

Remarks for the Albert Hofstadter Memorial Session, April 1st. 1989.  
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by  
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Albert Hofstadter, who became one of the leading philosophers of the nation, was a New Yorker through and through. He was born there, educated there, and married there, to a New Yorker like himself. After getting his M. A. and Ph.D. at Columbia, he taught and worked at New York University for 18 years and then transferred to Columbia for 16 years more. He spent only brief periods elsewhere, a year at Swarthmore, summers at Santa Barbara and Michigan, and a later year at Stanford. How Dean McHenry persuaded him to come to Santa Cruz is not known, but that year at Stanford, and the fact that his brother is Professor there, may have contributed. In any case, he left Columbia to come here in 1967. He chaired the Board of Studies in Philosophy for 3 years, and was a member of three other boards, History of Consciousness, Art, and Religious Studies. After 9 years here he went back to New York to chair the Graduate Faculty at the New School for Social Research, but only for 2 years; he spent the last eleven years at Santa Cruz.

The breadth of interest that is indicated by his membership of those four Boards of Studies is characteristic; the most unusual - and the great attraction to me - was that in the borderline between Philosophy and Art. His little book on Truth and Art was so popular it went into a paperback. He wrote on "Significance and Artistic Meaning", "The Consciousness and Language of Art", on "The Grounds of Aesthetic Judgment" and on "Hegel's Philosophy of Art", among other things. It was of course this special interest that drew him to Porter College. I cannot speak of his numerous contributions to special areas of Philosophy, — that must be left to experts.

But I got to know him through a quite different interest, that of the organization of Emeritus faculty members. This seems to have been his own enterprise; he set it up as an informal luncheon club, and as it gradually became established, meeting regularly every two months, other such organizations appeared on other U.C. campuses. When it was proposed to unite them into a University-wide organization, Albert was the obvious choice for the first President. This year it holds its first University-wide meetings, and the local organization now has the dignity of its own office. It is sad that his health forced him to retire as local chair, and as statewide President, for obviously it is a development whose time has come.

His characteristic quiet manner, his deep sincerity, his ability to get things done quickly but unobtrusively, and his rapidly awakening scholarly enthusiasm in discussion, will long remain in our memories. Santa Cruz was indeed fortunate to have had his services, and we count ourselves fortunate to have had him as a friend.