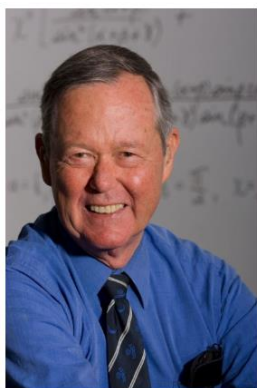


## Remembering Professor Jeremy Kilpatrick – A Tribute by Vilma MESA

### Dr. Jeremy Kilpatrick



September 21, 1935 - September 17, 2022

I met Jeremy in 1992 in Colombia during a national symposium for teachers organized by “una empresa docente” a research center at the University of Los Andes, my alma matter. I don’t remember the day exactly, but it must have been a chilly Bogotá morning in the conference room of our research center. Jeremy was leading a workshop on assessment (the standards were about to be released by the NCTM) for 40 plus teachers who flew from all over the country, and I was assigned to be his support person. As with so many other things, I had no idea of how momentous and significant that visit was. He brought with him applications for a Master of Arts program at the University of Georgia, UGA. It took me a year to send the application and another to get funding once I was admitted. I became his master’s student in 1995.

On Saturday September 1, 1995, my 15-month-old daughter, my mom, and I flew to the United States so I could start the program. But because I had packed the visa papers in my checked luggage, we lost our connection from Miami to Atlanta. I called Jeremy to let him know the news; he said I should not worry and that he would be there to pick us up—almost six hours later. We did not know how important college football was, but the day we chose to arrive to Athens was a home UGA Bulldogs game, so there were no hotel rooms! Jeremy and his wife Cardee hosted us for that weekend. Ana Sofia played with Bart’s and Jud’s toys; Cardee made blueberry muffins for breakfast, we laid down on the front lawn, and were introduced to the neighbors. We were grateful then, but over the years, I’ve come to understand how special this was; Jeremy treated us as family, even though we barely knew each other. Academically he was respectful of my own interests and very generous with his time; he saw me as a whole person, with a life, a culture, hopes, and ideals. And he nurtured them.

Jeremy made major contributions to the field in history of mathematics education, curriculum, and problem solving. Before I met him in person, we had read his *History of Mathematics Education* chapter (Kilpatrick, 1992b) in which he masterfully traced our origins as a field and recounted much literature that had shaped the field until then—almost 90 years of history. Later, he and George Stanic shepherded the publication of the momentous two volumes on the *History of School Mathematics* (Stanic & Kilpatrick, 2003), an enterprise that started in 1993 and resulted in “38 chapters...written by 53 authors... who were assisted by 64 designated consultants, 29 others who responded to drafts, and more than 130 individuals who provided information or other assistance” (p. xi). Jeremy wrote many more historical articles and

chapters; in many edited books, his is the chapter that recounts historical developments in our field (Kilpatrick, 1985, 1992a, 2000; Kilpatrick & Izsák, 2008; Stanic & Kilpatrick, 1992). Likewise, before meeting him, I read the *Curriculum and Evaluation Standards* (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1989), a publication that revolutionized how we thought about curriculum and its purposes. I was very happy to learn that this was one of Jeremy's textbooks in his curriculum class at UGA, the other being *Curriculum development in mathematics* (Howson et al., 1981), a one of its kind book on curriculum projects covering a long period from early 18<sup>th</sup> century to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. He participated actively in the 2000 revision of the *Standards*, supporting the work of its research component (Kilpatrick et al., 2003) and the significant *Adding it Up* (Kilpatrick et al., 2001) which synthesized much research into the famous strands of conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, strategic competence, adaptive reasoning, and productive disposition, strands that have paved the way to much research on curriculum and instruction. We read drafts of these texts when we were in his seminars. I read much of his work on problem solving as I advanced my master's thesis; he let me study what I wanted to learn, offered design suggestions, and guided the analysis. And he patiently read all my drafts.

As an English and Math major from Stanford, Jeremy loved writing and the English language. What I have learned about English comes from his careful detailed editorial annotations to my really poorly written assignments and papers, and his knowledge of history of words in English. He loved searching for words, looking for its uses in the *American Heritage Dictionary* (one of the first books I purchased when I started my academic career), and the parsimony that English affords to convey ideas. I did have to forget much of the language mannerisms I learned from reading French and Spanish scholarship—often wordy and obscure; Jeremy favored synthetic writing and directness in the presentation of ideas—writing qualities that I am still striving for today.

As an advisory, Jeremy was “off hand” meaning he allowed his students to pursue the work they wanted to pursue. From time to time, he would suggest readings or propose alternatives, but he did not impose his own agenda. In the UGA' doctoral program, it was customary to write a preliminary exam on a topic that would later become a literature review for a dissertation project. I decided to pursue different work after writing that preliminary exam. Jeremy did not question my decision, and instead enthusiastically supported my interest in studying textbooks from the TIMSS project. He was sure to nominate me for workshops and awards and write any recommendation letters for opportunities that I did not know were open to me. At every single conference he made sure I met academics that I should meet: Judy Sowder, Carolyn Kieran, Ole Skovsmose, Rolf Biehler... and many many more. I spent six months at Michigan State University working with Bill Schmidt with his textbook collection; and that work became the basis for my dissertation.

