

Journal of
Mechanics of
Materials and Structures

GEORGE HERRMANN: IN APPRECIATION

Terry J. Delph and Dewey H. Hodges

Volume 4, N° 4

April 2009



mathematical sciences publishers

GEORGE HERRMANN: IN APPRECIATION

TERRY J. DELPH AND DEWEY H. HODGES

This issue of the *Journal of the Mechanics of Materials and Structures* is dedicated to the memory of George Herrmann, who, among his many other activities, played a not insignificant role in its founding. It contains a selection of papers on a wide range of topics in mechanics written by a number of his numerous colleagues, associates, and students. We, the editors of this issue, are privileged to have been in the last category.

George Herrmann played a major role in the mechanics community in the latter half of the twentieth century, and his influence persists to the present day. Born in Moscow in 1921, he was brought to Switzerland in 1933 and was educated there, receiving his doctorate from ETH in 1949. After a short stint at the École Polytechnique in Montreal, he moved to Columbia University in 1951, where he stayed until 1962. He then moved to Northwestern University, and finally, in 1970, to Stanford University. At Stanford, he served as Chair of the Department of Applied Mechanics and then, when the Department merged with the Department of Mechanical Engineering in 1975, as Chair of the Division of Applied Mechanics. He held this post until his retirement from Stanford in 1984.

His research interests were broad, and touched on many of the major themes in mechanics over the last 60 years: plate and shell theory, stability theory, vibrations of elastic bodies, wave propagation, and fracture mechanics. He remained active in research following his retirement from Stanford, and, in later years, developed an interest in the mechanics of solids as viewed from an Eshelbean standpoint. This he pursued vigorously with longtime collaborator Reinhold Kienzler up to his death in 2007. His work brought him wide recognition and a number of awards from various professional societies. Among these were election to the National Academy of Engineering, the Centennial Medal of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, the von Karman medal of the American Society of Civil Engineers, and the Eringen medal of the Society of Engineering Science.

His service to the mechanics community was equally important. He served on innumerable boards and committees, and was quite influential in the Applied Mechanics Division of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. In an era in which important Soviet work in mechanics was largely unknown in the West, he began the English translation of *Prikladnaya Matematika i Mekhanika*, the premier Russian language mechanics journal and served for many years as its translation editor. Perhaps most significantly, he founded the *International Journal of Solids and Structures* in 1965 and served as its Editor until his retirement from Stanford, building it into one of the most reputable journals in the field.

On a personal level, George Herrmann was a man of great warmth and charm. Those of us who were his students will recall his kindness and consideration, even on those occasions on which we tried his patience. Particularly impressive was his uncanny ability to find the best line of attack on a given research problem, where he was often able to obtain significant results with only a minimum of tools. His lectures were clear, focused, and well-organized, and his courses were always popular with the students. He was an accomplished linguist, and constantly amazed those of us around him by his ability to converse

with the seminar speaker of the day in the speaker's native language. While at Stanford, he organized frequent outings, excursions, and dinners for the students and faculty that did much to build a strong sense of camaraderie within the Department, and later the Division, of Applied Mechanics.

We think that we can speak for the contributors to this issue, and certainly for ourselves, in saying that it was a privilege to have known him.

TERRY J. DELPH: tjd1@lehigh.edu

Lehigh University, Mechanical Engineering and Mechanics, 19 Memorial Drive West, Bethlehem, PA 18015, United States

DEWEY H. HODGES: dhodges@gatech.edu

Georgia Institute of Technology, Daniel Guggenheim School of Aerospace Engineering, 270 Ferst Drive, Atlanta, GA 30332-0150, United States