
Memorial Session for George Cobb



(George Cobb, 1947 – 2020)

George Cobb

- Education
 - B.A., Russian, Dartmouth College
 - M.S., Biometry, Medical College of Virginia
 - Ph.D., Statistics, Harvard University
- Professor of Statistics, Mount Holyoke College
- Influential, visionary statistics educator
 - Expository writer
 - Conference presenter
 - Textbook author

Self-description (“Along the way ...”)

George Cobb is Robert L. Rooke Professor of Statistics at Mount Holyoke College. He is inaugural winner of the USCOTS Lifetime Achievement Award, an ASA Fellow ('93), former ASA vice president ('01-'04), ASA Founders Award recipient ('07), former member of the National Research Council's Committee on Applied and Theoretical Statistics, and founding chair of the ASA/MAA Committee on Undergraduate Statistics. Along the way he has (slowly) written or helped to write a handful of books, has (slowly) grown to enjoy collaborating with attorneys on legal cases, has (largely) overcome his terror of public speaking generally and of testifying in court in particular, and he has (reluctantly) come to recognize that, for him, despite his Quaker upbringing, the sight of an apple cart triggers happy fantasies of how to upset it.

Speakers

- Allan Rossman, Cal Poly – SLO (chair)
 - Nathan Tintle, Dordt University
 - Lisa Kay, Eastern Kentucky University
 - Jeff Witmer, Oberlin College
 - Michael Lopez, NFL/Skidmore College
 - Nick Horton, Amherst College

 - Audience members
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Some more tributes

- Memorial website: georgewcobb.com
 - Amstat News obituary:
<https://magazine.amstat.org/blog/2020/07/01/re-membering-george-cobb-1947-2020/>
 - *JSE* interview:
www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10691898.2015.11889729
 - eCOTS memorial session:
www.causeweb.org/cause/ecots/ecots20/program/memorial
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Ph.D., Harvard University
M.S., Medical College of Virginia
B.A., Dartmouth College

Things he loved....

- Family
- Friends
- Colleagues
- Statistics
- Teaching and mentoring students and colleagues
- Nature/ Hiking
- Writing
- Side hustle working on court cases
- Traveling (He's been to Russia, South Africa, Australia, France, Belgium, New Zealand, Switzerland, Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Morocco, etc.)
- Lake house
- Anything by Charles Dickens and all the Harry Potter books
- Banjo and bluegrass
- Pimento Cheese
- NPR, MSNBC
- Josh Simpson Planets
- Dogs (Fred, Shatzi, Cliffy, Ryan, Chloe, Tessa, Tony, and Penny)
- SLAW
- Mount Holyoke College, George School, Dartmouth, MCV, and Harvard
- North Carolina BBQ
- Ogunquit Maine, Philly, New Orleans, North Carolina, Virginia
- Making people laugh and making people comfortable
- Writing to the local newspaper



Paul Velleman

- “George changed the way we thought about teaching and wrote that in ways that were new and stunning to those of us who read him.”

Bob Hayden

- “George had a rare gift for entertaining people while making them think at the same time. He often told audiences they were doing it all wrong and needed to change, yet they walked out of his talks laughing and smiling.”

Ann Watkins

- “George truly was the Mozart of our profession: profoundly original, lyrical, incomparably influential, and delightfully complex.”

A story from our interview

AR: I think you've already revealed many things that will come as a surprise to JSE readers, but a standard "pop quiz" question of mine is to ask you for something about yourself that is likely to come as a surprise to those reading this interview.

GC: Back in my hippie days (I actually *did* go to Woodstock!) when I was long-haired, bearded, bell-bottomed, and living in Richmond (VA) in the late 60s, I was headed for the bus station late one Friday night when I was grabbed from behind by two tipsy rednecks, while a third put a gun to my head, saying he was going to blow my (participle) head off. Needless to say, my heart and brain froze. What came out of my mouth was "I hope this isn't going to take very long. I have to catch a bus."

Fortunately, we eventually parted company on friendly terms, after they had showed me that the gun really was loaded.

AR: Wow, mission accomplished: I am surprised! And of course I'm delighted with the outcome of this encounter. I hope that you succeeded in catching your bus.

GC: I did, and the bus ride was uneventful, but after I got off the bus and was walking to my parents' house, a cop apparently thought I looked suspicious, and pulled over to question me. Another happy ending, albeit on a lesser scale this time: He gave me a ride the rest of the way home.
