



10-21-2016

In Memoriam

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr>

 Part of the [Comparative Literature Commons](#), [History Commons](#), [International and Area Studies Commons](#), [Political Science Commons](#), and the [Sociology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(2016) "In Memoriam," *Comparative Civilizations Review*: Vol. 75 : No. 75 , Article 9.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol75/iss75/9>

This Comment is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Comparative Civilizations Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu.

Remembering Carle C. Zimmerman: A Tribute

Richard Cronk

Conversations I had at the 46th ISCSC conference at Monmouth University this past summer have fed my memory and admiration for those giants that living memory is losing quickly. At the 2009 meetings I asked who may have known Carle C. Zimmerman, author of *Family and Civilization*. Many knew of Zimmerman and I came away with the name of Palmer Talbot. I was able to locate Professor Talbot and we spoke on the telephone over the next few months.

He shared that he was a graduate student in school in California when Zimmerman came and delivered a lecture that Talbot was able to hear. Talbot linked Zimmerman with Sorokin immediately, as is hard not to do, in his interest and study. In a formal project of the ISCSC in 1996 – resulting in the book, *Sorokin and Civilization* – Talbot connects Sorokin’s philosophy with rural and regional roots and his comfortable early collaboration with Zimmerman.

Zimmerman grew up in Missouri and his family address in the material I have been able to find is listed only by the name of the county. This county apparently did not have a city to support a post office. His parents were teachers in truly frontier conditions and the learning that was at the center of that life was not lost on their son Carle.

Palmer Talbot and I found time to think about how these men had affected both of our lives. We did share that we both felt richer for it. Palmer now too is missed.

In 1974 I had left a mind-numbing M.A. program in sociology with my new wife and we took our first steps into adulthood. My interest had been developing around family sociology; at that time, I moved to the very rural Copper Country in Michigan’s upper-peninsula on the shores of Lake Superior. I had time to read and my collection of Sorokin’s books were on the top of the pile. I reached a point where I thought I could send a letter without sounding like too much of a bumpkin. I wrote to Sorokin.

It was in a very short time that I came home to a hand-written letter with the return address carrying the name “P. Sorokin.” I excitedly opened the envelope to find a note from Sorokin’s son, Peter. I was informed of Sorokin’s death and he kindly suggested that Carle Zimmerman might be of some help to me. News like this took much longer to get to the provinces in the 1970s. I began my research by trying to find any works by Zimmerman. In the 1970s we still had to go to a library and hope that it housed what was sought. No work by Carle C. Zimmerman had made it to the stacks of the Copper Country libraries.

I did take the time to write a long introduction and request for an academic consultation. He sent some of his monographs for me to study. I told him about my interest in the study of the family and that I had left school and taken a job working for the welfare department. In those days that is what it was called. I thought this would give me a window into the

topic of family dysfunction and some real experience to ground further studies. He wrote that he began his serious work with field studies, too. I was happy to accept an invitation when I was invited to visit at his home in the White Mountains of New Hampshire.

My visit spanned three days over the Labor Day holiday in 1978. I stayed in the local small town and spent from late morning to late afternoon in conversation with Zimmerman. When I first pulled into the drive of an older country home Zimmerman was in yard clothes and bent over a lawn mower. When he stood up, he stood straight up. He was now in his 80s and moved slowly and deliberately as he took me into his home and his study/library. His wife Madeline greeted me as well and I was taken by the Boston urbanity and gracefulness that she carried. That day she provided fresh squeezed lemonade and cookies and it felt like the house of my grandparents in the 1950s.

The study was lined with books and his continued reading could be seen lying about. Not in disarray but within reach. The stuffed chair that I sat in had doilies with crocheted covers for the arms and backs of chairs. Again I was in my grandma's house. I think that helped me to not be overwhelmed at the whole event. But it did not last so for very long.

As he settled in his chair we confirmed that he had never heard of my provincial state university or any of my instructors before. I was aware that he did not expect me to have waist-long hair and that I looked like the students that he had opined did not belong on a university campus. He slowly picked up a stack of academic journals from the table next to him and put them in his lap. He picked up the first one and asked, "Do you read this?" It was a leading journal in sociology. I answered that I had read some articles I had looked up. He set it on the arm of his chair. He picked up the next journal and asked the same. I answered the same. Soon I did not even know of the journal he held in his hand. Before he finished with the eight or nine journals he had stacked up, I wished I had never gone there.

