

TECHNOLOGY

Carl Kaysen: A Legacy Worth Studying

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Carl Kaysen was one of those people legendary to those who knew him and to a relatively small number of colleagues and historians, yet rarely recognized by the mass media until their deaths, when obituaries like that in the Times attempt to cover lost ground.

I interviewed Dr. Kaysen by telephone when I was writing an essay for *Harvard Magazine* on the university's surprisingly deep connections to the footwear industry. Kaysen's economic analysis helped resolve a historic antitrust decision on United Shoe Machinery, which foreshadowed later arguments in the Microsoft case. He was not only a theorist but a practical and acute observer of management and technological style. As an administrator, he built the School of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study--and the office building and dining hall that are the finest of their kind that I have seen in all of academia. (More details of Kaysen's experience here.) During a controversy over a sociology appointment at the Institute, a critic in the mathematics faculty declared that Kaysen had written his Ph.D. dissertation on how to run a shoe factory. Considering what computer programs developed by other mathematicians have done with financial markets more recently, and unemployment in American manufacturing, the sneer now seems a compliment.

Kaysen was one of the quietest yet most versatile of the major public intellectuals of the second half of the twentieth century. The risk of mutual assured destruction concentrated the minds of scientists as well as

humanists, of the West and the former Soviet Union, wonderfully. For some ambitious graduate student in history or political science, Kaysen's life and papers could be a key to the changing fortunes of the American academic-government complex at its peak.