

Prof. Joel Norman

(January, 1936 - May, 2013)

Joel Norman was the son of Itzhak Norman, a prominent author, editor and intellectual, and of Dr. Jean Norman, one of Israel's senior English teachers.

After graduating from Amherst College (class of 1957), Joel served in the Israeli military in the Research and Statistics Unit, where he also met his future wife, Gabi.

Joel continued his graduate studies in psychology at The Hebrew University, Jerusalem and completed his doctoral thesis under the supervision of Prof. Daniel Kahneman, who later was the recipient of the 2002 Noble Prize in Economics.

Joel joined the faculty at the University of Haifa in 1969. He was one of the founders of the Department of Psychology, and was responsible for the establishment of its experimental laboratories. Among his colleagues and collaborators were two Israel Prize Winners, Prof. Asher Koriat, and Prof. David Navon.

Joel has been a member of the Institute of Information Processing and Decision Making (IIPDM) since its establishment in 1983. His research was in the area of Visual Perception and Human Factors and Ergonomics. His work on visual perception covered such areas as size perception, space perception, and mental rotation. In his later work, he analyzed and studied the implications of the dual visual systems approach to human performance. Joel was head of the IIPDM's Center for Human Factors and Ergonomics, where projects are conducted on applied aspects of cognitive psychology, and which provides training for many students in the graduate program of Cognitive Psychology and Human Factors. The research projects carried

out at the Center cover an array of topics concerning the design of human-machine interfaces. Joel's projects within the Center focused on the effectiveness of computer displays and the development of innovative methods for improving human-computer interactions such as a visual transparency tool for internet navigation. In recent years his efforts concentrated on issues concerning road and traffic safety. Together with his team, he investigated the effects of advertising billboards on driving performance, the effects of visible versus hidden speed cameras, the effects of perceptual load on driving performance, and more. One of Joel's findings is that visible speed cameras actually increase driving speed. He called this behavior "kangaroo driving" – sudden slowdown before cameras and acceleration immediately afterwards.

Joel was also one of the founding and active members of the Max-Wertheimer Minerva Center for Cognitive Processes and Human Processes, which involves a partnership between the University of Haifa and the Technion–Israel Institute of Technology. The Minerva Center was established under the auspices of Germany's Max Planck Foundation to foster research cooperation between Israeli and German researchers.

Joel is survived by his wife Gabi, two daughters, Michal and Tami, and four grandchildren, Noam, Dana, Tal and Gili.