

Foreword

On that day in February 1979 as the scientists of Chimie Physique II arrived at their office they could tell from just looking at the faces of those already there that for their colleague Pierre the long struggle was finally over. It was not a surprise. First his closest friends, then progressively more and more colleagues from Brussels and from the international statistical physics community had helplessly watched Pierre's fight with his grave illness. The struggle lasted for more than a year, during which, in full consciousness, supported by the constant, active, and loving presence of Annette, Pierre never gave up.

The death of a young person at the height of his career, yet with so many things still to be done and so many plans still to be realized, remains the most shocking phenomenon of Nature. The only thing we, his friends, can do is to keep his memory alive forever.

Pierre was an accomplished humanist and scholar. He was gifted with an incredible number of rarely encountered qualities. He had deep intuition and originality; yet he carried out his abstract ideas to the very last detail of calculation with an astonishing virtuosity. His unusual grasp of all problems related to statistical physics made him the ideal person with whom to discuss one's problems. If an idea had been cleared by him, chances were that it would turn out to be correct. His criticism was sharp and bold, yet never did he become polemic. He was always the friendly, cordial, deeply humane person that we were accustomed to greeting in the corridor every day.

When we sent out a call for papers for this special issue of the *Journal of Statistical Physics*, we were not surprised to receive a massive and enthusiastic response. The resulting collection of outstanding contributions very closely reflects the wide variety of Pierre's interests. We wish to thank very sincerely all his former students and coworkers as well as his friends and admirers for offering their time and work to ensure the high standards of this memorial issue. We wish to thank particularly Joel Lebowitz, Editor of the *Journal of Statistical Physics*, for making this project a reality. Our best reward is the thought that Pierre would have enjoyed reading these papers.

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