

IN MEMORIAM

M. Brewster

Smith

Professor Emeritus of
Psychology UC Santa

Cruz

1919 - 2012

M. Brewster Smith was appointed Vice Chancellor for Social Sciences at the University of California, Santa Cruz, where he subsequently served as Professor of Psychology until his retirement in 1988. He was a major figure in American social science who helped to shape the field of modern social psychology. He was referred to as the “gentle conscience” of the field because of the way that he not only provided intellectual leadership but also championed a number of social justice and civil rights causes. Smith similarly played a profoundly important role in establishing the direction of social sciences on the Santa Cruz campus and in creating the special social justice orientation that still exists within its social psychology program.

Born in Syracuse, New York, Brewster Smith was raised in the college town of Corvallis, Oregon, where his father was an English professor and dean at what became Oregon State University. Smith enrolled in Reed College at the young age of 16, and subsequently moved to Stanford, where he received his B.A. and M.A. degrees in psychology. Professor Smith’s doctoral studies at Harvard were interrupted by service in the United States Army in World War II, during which he developed classification procedures for the selection of military personnel, conducted research on soldier morale, and was awarded a Bronze Star. His first academic position following his Ph.D. was at Vassar College, where he served both as Professor of Psychology and chair of the department. After serving as an associate at the Social Science Research Council for several years, Professor Smith joined the faculty of New York University in 1956, where he was Professor of Psychology and, eventually, director of graduate training. He moved to the University of California system in 1959, serving first as a Professor of Psychology at the Berkeley campus, and then becoming the Director of its Institute of Human Development in 1965. After a two- year stint (1968-1970) as Professor of Psychology and department chair at the University of Chicago, Professor Smith returned to the University of California system in 1970, and remained on the Santa Cruz campus until his retirement. He served for five years (1970-1975) there as a Vice Chancellor, and for the next thirteen years as a Professor of Psychology.

Professor Smith had an acclaimed and storied career in academic psychology, one in which he held numerous important positions in key organizations within the field, and received many of the discipline’s most prestigious awards. He not only was elected President of the American Psychological Association, but also served as the president of several of its separate divisions (including the Society for the Study of Social Issues, the Division on Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology, and the Division on Humanistic Psychology). He also helped found the Society for the Study of Peace Conflict and Violence and Psychologists for Social Responsibility. In addition, Professor Smith served as editor of two of social psychology’s most distinguished publications, the Journal of Social Issues and the Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology. Among Professor Smith’s many honors and awards was the Kurt Lewin Award for his

contributions to the study of social issues, the Henry Murray Award for his contributions to the study of human personality, and the Harold Lasswell Award for his contributions to the study of political psychology..

In 1988, Professor Smith received the American Psychological Association Award for Distinguished Contributions to Psychology in the Public Interest, and in 2010 he was the recipient of the UC Santa Cruz Distinguished Social Sciences Emeriti Faculty Award.

Professor Smith was a prolific writer who published over 300 articles and books. Several of his early works are still regarded as classics in the field, including *The American Soldier* (1949), on the psychology of soldiers in combat, and *Opinions and Personality* (1956), on the relationship between attitudes and personality traits. His later books — including *Humanizing Social Psychology* (1974) and *Values, Self, and Psychology* (1991) — advanced an explicitly values- oriented and humane approach to social research and theory. Professor Smith’s very substantial intellectual and scholarly contributions notwithstanding, he regarded the contributions that he made to advancing racial justice in the United States as one of the pinnacles of his long and illustrious career. Specifically, his research and testimony played an important role in the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which found school desegregation unconstitutional. His work on this historic effort was characteristic of his willingness and ability to apply social science to the cause of social justice.

However, racial justice was not the only social justice cause that Professor Smith undertook. He had a near encyclopedic grasp of the discipline of psychology and its history, and he regularly used his piercing intellect and strong ethical compass to raise critical and sometimes unpopular questions or issues that frequently changed the course of the discipline, making it more socially responsive, relevant, and humane. For example, as he would often later say, his time in the military showed him the horrors of armed conflict and the physical and psychological toll that war took on all involved. In part as a result, he was very influential in helping to shape what came to be called “peace psychology,” and he also played a central role in selecting the nation’s very first cohort of Peace Corps volunteers, whom he took several trips to Ghana to visit.