With one hand resting on the stack he said, "Don't worry about it." Then he pushed the entire stack off the arm of the chair and the journals scattered across the floor. He said, "It is mostly a lot of #\$@*+! anyway." This let me begin breathing again and it marked the beginning of the time he graciously shared.

There is lot I did not know, could not have known, and can only begin to appreciate at this later point in my life. Carle Zimmerman's bibliography shows his last publication in 1977, well after retirement from Harvard, and yet he would still set aside precious time for an anonymous student from the provinces in 1978. T. Lynn Smith's tribute to Zimmerman was carried in the *International Journal of Sociology of the Family*. In it, Smith recalled "...his untiring efforts to stimulate, guide, and encourage young men and women seeking to master the way and means of developing their own professional competency." When I read this some years later it rang so true because I was stimulated, guided and encouraged by him more than by any other scholar at that time in my life.

I was privy to some very personal stories and I am a good listener if there is a great story teller with great stories to tell. He had many things to say about his friendship with Sorokin, one that lasted their adult lifetimes. He explained in what ways his thinking was like that of Sorokin and where their thinking was not the same. One difference was his skepticism about the cyclical pattern of recurrence and he was open to a more linear development of society, culture and civilization.

It was also clear, however, that within the contemporary period they agreed that civilization went through phases and that we were in a phase of decline, corruption, and social disintegration. Zimmerman saw this most clearly in the structures of the family and what that can mean to society.

This is what he presented so clearly and in such depth in *Family and Civilization*. His more linear model traces the key functions of law, religion and economy as they formed in primitive social structures and the family. He sees over the ages the functions of law directed by the family as being moved to the jurisdiction of the ‘civitas,’ the government or the state. He sees the functions of religion moved from the confines of family religions and into the power of religions, faiths and churches as institutions. The final primary institutional power and responsibility that remains is in the economic sphere, where most workers must depend upon themselves for economic survival and security. The authority of the family has been removed by this analysis and the family has been doomed to the discontinuities that are common today.

Zimmerman did agree with Sorokin’s diagnosis of an “overripe sensate system” that was headed for a crash, as culture and civilization fracture and fragment and lead to dissociation. This is far from the socio-ecosystem that can nurture love and altruism. But that is what should happen in the family. Right?

Zimmerman was clearly disappointed in the lack of attention that was paid to his serious work. I am struggling not to be trite if I call it “monumental scholarship.” His dedication to the methods of science were clear and induction, he contended, was more important than deduction. Henri Poincaré put it this way: “Science always speaks in the indicative; never in the imperative.” If I understood correctly, making the move from scientific indicatives to ethical and/or pragmatic judgments is where sociology meets philosophy. Zimmerman was also a product of his times and his attitudes reminded me of those of my grandparents and my parents. I did not always agree with the imperatives common to those generations of immigrant Americans, but his methods of study remain scientific, empirical and important today, even if mostly unknown.

He did say he was especially hurt that Sorokin did not review his book and that a review from Sorokin would have been a great help. Sorokin never did make any comments in print that I have been able to find about *Family and Civilization*. There was one edition printed and there are no references to be found in the leading books on family sociology beginning in the 1970s.

Nonetheless, a member of the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations, Sigurd Skirbekk of Norway, made good use of Zimmerman's typologies in his work, *Dysfunctional Culture* (2005). This is a rare encounter that I am sure would have pleased him.

In 1976 Zimmerman published a monograph titled, *Family & Civilization in the East and in the West*. He offered this comparative study of civilizations as represented by India and the USA as a model for future studies. His theoretical model was set in his classification and description of family types and how they appeared across civilizations. Like Sorokin, he was deeply concerned that present social trends and patterns were concurrent with social disorganization and human strife.

I left this long weekend with three things: I asked for help with finding a school to continue my education in sociology. I was told that there is "not one good school left in North America." So what can a poor boy do? "Find a teacher." He then added that there was "one good one" he would recommend and that was Don Martindale, who was in Minnesota at what they called "the U."

With that I did find a teacher and I found a school and I found a career. We also discussed case study and institutional analysis from the perspective of field research. Zimmerman confirmed some value in my study that accompanied my work in the welfare office. He told me about Frédéric Le Play who influenced his own family studies and who completed deep and detailed empirical studies of family life and economy. Le Play was a mining engineer who managed mining operations in several parts of Europe. He completed his family studies by way of his travels and stops as an active engineer.

