economic thought, economic history and political economy. Some were jointly with former pupils, especially with Stephanie Kelton (née Bell). With John's support, Stephanie came to Cambridge in the 1970s to do an MPhil where I taught her. Stephanie and her family remained close to John, Charlene and their family; Stephanie's children thought of Charlene and John as 'surrogate grandparents'.

John read extremely widely and deeply, not only in the economics literature but also in history, philosophy and theology, all of which enriched his understanding of the important issues on which he taught and wrote. He was a true polymath, a modern renaissance man. His contributions were recognised both by his universities (after retiring from Sacramento State, he taught at the University of Missouri at Kansas City until 2014 and then was a Senior Scholar at The Levy Economics Institute, Bard College, New York) and the profession at large – for example, he received the Veblen Commons Award of the Association of Evolutionary Economics in 2016.

John was extraordinarily courageous and outspoken on many issues of social injustice, both in the university community and the community at large. But his most outstanding traits were kindness, concern and care for others. I received from him a letter dated 14 September, the contents of which completely overwhelmed me. When leukaemia, diagnosed in 2013 as 'relatively benign' turned 'aggressive and terminal', he forwent treatment and set himself a 'to-do' list from which the letter to me came.

He and Charlene Heinen were happily married for 41 years. He has two daughters from a previous marriage.

To have known John was one of the greatest privileges of my life. John was a remarkable teacher, scholar and human being.

Acknowledgement

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