

Jaap Diedrick Snoek Memorial Minute

Written and read by Peter Pufall

November 29, 2023

Jaap Diedrick Snoek was born in Eindhoven, The Netherlands in 1931. As a youth he experienced the Nazi occupation during WW II, and during his late teens the rebuilding of The Netherlands' cities. In 1950 he emigrated with his father and step-mother to the United States. His father died shortly after they settled in Cleveland, Ohio. His step-mother resumed her nursing career to support Diedrick's college education.

He completed his undergraduate studies in the Spring of 1954, at what was then Western Reserve University, and, that Fall began his graduate studies in psychology at the University of Michigan. Diedrick's first year at university was busy. In addition to earning his M.A., he became a naturalized citizen and married Barbara.

He began to forge his academic career as he pursued his Ph.D in Social Psychology. He was a Teaching Assistant and Fellow in his first year, a Research Assistant at the Research Center for Group Dynamics over the next three years and from 1959 to 1962 he was the Study Director at the Institute for Social Research. After earning his Ph.D in 1960 he continued as director of the Institute and became a lecturer in Michigan's Department of Psychology.

In 1962 Diedrick joined the Smith College faculty as an assistant professor in the Psychology Department. He and Barbara settled into a faculty house overlooking Paradise Pond and across Paradise Road from the Quad which their children, Eric and Martha,

visited frequently. In fact, Eric had his own cubby with a napkin and napkin ring in at least one of the Quad houses.

Diedrick was promoted to associate professor in 1969 and to full professor in 1978. His research interests were always guided by his core interest in social functioning. During his first decade at Smith he continued the research on interpersonal attraction he began in graduate school. Over the last two decades at Smith his teaching and research interests in social psychology focused on his emerging interests in life span development and women's gender roles. The latter interests led to a publication on self disclosure among adolescents with one of his advisees, Esther Rothblum.

Diedrick chaired the Department of Psychology twice. However, I suspect that being one of the founding members and co-directors of the Project on Women & Social Change was more agreeable personally and fulfilling professionally. The project brought together faculty from a cross section of departments to work collaboratively on projects of common interest. The fact that it generated a series of interdisciplinary publications testifies to his success as co-director.

Diedrick taught introductory courses in psychology as well as basic courses in social psychology. Over the years his courses, as his research, incorporated his emerging interests in life span development and the roles of women in American society.

Shortly before he retired he teamed up with Fran Volkmann to teach Behavior in Organizations. The class examined case studies and when they finished reading a case study Fran would ask, "What should this Manager do next?" Before asking his question I can imagine Diedrick leaning forward, smiling, and, as he briefly fixed on each student asking, "And how does she feel about it?"

Diedrick's teaching and research were certainly driven by his commitment to the equality of women and men. That commitment was rooted in and cultivated by his commitment to the Quaker tradition. In fact, in a brief description of his life he lists his personal participation in Quaker organizations in the same paragraph as and before he lists his memberships in professional Psychological organizations.

My wife and I got to know Diedrick personally after Barbara died and he had moved back to Ohio. He generously contributed to a college scholarship fund we had set up with another couple to help minority youth in Springfield defray some of the expense of college. Each year he would send a generous gift and a personal note of encouragement. One year he gleefully announced that he had remarried and that he was emotionally reborn.

Diedrick died in early September of this year. A colleague, Don Reutener, captured Diedrick brilliantly but simply by observing he was a "kind man". He was indeed. His life embodied the Quaker tradition. He was a Friend.

Peter B. Pufall
Emeritus Professor of Psychology
Smith College