

In Memoriam: Bruce Bridgeman

July 25, 2016

Professor Emeritus of Psychology Bruce Bridgeman died July 10, 2016 in Taipei, Taiwan. His family prepared the following obituary to share with the campus:

UC Santa Cruz professor of psychology and psychobiology, Bruce Bridgeman, an internationally renowned researcher on spatial orientation and neuroscience, was tragically killed July 10 after being struck by a bus in Taipei while crossing a multi-lane intersection. Bridgeman was due to speak that day at the Medical University of Taiwan. He and his wife, Dr. Diane Bridgeman, were on a speaking tour in Asia where both were giving talks.

Those who knew Bridgeman will remember him for his sharp intellect, genuine sense of humor, intellectual curiosity, thoughtful mentorship, gentle personality, musical talent, and committed peace, social justice, and environmental activism. He remained an active cyclist – biking up Coolidge Drive each day – and enjoyed sailing, cooking, baking, and gardening. He was a loving, present and engaged husband, father, and grandfather.

Bridgeman joined UC Santa Cruz in 1973 and remained with UCSC throughout his career. Though an emeriti professor, Bridgeman was reappointed to teach courses in neuroscience and evolutionary psychology, the subject of one of his textbooks, and had several active experiments running in his lab at the time of his death. “Bruce remained a vital member of the psychology department,” said professor Campbell Leaper, department chair. “He maintained a very productive research program that included several UCSC students as research assistants.”

He enjoyed teaching and taking an active mentorship role with both undergraduate and graduate students. For decades, students in his lab received a hands-on understanding of experimental research, and frequently published articles and presented at conferences with him. “His mentorship extended to junior faculty as well,” said Jessica Witt, associate professor of cognitive psychology at Colorado State University, “and he exemplified the kind of scientist we hoped to become, allowing data and innovative ideas, rather than egos, to drive the scientific process.”

Bridgeman’s research centered on spatial orientation by vision and perception/action interactions, and his intellectual interests also included the functions and neural basis of



consciousness. Professor Dr. Wolfgang Prinz, of the German Max-Planck Institute, described Bridgeman as, “on a worldwide scale, one of the most prominent scholars of relationships between perception and action in the spatial domain.” Professor Fred Owens, of Franklin & Marshall College, described Bridgeman as “an esteemed colleague whose intellect was as broad as it was deep. His knowledge about perception-action systems was highly integrative, generating scholarly contributions that ranged from perception and psychophysics to neurobiology, philosophy, and the history of science.” Owens also noted “conversations with Bruce always held an interesting lesson or two, often venturing beyond the scientific domain to important matters of global peace, justice, and sustainability.”

Professor Vilayanur Ramachandran of UC San Diego, whose lab had been looking forward to a visit from Bridgeman in fall 2016, stated: “It’s hard to conjure up Bruce’s image in my mind without feeling good. His facial expression combines wisdom, a slight mischievous twinkle, and patience.” He went on to note that “in an era of sound-bites,” Bridgeman was rare in that “he combined meticulous scholarship with high originality. He was well ahead of the curve in combining neuroscience and perceptual psychology and in that respect we were kindred spirits. Besides being a brilliant scientist, world renowned for his pioneering work, Bruce was also a very nice guy in the good old-fashioned sense; a true gentleman. If I was stuck on a desert island with a thousand others, I would probably go to him first for help and advice.”

Bridgeman was the author of *Psychology and Evolution: The Origins of Mind* (Sage Press, 2003), and more than 350 articles, chapters, and other publications. At the time of his death, Bridgeman had numerous papers in process and in press. He was also highly dedicated to his role as editor-in-chief of the international journal “*Consciousness and Cognition*,” which brought him much professional satisfaction. The journal’s publisher Adam Fraser recalled an occasion when the editorial office received a manuscript from a prisoner who had been learning about consciousness: “Bruce took the time to assess the manuscript, and while it wasn’t right for publication in the journal, he wrote encouraging words and gave good advice for how the author may expand his knowledge, hone his skills, and help to use science to turn his life around. This showed Bruce for the generous and thoughtful man that I knew him to be.”

Bridgeman earned his undergraduate degree at Cornell University, graduating cum laude in psychology. He received his Ph.D. from Stanford University, where he studied with Dr. Karl Pribram, and worked as a post doctoral fellow at the Free University of Berlin and UC Berkeley with Dr. OJ Grusser and Dr. Lawrence Stark, receiving both a National Institutes of Health (NIH) Post-doctoral Fellowship and an Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung Fellowship, before joining UC Santa Cruz. During summers from 1993 through 1999, Bridgeman was a guest professor at the Max-Planck Institute for Psychological Research in Munich. Bridgeman was also a guest professor at the University of Padova in 2000 in Padova, Italy.

He received numerous grants from the NIH and other institutions, and collaborated widely with colleagues throughout the United States and the world, both in interdisciplinary settings and within his areas of focus. In 2012, he was named the Edward A. Dickson Professor of

Psychology, a prestigious award for emeriti professors. Earlier he won the inaugural award for social science research at UC Santa Cruz.

Bridgeman had an enormous depth of knowledge and interest in history, music, the environment, and of course science. He and Diane attended and were supporters of many professional and community organizations. His singing career included the Cornell Glee Club, which toured Asia for the U.S. Department of State in 1966, and both he and Diane sang with the Stanford University chorus, the Berliner Concert Chor in Berlin, Germany, various choral groups at UCSC, a chorus in Bielefeld, Germany, and for many years, the Santa Cruz Chorale.

