LSA STATISTICS
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

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FRANK LAD

(Frank with Treaty of Waitangi Pou)

Frank Lad graduated with his Masters in Statistics in 1973.

He has had a full career in academia since attaining his masters in statistics. He is currently a Research Associate of Mathematics and Statistics at the University of Canterbury

QUESTIONS

What made you choose your program?

"Intellectual excitement and clarity of subjective probability via LJ Savage and Bruno de Finetti."

Based on what you know, would you pick the same career path?

"I've been a lucky boy with an enchanted life. While at UM I got to work on a survey study in the rural health centres of northern India via my research fellowship in the School of Public Health Center for Studies in Population Planning. Subsequently learned Hindustani at the South Asian Studies Centre at UM, and eventually travelled widely throughout India. Also travelled in Africa, South America, far Asia, and Europe (France and Italy). Lectured in Utah. Cross-country skied and backpacked extensively through Utah and the Wind River Range of Wyoming. Learned French and Italian. I once gave a lecture in the great hall of the Sorbonne. Lectures throughout Italy. Ended up in New Zealand. No, I wouldn't change it. Wouldn't call it a career but a life. Now tending my garden and tutoring kids in arithmetic and beyond."

What is your favorite part of your experience in the program?

Reading Frank Ramsey, "Truth and Probability" which opened my eyes."

What do you know now that you wish you knew during your time in school?

"Now I know nothing, and wish I'd known that then."

How did the statistics program prepare you for your career?

"Taught me to think and to dodge the noise of America."

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Frank Lad (MA Stats, 1973, PhD Econometrics, 1974) has had an intriguing career of research and teaching at universities throughout the world. This has included notably two series of three lectures at the Ettore Majorana Centre for Scientific Culture in Erice, Sicily, and a lecture on the Calibration of Probabilities at the Grande Salle of the Sorbonne. At Erice, he lectured positively on computational forms of Bruno de Finetti's "fundamental theorem of probability", and critically on the developments of Bayesian networks and causal inference. He has also spent a year working at the Federal Reserve Board of Governors in Washington, D.C., in the Special Studies Section.

A keen advocate of the subjectivist ideas of Bruno de Finetti that he learned from Bruce Hill and William Ericson while at Michigan (1970-74), he is the author of a challenging text, Operational Subjective Statistical Methods: a mathematical, philosophical, and historical introduction, New York: John Wiley, 1996. More recently, he has produced a fundamental challenge to widely held misunderstandings of quantum physicists in the book JUST PLAIN WRONG: the dalliance of quantum theory with the defiance of Bell's inequality, London: Austin Macauley, 2024, which he recommends to you. He has an array of intriguing research articles, including "Extropy: complementary dual of Entropy", from Statistical Science, 2015. This does not involve a proposition that there are forces that decrease the entropy in physical systems, as is proclaimed by AI "brains". The complementarity recognizes that what we observe to be happening, for which we provide "p's", is accompanied by what we observe not to be happening, for which we provide "(1-p)'s". There are implications for our assessments of tail probabilities in statistical forecasting.

Lad currently resides in Christchurch, New Zealand, continuing past retirement from the University of Canterbury as a research associate. His teaching is now limited to tutoring neighborhood children in arithmetic and beyond.