Similarly, at a time when much of academic psychology was narrowly focused on only quantitatively measurable empirical truths, Professor Smith championed the cause of humanistic psychology, and advanced the argument that the dignity and fulfillment of the whole person needed to be taken more centrally into account. Sometime later, when many in the discipline were striving to achieve a natural science model of complete dispassion and absolute objectivity, Smith wrote eloquently about the importance of “values” in psychology and extolled the virtues of political engagement.

Indeed, throughout his career, Professor Smith worked tirelessly on behalf of what he called the “third force” in American psychology — those who advocate for “the public interest”— which he saw as positioned between (and certainly sometimes including) the “clinical- practitioners” and the “scientist- academics” in the field. He reminded social scientists that “any attempt to advance the public interest is inherently political,” observed wisely that “advance in justice comes in small packages,” and implored psychologists of all persuasions to engage in “advocacy for the rights of the disadvantaged” and to “stand on the side of justice and human welfare.”

His Santa Cruz colleagues remember Brewster Smith as an extraordinarily kind, dignified, and dedicated colleague who was the epitome of a committed advocate who could “disagree without being disagreeable.” Despite his many accomplishments and stature in the field, he remained unusually humble and remarkably generous with his time and sage advice, especially to the several cohorts of junior faculty members who had the good fortune to start out in academia with him as a senior colleague. He functioned in many ways as an intellectual and academic visionary at Santa Cruz, spearheading the creation of a new developmental psychology graduate program and laying the intellectual and values- oriented groundwork for the distinctive social justice emphasis that now characterizes the Psychology Department’s social psychology graduate program.

Although he will be sorely missed, Brewster Smith was an extraordinary person and a remarkable psychologist who left us all with a wonderful legacy to admire and emulate, and a worthy path to follow.

He is survived by a large and loving family, most notably his wife of 64 years, Deborah, who was in every respect his devoted life partner.

Craig Haney
Department of Psychology
University of California, Santa Cruz

Psychologists for Social Responsibility Invites You to

**Join Us in Honoring Brewster Smith
With a Special Gift on His 90th Birthday This Month:**

***MAKE A GIFT TO PSYSR'S NEW BREWSTER SMITH FUND
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF PEACE WITH JUSTICE THROUGH
PSYCHOLOGY***

The Brewster Smith Fund sustains and expands direct social activism by PsySR, including the development and promotion of educational materials, public events, creative international collaborations, progressive policies and projects, and other action initiatives that focus the power of psychological analysis and skills on such urgent issues as human rights, poverty, peacebuilding and reconciliation, and climate change. The goal of the fund is one long championed by Brewster: Effective education and advocacy for social change through ethical psychology.

The fund was initiated by a generous challenge grant from Brewster, who is a founding member and former president of PsySR, a former president of the American Psychological Association, and a leading Peace Psychology Pioneer. A gift to the fund is a special way both to honor Brewster today and to help preserve his important legacy – ethical applications of psychology for positive social change – for the future.

Please share this invitation to honor Brewster at his 90th birthday with other friends and colleagues who share your interest in sustaining Brewster's legacy. We will send the honor roll of donors to Brewster, along with whatever birthday greeting you would like to include in the space provided below. PsySR will compile and present this list and your greetings as a unique gift to Brewster, in honor of his 90th birthday.

Please mail this gift form and your birthday greeting below to PsySR, at 208 I Street, N.E., Washington, D.C., 20002 by June 19th, so we can send Brewster word of your gift by his 90th birthday, June 26th, 2009. You may also charge your gift online at: www.psysr.org/donate/ (If you charge a gift online, please include your Birthday Greeting in response to the last online query, about "any additional information.")

Yes, please tell Brewster I have contributed to the fund to help keep his legacy alive.

Enclosed is My Gift of: \$1,000 \$500 \$250 \$100 \$50 Other

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