

Tribute to Hujer

Please publish this as a student's tribute to a master teacher on his 85th birthday, Sept. 18.

I was privileged to have Dr. Karel Hujer as a professor during my time at the University of Chattanooga (1958-1962). It is a measure of his stature as a teacher that he brought me to enjoy the study of scientific fields for which I have very little natural aptitude.



This enjoyment was largely due to his fascination with and love of these fields: He would explain the history and philosophy of science to us and make us wonder at the "fantastic gravitation" of black holes, the temperatures at the cores of stars and the emptiness of interstellar space. All the while, he was "always chasing this bad spelling" and grammar although his native language is not English.

In class, he would often write down two numbers the length of the blackboard (almost), consider them for a microsecond and multiply or divide them with a speed that would have made the world's most advanced computer blow all its relays. He sometimes said, "And so, you see, answer is ..." as though a little sad that we didn't see or comprehend the order of the universe as he does.

He, indeed, comprehends that order with the precision of a great scientist and contemplates the heavens with the awe of the Hebrew poets. The most valuable lesson he taught is that science and religious faith are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, the more one learns about the birth and death of stars and the motions of galaxies, the more one is moved to say, in the words of one of his favorite psalms: "When I consider thy heavens ... (Psalms 8:3)

After college, I moved on to graduate work and teaching, but I have had the good fortune to remain friends with Dr. Hujer and his wife, Harriet. Thus a ginger lily with fragrant white blossoms moved from my garden to his and now back to mine, where it had frozen out. In Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince*, a young extraterrestrial visits Earth and befriends the narrator (as well as a philosophical fox and a garden full of roses). As he prepares to leave Earth, the little prince explains that the narrator will have stars like nobody else's because stars will now remind him of that friendship.

I, too, have different, special stars for the same reason!

Happy birthday, Karel, and many more!

— Linda R. Wheat

Sewanee

At 216 Hillcrest

Sept. 21, 1987

Dearest Hal,

What a precious and inspiring Birthday greetings that came on the very day the 18th and what a superb overview of your blessed scholarship. May the Supreme Spirit of the Universe ever guide you to the glory of creation. I thought it may be interesting to you if I write this expression of my gratitude on the feet of Linda Wheat's story who majored in French. In deep gratitude for you being our inspiration French will ever be our first language. Continued blessing to you, your beloved Suzanne and pleasure Merritt for both of us.

Affectionately, Karel and Harriet