Bridgeman was an eager advocate of his wife Diane's work, including her clinical psychology practice, and her efforts with various professional and community organizations, such as the Monterey Bay Psychological Association, the American Psychological Association, and the Santa Cruz Red Cross as coordinator of its disaster mental health team and its international services committee.

He leaves his wife, Dr. Diane Bridgeman; and daughters Natalie Bridgeman Fields, an attorney who is founder and executive director of the nonprofit Accountability Counsel, and Dr. Tess Bridgeman, an attorney who is currently Special Assistant to the President, Deputy Legal Advisor to the National Security Council, and Associate Counsel to the President at the White House; their spouses Carter Fields and Beth George; and Natalie's three children, Nicholas, Juliet, and Tobin Bridgeman Fields. He also leaves his brother Dr. Brent Bridgeman and many nieces and nephews.

A memorial event celebrating Professor Bridgeman's life and career will be held in October 2016. Specifics of the event, as well as information regarding a fund that will be established in his honor, will be provided at a later date.

See also: [American Journal of Psychology Obituary](#)

BRUCE BRIDGEMAN
UCSC psychology professor killed by bus in Taiwan
Sentinel staff report

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7-27-2016

SANTA CRUZ >> UC Santa Cruz professor of psychology and psychobiology Bruce Bridgeman, an internationally renowned researcher on spatial orientation and neuroscience, was killed July 10 after being struck by a bus in Taipei, Taiwan while crossing a multilane intersection.

Bridgeman and his wife, Diane Bridgeman, were on a speaking tour in Asia. He was

due to speak the day of his death at the Medical University of Taiwan.

According to a statement released by UCSC, those who knew Bridgeman will remember him for his “sharp intellect, genuine sense of humor, intellectual curiosity, thoughtful mentorship, gentle personality, musical talent and committed peace, social justice and environmental activism.”

Bridgeman was an active cyclist who also enjoyed sailing, cooking, baking and gardening. He is described by his family as a loving, present and engaged husband, father and grandfather.

Bridgeman joined UCSC in 1973 and remained with the university throughout his career. Though an emeriti professor, Bridgeman was reappointed to teach courses in neuroscience and evolutionary psychology, the subject of one of his textbooks, and had several active experiments running in his lab at the time of his death.

“Bruce remained a vital member of the psychology department,” said professor and department chair Campbell Leaper. “He maintained a very productive research program that included several UCSC students as research assistants.”

Bridgeman enjoyed teaching and taking an active mentorship role with both undergraduate and graduate students. For decades, students in his lab received a hands-on understanding of experimental research and frequently published articles and presented at conferences with him.

“His mentorship extended to junior faculty as well,” said Jessica Witt, associate professor of cognitive psychology at Colorado State University. “He exemplified the kind of scientist we hoped to become; allowing data and innovative ideas, rather than egos, to drive the scientific process.”

Bridgeman’s research centered on spatial orientation by vision and perception/ action interactions. His intellectual interests also included the functions and neural basis of consciousness. He was the author of “Psychology and Evolution: The Origins of Mind” and more than 350 articles, chapters and other publications.

He received numerous grants from the National Institutes of Health and other institutions, and collaborated widely with colleagues throughout the U.S. and the world, both in interdisciplinary settings and within his areas of focus. In 2012, he was named the Edward A. Dickson Professor of Psychology, a prestigious award for emeriti professors. Earlier he won the inaugural award for social science research at UC Santa Cruz.

Santa Cruz - July 13, 2016

We are Diane's daughters, Natalie Bridgeman Fields and Tess Bridgeman. We are writing first to acknowledge and thank you for the many heartfelt emails of condolences that have been sent to her regarding the sudden death of our father, Diane's husband, Bruce Bridgeman on July 10.

Many had asked whether we could share a few of the specifics.

As some of you know, Diane and Bruce were traveling in Asia. Bruce was invited to give a talk at the Medical University of Taiwan and at several other universities in Japan, then both he and Diane were each presenting at the International Congress of Psychology Conference in Yokohama, Japan at the end of July before returning home.

It was in Taiwan where Bruce had gone for a brief walk before giving his talk while Diane was in the hotel preparing for her own presentation when the incident happened. Bruce was hit by a bus while crossing a 12 lane major intersection near the hotel. He died instantly. The president of the University where he was to give his talk, and his colleagues there who Diane also knew, were exceptionally supportive and helpful to Diane in attending to all the details for the few days after, as was the American Institute in Taiwan, which is the U.S. State Department's presence in Taiwan. Diane returned home late last night and is with us now in Santa Cruz.

Many of you met Bruce as he and Diane attended many professional and community events together and they both sang with the Santa Cruz Chorale. Bruce was a strong supporter of Diane's work with her clinical practice, MBPA, APA, and her Red Cross efforts as coordinator of its disaster mental health team and its international services committee.

Bruce was a professor of psychology with neuroscience as his primary area and he taught at UCSC for over 40 years and continued to teach with central courses in Neuroscience and Evolutionary Psychology, which is the subject of one of his textbooks. He authored over 100 articles, chapters, and other publications and had a very active research lab where students received much hands-on understanding of research and frequently published articles with him and presented at conferences with him. Bruce was editor in chief of the international journal of Consciousness and Cognition, a function he took seriously, consumed enormous amounts of his time, and brought him much professional satisfaction. He had an enormous depth of knowledge and interest in history, music, the environment and of course science.

On a personal note, we will deeply miss him as an exceptionally present, thoughtful, and devoted father to us both and grandfather to Natalie's three children. There is much more to be said about our dad, which will come in time.

Our appreciation to all of you for the support you have offered to Diane at this challenging time. The family will be in touch with more information for those who may be interested in being in touch in the coming weeks.

Sincerely,

Natalie and Tess

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