Henry Kendall 1926–99

MIT professor Henry W. Kendall, a 1990 Nobel Laureate and long-time environmentalist, died while diving in February. He was 72 years old.

Along with Jerome Friedman and Richard Taylor, he was one of the key members of the team studying the scattering of high-energy electron beams at the then new two-mile linear accelerator at SLAC, the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, which in 1967 found the first experimental evidence for hard scattering centres deep inside the proton. These centres were to be identified as quarks. Prof. Kendall studied mathematics at Amherst College, graduating in 1950, and earned a physics PhD at MIT in 1955. He taught at Stanford from 1956 to 1961, before joining the MIT faculty in 1961 then becoming a full professor in 1967 and the J.A. Stratton professor of physics in 1991.

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A founding member of the Union of Concerned Scientists in 1969, Prof. Kendall served as its chair for the past 25 years. He was deeply involved with arms control and nuclear power safety issues. He played a leading role in organizing scientific community statements on global problems, including the Call for Action at the Kyoto Climate Summit in 1997 and the World Scientists’ Warning to Humanity in 1992. He was on a panel of scientists who briefed President Clinton on the dangers of global warming in 1997. For 10 years Prof. Kendall advised the Department of Defense as a member of the Jason Group and the Institute for Defense Analysis.

In addition to the Nobel Prize, he received the Bertram Russell Society award in 1982, the Environmental Leadership award from Tufts University’s Lincoln Filene Center in 1991, the Ettore Majorana-Erice Science for Peace prize in 1994, the Award for Leadership in Environmental Stewardship from the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future in 1997 and the Nicholson Medal for Humanitarian Service from the American Physical Society in 1998.

In addition to his intellectual accomplishments, he was an accomplished mountain climber, scuba diver and photographer. During his college years he co-authored successful books on shallow water diving and on underwater photography. Later efforts included Energy Strategies: Toward a Solar Future in 1980, Beyond the Freeze in 1982, Fallacy of Star Wars in 1985 and Crisis Stability and Nuclear War in 1988.