



**Philip Jason Clark**  
1920 – 1964

### **RESOLUTION OF RESPECT**

**PHILIP JASON CLARK**, respected ecological biometrician, was fatally injured while walking home from his office on Christmas Eve, 1964. He has made significant contributions to human genetics, physical anthropology and community ecology. His primary goals were to create mathematical models for the calculation of departures from randomness in ecological phenomena, particularly spatial distribution.

Philip Jason Clark was born January 28, 1920, in Takoma Park, Maryland. He grew up near Chicago, spending the summer months at a home on the shores of Lake Michigan. His undergraduate training began at the University of Chicago and was completed at the University of Michigan in 1948, after he had served a year and a half in the United States Navy. He pursued graduate studies at the University of Michigan with Dr. Lee R. Dice, his major advisor. He was awarded a M.S. degree in 1950 and the Ph.D. degree in 1953. He remained at the University of Michigan as Junior Biologist in the Institute of Human Biology until 1955, when he took a Postdoctoral Fellowship in Statistics at the University of Chicago. His teaching career began at the University of Oklahoma in 1956. A year later he joined the Michigan State University faculty. His research and teaching talents were quickly recognized in the Department of Zoology and he was promoted in four years from assistant to full professor. Shortly before his death, he returned to Michigan State University after a year's sabbatical leave at the University of

North Carolina, in the Department of Biostatistics, where he held a Science Faculty Fellowship from the National Science Foundation.

Philip Clark was concerned with the orderly logic of statistics and mathematics and he used his knowledge of them for the purpose of untangling the complexities of the biological universe. He frequently mastered special areas of mathematics in order to apply them to biological problems. His first postdoctoral associations with Lee R. Dice led him into problems of genetics and differential fertility in human populations. This interest in human genetics continued into an extensive study of human twins. Data from his human population studies also provided him with a unique approach to species frequency distribution. Without relinquishing his interests in the analysis of human population genetics, he most recently emphasized strictly ecological problems.

The scope of his interests and competencies are reflected by the variety of journals to which he has contributed: *Ecology*, *Science*, *Human Biology*, *Eugenics Quarterly*, *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, *Animal Behaviour* and *American Journal of Human Genetics*. The significance of his investigations are revealed by the inclusion of a paper on spacing in plants with F. C. Evans in Hazen's book of readings.

Upon his return from sabbatical leave at North Carolina, Philip Clark had expressed an enthusiasm for applying his new skills and critical insight to certain ecological problems which had stirred his interest for many years. One problem was the selective advantage of social behavior. Although he recognized many selective advantages to social behavior after it had evolved, he hypothesized that social groups initially arose from a reduction in the probability that any single individual will be preyed upon when associating with other conspecific individuals. This initial selective advantage provided by aggregating, enabled the elaboration of social behavior. He also had plans for developing new techniques to assess interspecific associations. Just before his death, he was working on a problem of character displacement, which was to be illustrated by latitudinal differences in morphological variability among snakes.

Philip Clark's professional advice for biometrical problems was widely sought and readily given to students and colleagues. To students he had an unmatched capacity for inspiring and motivating interest in all phases of biology and related sciences. Through his desire to have them learn and become proficient, he gave them time and encouragement. He shared his ideas with kindness, patience, and generosity. Although he demanded a high standard of performance from his students, the competence and graciousness of his instruction was an example to which they aspired without reservation.

The magnitude of the respect felt for Philip Clark at Michigan State University is illustrated by the large number of graduate student guidance committees upon which he served: as many as 50 at one time. He was recognized as a valuable contributor to graduate education by biologists in various fields, not only for his unique abilities in an important and complex area, but also for his willingness to give his time unselfishly to aid and train students. His quick perception of problems and thorough, gentle questioning guided students to analyze and understand the quantitative aspects of their biologic problems. He made biometrics lively and exciting. New and often startling ideas were sometimes presented as an outrageous

and unexpected possibility, which became quite probable during the course of his logical analysis.

His high esteem as a colleague stemmed particularly from his outstanding integrity. Dry, subtle humor and personal warmth were put to the service of excellence and to the rejection of carelessness, superficiality, and hypocrisy. The design and analysis of his own work as well as that done under his guidance has significantly influenced the direction and quality of many scientific investigations and publications. Although he gave counsel and companionship to colleagues generously, his productivity was sustained by an active intellect and a capacity for long hours of strenuous work. Whenever a new idea struck him—in the middle of the night, during discussions, while walking home—he would work on it immediately until it was appropriately formulated. It was a delight to be with him at such times and pursue the concept with him to a logical (often a statistical) test.

Philip Clark's zest for life was evident in the pleasure he derived from being with his family: his wife, Deborah, and three daughters, Katherine, Edith and Judith. His informally hospitable family reflected his pleasure in creative and unsophisticated activities. The home garden and the childhood farm in western Michigan provided them all with many delightful hours in planting trees, riding horses, keeping bees and sawing firewood. A quiet winter's evening spent studying and listening to Bach's music in the company of his family and before their ever-burning fireplace was one of the ultimate pleasures of his life. An assortment of wild and domestic animals shared their home—an incongruous menagerie that offered his family and friends a touch of comedy and a deeper appreciation of living creatures. His family has shared his dedication to human betterment and the preservation of natural resources. (Prepared by his colleagues)

