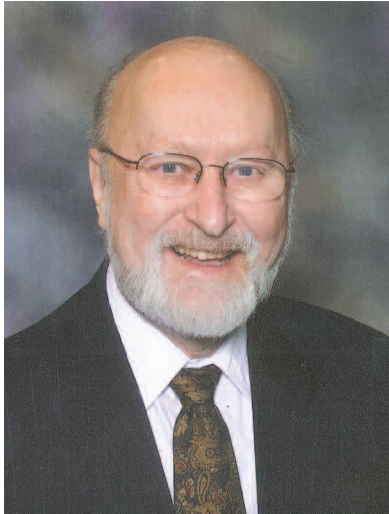


***Kappan* Columnist Gerald Bracey Dies**

By Joan Richardson, *Kappan* editor-in-chief

Professional skeptic and *Kappan* columnist Gerald W. (Jerry) Bracey, 69, died unexpectedly on Oct. 20 at his home in Port Townsend, Washington.

Arrangements are pending and are expected to be private. A scholarship/fellowship in his name will be established by the Education and the Public Interest Center in Boulder, Colorado. Information about making a contribution is available at <http://epicpolicy.org/>.



Gerald W. Bracey

“He really was a national treasure,” said his longtime friend David Berliner, professor of education at Arizona State University. “He was irascible and he was fearless. He had the energy to go after people, he was really good at digging out the facts, and, fortunately, he was almost always right.”

“Filling the void is going to be really difficult,” Berliner said.

Author and lecturer Alfie Kohn’s report of Bracey’s passing on his Twitter page summed up Bracey as eloquently as anyone has: “Spirited crusader for accuracy, integrity; denounced false claims, misuse of stats; made the right enemies.”

Bracey summarized the reason for his work in a recent interview published in the *PTLeader*, the newspaper in his new hometown: “There is only one misperception really, and that is that standardized tests are scientific and objective and are adequate instruments to evaluate children, teachers, schools, districts, states, and nations.”

From that simple point, Bracey made a career out of examining the numbers that others used to criticize American education and American schools. He came to national prominence in the early 1990s when he boldly went against a tide of political opinion and challenged assertions that American schools were failing.

“So many people have said so often that the schools are bad that it is no longer a debatable proposition subject to empirical proof. It has become an assumption,” he wrote in “Why Can’t They Be Like We Were?” a *Kappan* article (October 1991) that came to be the first of 18 Bracey Reports on the Condition of Education. (The 2009 Bracey Report will be published in early November by the Education and the Public Interest Center at <http://epicpolicy.org/>, said Kevin Welner, director of the center.)

During the 25 years of his association with *Kappan*, Bracey wrote more than 180 columns and 18 Bracey Reports on the Condition of Education. His first *Kappan* article was “Some Reservations About Minimum Competency Testing,” published in April 1978.

“His deep understanding of research and the clarity with which he expressed it, coupled with his concern for and understanding of children and learning, made an impression on the editors. It made so great an impression, in fact, that when (*Kappan* editors) Bob Cole, Pauline Gough, and I began thinking about someone who could scan the ever-expanding field of educational research, share what he found there with the generalist readers of the *Kappan*, and do it with grace and clarity, our first choice was Jerry Bracey,” said former *Kappan* editor Bruce M. Smith.

“It was a choice that occasionally led to controversy, for Jerry was nothing if not outspoken. But it was never a choice we regretted,” Smith said.

Bracey's first Research column was titled "My Brother's Keeper and My Grade-Point Average" and appeared in November 1984.

"I'm proud that Jerry's regular column in the *Kappan* started during my editorship," said former *Kappan* editor Bob Cole. "Jerry didn't suffer fools at all. He burned hot; he was fiercely bright and absolutely relentless. You didn't want to pick a fight with Jerry Bracey when he was playing on his home turf — and because of his research and preparation, most times I had the feeling that he was playing on ground of his choosing."

When a new *Kappan* debuted this fall, Bracey's column was re-named Skeptic's Corner and selected to appear in the digital edition because the editors believed that his loyal followers would lure readers to the new format.

Bracey's November and December columns were already completed and edited at the time of his death and will be published as planned.

"If you measure a person's life by the impact they had on others, then Jerry's life rests at the top of that continuum, although knowing Jerry, he would question how we could make an assessment like that and what research could possibly support that finding," said PDK Executive Director Bill Bushaw.

Bracey and his wife of 31 years, Iris, moved from Virginia to Washington in the fall of 2008. In typical Bracey fashion, the couple researched "favorite places to live," honed in on Port Townsend after its name kept popping up, and twice visited the area before deciding it would be their new home. Iris Bracey describes it as a "funky artists' colony" that draws an eclectic mix of residents.

Besides his wife, Bracey is also survived by two stepchildren, Kira Petrie and Noel Petrie.

A biography of Bracey's work is available at www.huffingtonpost.com/gerald-bracey.