I wrote the following memo in November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011 as part of the process of writing a chapter for his Festschrift book (Silver & Keitel, 2015), reflecting on Jeremy's approach to mentorship:

This is a piece about Jeremy not about me. But in hindsight the unusual circumstances of my life make more poignant the qualities that Jeremy exhibits as a professional, a teacher, a mentor, a collaborator, and a friend. Jeremy is so humble, in his incredible knowledge of people and the world he listens, he never appeared to me as this stuck-up scholar or as the inaccessible person. I don't think I have seen him irritated, except once when I told him that Les Steffe had suggested that I work with him on some teaching

Vilma MESA

experiment. Jeremy said: “No! You are my student.” I was startled—I thought it was just a, you know, change of boss kind of thing. Now I know that we academics take pride and full responsibility for *our* students. We nurture them, we guide them, and they sort of become extensions of ourselves. Not quite but very much like children! I learned that from Jeremy then, how to care for my students, how to make sure that they carry on his legacy, and to feel, as I did then, that he would ‘fight’ for me and that I needed to strive to make him proud”

I met my future husband, Pat Herbst, in the program—Jeremy and Cardee were so happy for us; they, and the Wilsons, Jim and Corene, were our surrogate parents and witnesses in the courthouse, when Pat and I decided to get married. We told them that we were not planning to do anything, but they would not hear about that! Jeremy and Cardee hosted a ring exchange lunch at their house, and together with Jim and Corene, they threw the biggest party ever, in the Wilsons’ backyard, and invited all the department and our friends. It is just such an incredible gesture, again, of love, family, connections. We kept in touch throughout the years through annual Christmas letters, a tradition I learned from both families; we met at conferences and caught up with all the news. Cardee was very active politically and she and I shared love for swimming. As Cardee’s health declined, Jeremy travelled less. The last time they saw our family was in the ICME in Hamburg. Cardee was on a wheelchair, and Jeremy was patiently taking her places; we had ice cream with our children and had the loveliest time together. I saw his dedication to Cardee and that for me continues to be an example for how partners treat each other. So many lessons!

I kept in touch calling them with some frequency to find out how he was doing, especially after their oldest son, Judson, died. After Cardee died, I kept calling but I started to notice his rapid decline. His caregiver, Gabby Jackson kept us informed; thanks to her, we were able to be by his side on the morning he died; it was a beautiful goodbye, a special moment for us, to be with our academic father as he left this earth to reunite with his beloved Cardee, and to oversee us.

Pat and I carry his legacy; one of my main goals, as an academic, as an editor, as a mentor, and as a partner, is to always make him proud.

We love you, Jeremy; until we meet again.

Vilma Mesa

School of Education & Mathematics, College of the Arts, Literature, and the Sciences  
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA

## References

- Howson, A. G., Keitel, C., & Kilpatrick, J. (1981). *Curriculum development in mathematics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kilpatrick, J. (1985). A retrospective account of the past 25 years of research on teaching mathematical problem solving. In E. A. Silver (Ed.), *Teaching and learning mathematical problem solving. Multiple research perspectives* (pp. 1-15). Laurence Erlbaum Associates.
- Kilpatrick, J. (1992a). "America is likewise bestirring herself": A century of mathematics education as viewed from the United States. In I. Wirszup & R. Streit (Eds.), *Developments*

- in school mathematics education around the world* (Vol. 3, pp. 133-145). National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.
- Kilpatrick, J. (1992b). A history of research in mathematics education. In D. Grouws (Ed.), *Handbook of research on mathematics teaching and learning* (pp. 3-38). Macmillan.
- Kilpatrick, J. (2000). Research in mathematics education across two centuries. In M. A. Clements, H. H. Tairab, & W. K. Yoong (Eds.), *Science, mathematics and technical education in the 20th and 21st centuries* (pp. 79-93). Universiti Brunei Darussalam.
- Kilpatrick, J., & Izsák, A. (2008). A history of algebra in the school curriculum. In C. E. Greenes & R. N. Rubenstein (Eds.), *Algebra and algebraic thinking in school mathematics* (Vol. 70, pp. 3-18). National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.
- Kilpatrick, J., Martin, W. G., & Shifter, D. (2003). *A research companion to Principles and Standards of School Mathematics*. National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.
- Kilpatrick, J., Swafford, J., & Findell, B. (2001). *Adding it up: Helping children learn mathematics*. National Academy Press.
- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. (1989). *Curriculum and evaluation standards for school mathematics*. Author.
- Silver, E. A., & Keitel, C. (2015). *Pursuing excellence in mathematics Education: A Festschrift to honor Jeremy Kilpatrick*. Springer.
- Stanic, G., & Kilpatrick, J. (1992). Mathematics curriculum reform in the United States: A historical perspective. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 5, 407-417.
- Stanic, G. M., & Kilpatrick, J. (2003). *A history of school mathematics*. National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.