



IN MEMORIAM

Walter J. Karplus
Professor of Engineering and Interim Dean
Los Angeles
1927 — 2002

The University of California lost one of its most eminent scholars, outstanding faculty members and ablest administrators in the passing of Professor Walter J. Karplus due to cancer on November 11, 2002. He was serving as the interim dean of the Henry Samueli School of Engineering and Applied Science at the time of his death.

Walter Karplus was one of the pioneers in the field of computer science and was instrumental in the establishment of analog computing courses and field of study in the engineering school. Born in Vienna, Austria in 1927, he left Austria with his parents and his brother when Nazis invaded Austria in 1938. He became a U.S. citizen in 1944 and served in the US Navy for two years before earning a B.S. degree from Cornell University in 1949. He received his master's degree from UC Berkeley in 1951. After receiving his Ph.D. degree from UCLA in 1955, he joined the UCLA engineering faculty in 1955. He was one of the founders and architects of the Computer Science Department. He served as the chair of the Computer Science Department from 1972 to 1979. He served as the acting chair of the department from 1970 to 1971 and as a joint chair of the department from 1994 to 1995. His administrative service in the department includes that as the head of the computer simulation laboratory and as the director of the Center for Experimental Computer Science at UCLA. He also served admirably as the interim dean of the school in 2001. Walter was a strong proponent of shared governance in the university and he volunteered his time and effort constantly for academic senate service. He served at various times in all the major committees of the campus as well as in the universitywide committees.

He demonstrated a remarkable intellectual ability to blend several disciplines together. Karplus made contributions in his earlier days primarily in simulation, solution of field problems, hybrid computation, and array processors. In his later years, he worked on virtual reality (as applied to medical problems), human-computer interfaces and neural networks. He authored or co-authored nine books and more than 130 technical papers in refereed journals. He supervised 31 doctoral students' dissertations and an enormous number of master's theses. In addition to participation and contributions in international conferences and symposia, he gave lectures on his research within the U.S. and abroad. He taught short courses in his field of research in various universities and industrial laboratories.

He received a number of awards and honors for his research and teaching. He was a fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, an honor reserved for the top few members of the premier professional society in the world for electrical and computer engineers, and he also received awards from NASA and IFIP. He used the Fulbright and Guggenheim fellowships to spend time in European institutions to collaborate on research in his specialty. He was elected president of the IEEE Neural Network Council, a highly prestigious professional society, in recognition of his interests and contributions in virtual reality, intelligent interfaces and neural networks.

Walter was a man of diverse interests. He wrote a book, *The Heavens are Falling*, dealing with the topic of the tendency of the human beings to predict catastrophic ends in the distant future based on extrapolation

from present experimental data which are obtained under conditions that are not appropriate for the different conditions of the future.

Walter was a quiet, unassuming and modest person. He had a very nice sense of humor. As an administrator, he searched for ways to iron out wrinkles and found a smooth solution to the problems. He was a master in interpersonal relationship and he was a friend to every one who came into contact with him. He found and nourished good points in every human being. Not one person ever found Walter to be disagreeable, a feat which is very difficult in a highly competitive society. Walter had a quiet and compassionate way of performing good deeds for others without making a big fuss about it. His students respected and adored his way of interacting with them.

He loved his family, wife Tako, daughter Maya and son Toni, very much. Walter's life is marked by his dedication and passion for a number of things. His love for teaching and his students, his love for his profession, his love for humanity and his love for intellectual pursuit leave a legacy that it is difficult for others to emulate. Walter also was very much interested in many intellectual games that require the exercise of logic and analysis. Needless to say he found poker, bridge and blackjack to be his favorite games.

Walter will be missed by the UC community.

Chand Viswanathan
Leonard Kleinrock