

## **In Memoriam**

### **Carl Friedrich Graumann 1923-2007**



By Sabine C. Koch  
& Barbara Maier-Schicht,  
University of Heidelberg, Germany

On August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007, the great psychologist and former president of the German Psychological Association (DGPs) Carl Friedrich Graumann died at the age of 84 at his home in Lobbach near Heidelberg, Germany.

He became interested in the field of language and social psychology very early in his career. The relation of language and thought, the role of language in psychology and the phenomenological tradition have been major themes throughout his highly productive professional life. In 1972 he published his influential handbook article “Interaction and Communication” and was later the chairman of the Special Research Group “Language and Situation” funded by the German National Science Foundation (DFG) at the University of Heidelberg.

Carl Graumann was deeply committed to a humanistic approach in psychology which centred around the key topics of perspectivity in cognition and communication, “ecology” (context, situatedness) of human experience and behavior, history of psychology (particularly in Germany), and the historicity of human experience. While many times he worked on top or ahead of developments, he never aimed to be “mainstream”. He followed his judgement and did everything with his own meticulous profoundness.

He liked to have us participate in his “Canadian Memories”. His interest in psychology in parts originated from the experiences and opportunities he had had as a prisoner of war in a Camp in Saskatoon (Saskatchewan), Canada, in the winter of 1942/1943, where he and some of his companions systematically observed the behavior of officers who trained their dogs, as a substitute for the no longer existing soldiers. There he had the opportunity to enrol in distance studies with the University of Saskatchewan. He chose psychology.

Carl finished his psychology studies and his dissertation at the University of Cologne. In 1963, he became full professor at the University of Heidelberg where he developed and later remarkable expanded the department of psychology. He established psychology at a high academic level with an excellent reputation at the University of Heidelberg, where he continued to work until his death.

From 1962 to 1995, he was visiting professor at various US-American (Duquesne University, Pittsburg D.A.), French (Maison des Sciences de l'Homme), Swiss (University of Fribourg), and German universities (University of Greifswald). In 1973/74 he was Theodor Heuss Professor at the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research in New York City.

He was president of the German Psychological Society DGPs (1968-1970), and became an honorary member in 1992. In 2004, he received the life award for his scientific work (<http://www.daniel-weimer.de/Kommunikation/graumann.htm>), a testimony to the continued impact his work has had over the last 50 years.

After his retirement in 1991, Carl continued to work productively until a few weeks before his severe illness and his death in early August, 2007. He left unfinished an American chapter on his autobiography (to be edited by Bob Rieber and Leo Mos) and a German book (with Lenelis Kruse) on "Environments: the psychology of people-environment interrelations". It was due to his wife Lenelis Kruse-Graumann that in the end he was able to die peacefully in his home and not in the anonymity of a hospital.

We are losing a dear colleague, room neighbour, friend and mentor, who always listened closely and replied critically to our ideas, with his typical humor and brilliant word wit. We are losing a philosophical psychologist, an eloquent writer and brilliant speaker who leaves a rich and enormously profound legacy of texts and speeches of ongoing relevance for the field.

We miss him dearly.