

Preface

“All my friends!” These were nearly the first words I ever heard come from Asher Peres’s mouth. It was at a conference in Maryland in 1994 honoring the 83rd birthday of John Wheeler. The first morning of the meeting I spied Asher walk out of the lecture hall and into a long hallway where, in the distance, he saw a group of old colleagues. His words came out so spontaneously and so lovingly it left a mark on me. I thought, “What a wonderful way to lead a life!—to have results that effect the world over, to travel the world reporting them, to see each conference as a family reunion.” Asher was a man of family—his blood family in Israel and his family of physicist colleagues throughout the world. He nurtured all of us, and we are what we are in large part because of him.

When this collection of papers started its formation, it was meant to be a happy occasion: Asher’s 70th birthday festschrift. Sadly, Asher left us January 1st of this year, just 29 days shy of his 71st birthday, and the festschrift appears only now. But we hope it will still stand as the happy and lighthearted tribute it was originally meant to be. In these volumes, we have collected 25 original papers devoted to subjects Asher loved—quantum mechanics, quantum information, electromagnetism, and general relativity. In addition, we have included Asher’s autobiographical essay, “I Am the Cat Who Walks by Himself.” It starts the celebration off.

In that essay, Asher ends with these words, “The rest of my story is in my formal CV.” And what a story it is: More than 270 publications and his famous textbook *Quantum Theory: Concepts and Methods*. His research ranged from early results in the theory of gravitational waves, to calculating nuclear fusion-cross sections, to fundamental work in quantum chaos, to partially fathering the field of quantum information theory, to many things further still. Particularly in fundamental quantum theory, it seems there is no subject he left untouched. His life was indeed a wonderful one.

What would Asher do if he were to see this collection of papers? It is only a guess, but I can imagine him reading them, protesting some, shaking his head a little here and there—just as he would at any

conference—and more often than not, pulling a small sheet of paper from his shirt pocket to record a calculation that came to mind in his reading. Most of all, I imagine him looking up from his desk, seeing us in the distance, and saying in delight, “All my friends!”

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