

## *In Memory of Peter G. Bergmann*

*On October 19, 2002 Peter Bergmann, one of the initiators of the Texas Symposia on Relativistic Astrophysics and founder of the first relativity group at a US-University, died at the age of 87.*

*Peter Bergmann, born in 1915 in Berlin, was the only son of the chemist Max Bergmann, a pioneer of modern biochemistry and director of the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Lederforschung (leather research), who was forced to emigrate to the US in 1933. After graduation from a Berlin gymnasium in 1933, Peter Bergmann went to Prague to study physics with Philipp Frank, Einstein's successor to the chair of Theoretical Physics of the German University. When working for his PhD the 21year old Bergmann wrote to Einstein, asking whether he could work under his supervision. A few weeks later Einstein, after asking Frank's opinion and getting a glowing recommendation with the slight qualification of "a youthful pertness, typical of Berlin Youth", accepted him as a research assistant and worked with him from 1936-1941 on unified field theories. In particular, Einstein, Bergmann and Bargmann - all three of them refugees - generalized the Kaluza-Klein theory of gravity and electromagnetism which was based on a five-dimensional manifold, hoping that this approach may offer a connection between general relativity and quantum theory. Beyond just helping with calculations Bergmann contributed fresh, new ideas to Einstein's long-standing efforts.*

*In 1942 Bergmann published his well-known Introduction to the theory of relativity, a text which served generations of students and was translated into many languages. In his foreword Einstein remarked: "I believe that more time and effort might well be devoted to the systematic teaching of the theory of relativity than is usual at present at most universities."*

*After working for the Navy during the war Bergmann in 1947 joined the faculty of Syracuse University, where he founded the first Relativity Center at a US-University. In close and helpful collaboration with his students - Bergmann supervised 32 PhD's - he tackled the problem of quantizing general relativity, identifying most of the technical and conceptual difficulties and made first attempts of overcoming them. Around 1960 he furthered the progress of GR by establishing cooperation with the Hamburg School of Pasqual Jordan who initiated an exchange of young relativists between Hamburg and Syracuse. Without ever showing any resentment towards young*

scientists from the country which had done tremendous injustice to his family and his people Peter Bergmann welcomed young Germans in Syracuse and influenced their life through the generosity, friendship and magnanimity which he and his wife Margot showed to all. Peter Bergmann was always a kind, unpretentious and helpful teacher, colleague and friend.

Bergmann belongs to the founders of the GRG-Society. His merits are justly acknowledged with the first Einstein Prize in gravitational physics of the American Physical Society which he was awarded shortly before his death. The citation mentions among his scientific work his leadership and inspiration to generations of researchers in General Relativity.

After his retirement from Syracuse in 1987 Bergmann continued to work and helped organizing the relativity seminar at NYU till 1999 when he, because of a severe illness, moved to Seattle to live with the younger of his two sons.

Juergen Ehlers