

In Memoriam

Walter J. Karplus



ON November 11, 2001 the Neural Networks Council lost one of its pioneers. Walter J. Karplus passed away that day at the age of 74 after a brief struggle with lung cancer. He is survived by his wife, Takako and two children, Maya and Tony.

Dr. Karplus was born in Vienna, Austria. He received the B.E.E. degree from Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, in 1949, and M.S. and the Ph.D. degree from the University of California, Los Angeles, (UCLA) in 1951 and 1955, respectively. He joined the UCLA faculty in 1955 and served as Chairman of the Computer Science Department from 1972 to 1979. He also held positions as Interim Dean of the UCLA Henry Samueli School of Engineering and Applied Science, Head of the Computer Simulation Laboratory, and Director of the Center for Experimental Computer Science.

During his more than 40 years of distinguished service at UCLA, he made many contributions to computer science. He successfully employed virtual reality to allow doctors to observe blood flows through aneurysms in the human brain. He also used virtual audio to sort out critical information in noisy environments, such as the NASA mission control room. In recent years, his research emphasized the modeling, simulation, and control of physical and biological systems using massive parallelism, neural networks, and virtual reality. This naturally led to his involvement with the IEEE Neural Networks Council (NNC).

Walter Karplus, who was a Life Fellow of the IEEE, served as President of the IEEE NNC in 1995 and 1996. The Council thrived and matured under his leadership. He initiated a number of education programs that resulted in strong student participation in the fields of neural networks, fuzzy systems, evolutionary computation, and their applications.

In 1996, he conducted a successful review of the NNC by the IEEE Technical Activities Board (TAB), which brought much recognition to the Council and its activities while laying the foundation for its future. Walter will be remembered as a visionary leader with strong interpersonal skills. His demeanor was quiet, logical, and reasoned, while at the same time firm and resolute.

Walter had a strong desire for the NNC to become a Society, bringing this issue to the attention of TAB on numerous occasions. He would have been pleased to know that his dream finally came true on November 17, 2001 when TAB endorsed the formation of the Neural Networks Society. Today, members of the IEEE and the engineering and scientific community at large can enjoy the fruits of his labor.

Clifford Lau, *NNC President 1999–2000*