To put all that together I proceeded to take a course change into social work that focused on family violence and particularly child abuse and neglect. Here I encountered many of the worse symptoms found in social decay of the altruistic family. Many of the most important therapeutic insights I had were centered on the institutional analysis I learned from Zimmerman. As luck would have it, one of the oldest and most respected agencies for child protection services in the country was in Hennepin County and the city of Minneapolis. All this was across the Mississippi River from "the U" and Don Martindale's office.

With the trusting support of my wife and by now two young children and two cats we packed out of Michigan for Minneapolis. I had a plan. I would get a job at Hennepin County and I would find Don Martindale. The timing and the sequence were a bit off but I did both of those things and they filled the next twenty-some years of my life. With my first contact with Don Martindale his return note was cordial and we planned a meeting. His note to me ended with, "How do you know Zimmerman?" As I found out, Zimmerman had taken the time to send Martindale a word on my behalf before I even arrived and without my request or knowledge. He was a generous man.

Next year will be 70 years since the publication of *Family and Civilization*. As I left my visit in 1978 Zimmerman gave me a copy of his book that I had not been able to locate. It is the most important single volume I have read in the sociology of the family and helps to define what is “universal” among civilizations and where love and altruism can be nourished between and among civilizations.

I want to honor the man and the memory as we approach the 70th anniversary of this publication and the rich contribution Carle C. Zimmerman has made to the comparative study of civilizations and to the understanding of the institutional structure of the family.

Some Memories of George Von der Muhll

Michael Andregg

A member of the ISCSA for many decades, our dear friend George Von der Muhll passed on February 8, 2016, of natural causes. He was beloved by many because of his phenomenal knowledge of civilizations past, present and debatable, and because of his relentlessly positive and erudite advocacy of civilizational perspectives on global problems.

This marks the departure of another Titan of our small and ever aging crew. The decline of national support for humanities, much less classical studies of civilizations, has dried up the stream of junior faculty who used to replace our Titans when they retired or moved on.

George studied at Oberlin College, the London School of Economics, and Harvard before teaching at Swarthmore College, the University of Chicago, briefly in Ethiopia, in New Zealand (1977-78) and in Uganda from 1965-66 and 1972-73 (before he had to flee with his young family due to dangers posed by then-ruler Idi Amin). George was a remarkably fearless man for a tiny professor of government and governance. But his main academic home became the University of California at Santa Cruz where he taught politics and rose to become provost of Merrill College at UCSC. After retirement, he also taught and administered programs at Utrecht, Leiden and Maastricht Universities in the Netherlands from 2000-2002.

George was different from many scholars in that he actually walked on the ground of most of the modern, ancient, large and small civilizations he studied. He had fairly pronounced scoliosis, so in his later years we would expect him to limp up, bent over with ever new and fascinating stories of his latest adventures in far off places. To the end he was still planning excursions near war zones like Egypt, Jordan and Syria.

George was a remarkable example of an ancient, and, I fear, vanishing kind of scholar. He was a person filled with wonder at the world and a never-ending curiosity about the human condition and how we got there. And he did not just read books, of which he had thousands, but walked on the ground that books attempt to represent.

George is survived by two sons and his second wife, Lydia Blanchard Von der Muhll, whom he had met at a military high school in Germany shortly after World War II. His dad had been in the OSS and the CIA and her dad was a diplomat in Brussels. A story fit for a Hollywood movie follows because they did not marry right away, but rather decades later, and in fact, she 'stole' him from another woman, who had been Mayor of Santa Cruz. That is a private adventure. But they ended up together in Santa Cruz for most of their later years. Lydia first joined our conference in Dublin, Ireland in 1994, came occasionally thereafter, and remains a scholar in her own right.



**George and Lydia Von der Muhll
in Santa Cruz**



**Forever 17 and 18 in their Hearts
July 2015**

I was very fond of George Von der Muhll. I will remember him and Lydia forever, so I greatly regret the passing of one of our truly world-class civilizational scholars. Life is too short to capture all the dimensions that George shared with us for at least 30 years. May our remaining Titans stay as healthy and as filled with wonder as they can be. The young can still be inspired, even though colleges don't help budding scholars as much as once they did.



George Emanuel Von der Muhll

January 8, 1935—February 8, 2016