
Ian Porteous Howard (1927–2013)

Many are saddened by the loss of Ian Porteous Howard, an influential vision scientist, a wonderful mentor to many, and an exceptional human being. Ian Howard was born in Rochdale, Lancashire, in the North of England on July 20, 1927. His father was a foundry worker from Warrington, and his mother had been a weaver in the Rochdale cotton mills. He attended Ulverston Grammar School in the United Kingdom but left school at the age of 16 and worked for several years in industrial chemical laboratories while studying chemistry and biology at night school.

Ian entered Manchester University in 1948 to study chemistry and biology but changed to psychology and physiology during his second year, obtaining a bachelor of science degree in psychology in 1952. He then worked at Durham University in the northeast of England as a research assistant in the newly founded Psychology Department. In 1953, he was appointed lecturer. He married Antonie (Toni) Eber in 1957, and they had three children, Ruth and twins Neil and Martin.

Ian was a visiting associate professor in the Department of Psychology at New York University in 1965, the year he obtained a doctoral degree from Durham University. He published his first book, *Human Spatial Orientation*, with W. B. Templeton in 1966. He came to York University in Toronto that same year with the intention of building a concentration of people interested in vision. Ian was promoted to full professor in 1967 and was chair of the Department of Psychology from 1968 to 1971.

During that time he recruited several visual scientists and was subsequently influential in attracting more to form the York Vision Group. The group became an official York University Research Unit under the title the Centre for Vision Research in 1992. In 1988, together with David Martin Regan, Ian founded the Human Performance Laboratory of the Institute for Space and Terrestrial Sciences. This was an Ontario Centre of Excellence with its headquarters at York University. It was later renamed the Centre for Research in Earth and Space Technology (CRESTech).

Ian's initial research, starting in the late 1950s, investigated perceptual ambiguity, visual-motor coordination, and eye movements. When he came to York, he researched

several aspects of spatial orientation, including vection, induced motion, and torsional and vergence eye movements. He retired from his teaching appointment at York University in 1993 to become a senior scientist with CRESTech when he became interested in stereoscopic vision. He continued to work on human spatial orientation, sponsored by grants from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Canadian Space Agency, and the Defence and Civil Institute of Environmental Medicine. Further details can be found in his Wikipedia entry.

Ian leaves an impressive legacy of original scientific discoveries as well as several highly influential books: *Human Spatial Orientation* (with W. B. Templeton, 1966), *Human Visual Orientation* (1982), *Binocular Vision and Stereopsis* (with Brian J. Rogers, 1995), *Seeing in Depth* (with Brian J. Rogers, 2002, 2 vols.), and, most recently, *Perceiving in Depth* (with Brian J. Rogers, 2012, 3 vols.). The Centre for Vision Research hosted a conference honoring him in 2001, the proceedings of which were published as the Festschrift *Levels of Perception* (2002, edited by Laurence R. Harris and Michael Jenkin).

In addition to his professional interests, Ian had a lasting interest in belief systems of all kinds. He was a confirmed atheist and a skeptic about all things supernatural and most things political. He enjoyed reading history, listening to classical music, walking (especially in the English countryside), woodworking and sculpting, and composing games, for which he was famous. Some of these novel games were tried out at the renowned parties that he and Toni regularly hosted at their meandering house in Thornhill, just outside Toronto, and in his condo in Sarasota, Florida, where he was a well-known figure at the annual conference of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology.

Ian was diagnosed with inoperable cancer and died on June 1, 2013. He is survived by his wife Toni, his three children (Ruth, Neil and Martin) and seven grandchildren (Colin, Graeme, Alice, Katie, Shifra, Helah, and Eli). He will be greatly missed.

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