



## IN MEMORIAM

Thelma Estrin  
Professor Emerita of Computer Science  
UC Los Angeles

1924 –

2014

Thelma Estrin, UCLA professor emerita of computer science, who was considered a trailblazer in biomedical engineering and a role model for women in science, died on February 15 at her home in Santa Monica. She was 89.

Estrin was also the matriarch of a trio of Estrins on the faculty at UCLA's Henry Samueli School of Engineering and Applied Science that included her husband Gerald, who died in 2012, and their daughter, Deborah.

Born Thelma Austern in New York City, she trained as an engineering assistant during World War II at the Stevens Institute of Technology and worked at the Radio Receptor Company. She went on to study electrical engineering at the University of Wisconsin, where she earned undergraduate and graduate degrees, including a Ph.D. in 1951.

In 1954, Estrin traveled with her husband to the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel, where they worked on the development of WEIZAC, the first large-scale electronic computer outside of the United States or Western Europe. At UCLA in 1961, she made her mark in the biomedical field by inaugurating the Brain Research Institute's data processing laboratory, one of the first interdisciplinary laboratories dedicated to creating and applying computing to neurological research.

She served as director of the laboratory from 1970 until 1980, and she also headed UCLA Extension's Engineering in Science Department before joining the computer science faculty at the engineering school. In 1982, she took a two-year leave to work at the National Science Foundation as director of the Division of Electrical, Computing and System Engineering.

Throughout her career and long after her retirement in 1991, Estrin was actively involved in promoting women's careers in engineering and science throughout the world. She was the first woman elected to national office as vice president of the International Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) and, in 1999, she was inducted into the Women in Technology Hall of Fame. At UCLA, she funded a series of events for faculty and students to focus on the issues and concerns of women in science on campus.

Estrin was a fellow of IEEE, the Society of Women Engineers, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering. She is survived by daughters Margo, Judy and Deborah, and four grandchildren.

Professor Jens Palsberg, Chair