

Donald M. Baer

1931-2002

Donald M. Baer, Roy A. Roberts Distinguished Professor of Human Development and Family Life and of Psychology at the University of Kansas, died unexpectedly at his home in Lawrence, KS on Monday, April 29, 2002. Don was born in Chicago on October 25, 1931, joined the KU faculty in 1965, died at age 70, and was to retire this June. He is survived by his wife, Elsie Pinkston, Professor in the School of Social Services Administration at the University of Chicago, and three daughters by an earlier marriage to Ann Marshall – Ruth Baer (Lexington, KY), Miriam Baer (Durham, NC), and Deborah Baer (Franklin, WI).

Don was an internationally renowned member of several generations of basic, applied, and developmental psychologists. He received his A.B. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Chicago in 1950 and 1957, respectively, the latter in psychology under the supervision of Jacob L. Gewirtz (Florida International University). Between 1957 and 1965, Don established the “behavior analysis” approach to child development with Sidney W. Bijou at the University of Washington (e.g., Bijou & Baer, 1961; see also Baer, 1970, 1976), and contributed fundamentally to the experimental analysis of child behavior (e.g., Baer, 1960; Gewirtz & Baer, 1958). On the basis of then-pioneering work by Montrose M. Wolf and Todd R. Risley, he and they formally founded the discipline of applied behavior analysis at the University of Kansas in the late 1960s, where it flourished thereafter. Applied behavior analysis provides a conceptual framework and logic for empirically-based interventions into problems of individual and social importance (e.g., developmental disabilities, mental retardation, chronic aberrant behavior (see Baer, Wolf, & Risley, 1968, 1987).

In all, Don published over two hundred articles, chapters, and books, and made many more presentations. In doing so, he contributed significantly (a) to the literature on experimental methods and design (e.g., Hains & Baer, 1989; Horner & Baer, 1978; Parsonson & Baer, 1978); (b) to intervention research in early childhood education (e.g., Baer & Bushell, 1981; Baer, Rowbury, & Baer, 1973), developmental disabilities and mental retardation (e.g., Warren, Baxter, Anderson, Marshall, & Baer, 1981), and chronic aberrant behavior (e.g., Silverman, Watanabe, Marshall, & Baer, 1984), and to the generalization of those treatment outcomes (e.g., Stokes & Baer, 1977); (c) to basic and applied research in human behavior (e.g., Baer, 1962), language development (e.g., Guess, Sailor, Rutherford, & Baer, 1968), self-regulation (e.g., Herbert & Baer, 1972; Rogers-Warren & Baer, 1976), social development (e.g., Hart, Reynolds, Baer, Brawley, & Harris, 1968), and imitation (e.g., Baer & Sherman, 1964); (d) to behavior-analytic and developmental theory (e.g., Baer, 1982; Riegler & Baer, 1989); and (d) to disciplinary and professional topics (e.g., Baer, 1981).

Don was the intellectual leader of the Department, and among the most significant contributors to the Bureau of Child Research, now the Schiefelbusch Lifespan Institute (LSI). Frances Degan Horowitz (City University of New York) established the Department in 1963. Under her administrative guidance, she and Don built the premier international program in behavior analysis and developmental psychology (Baer, 1993). The program was the recipient of many years of continuous training grant funding from the National Institute of Mental Health, and in 2000 was the first academic program to receive an award from the Society for the Advancement of Behavior Analysis (SABA) for Enduring Programmatic Contributions to Behavior Analysis. As a Senior Scientist in the LSI, Don contributed actively and successfully in securing federally-funded grants for research in language and communication, early childhood education, mental retardation, and chronic aberrant behavior.

Don advised over 150 graduate students at the University of Kansas, many of them now leaders in their own fields (e.g., behavior therapy, education, public health, social work, special education). His graduate course in research methods and design -- HDFL 803: Experimental Child Study -- was taken by every student who ever earned a doctorate in the program. The Department "retired" Don's number late this spring. Beloved by his past and present students, Don was honored by them on April 12-14 this year with a conference and a banquet -- a BaerFest -- held at the University. It celebrated his contributions to behavior analysis, his teaching and mentoring, and his impending retirement. Over 100 colleagues traveled from across the nation and abroad to join in the celebration (e.g., from Brazil, Japan, New Zealand, Norway).

Under the leadership of Professor Emeritus Barbara C. Etzel, this spring the Department established a Donald M. Baer Faculty Award with the University of Kansas Endowment Association. In its own words:

The Award shall be given to a full professor of Human Development and Family Life. The award will acknowledge outstanding contributions to the experimental analysis of behavior, applied analysis of behavior, or the conceptual analysis of behavior as they pertain to our understanding and possible improvement of any part of human development across the lifespan.

Once fully funded, the Award will support a half-time graduate research assistant for the recipient. The Baer family requests that all gifts -- especially in lieu of flowers -- be contributed to the University in Don's name and donated to this Award or to the University's National Public Radio station -- KANU.¹

Don received numerous other awards during his lifetime, among them the 1987 Don Hake Award from Division 25 (Behavior Analysis) of the American Psychological Association (APA) for research bridging between basic and applied research, APA's 1996 Division 33 (Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities) Edgar A. Doll Award for his contributions to people with developmental disabilities, and the 1997 award for Distinguished Service to Behavior Analysis from SABA. He also served as president of the Society for the Experimental Analysis of Behavior (1983-1984) and the

Association for Behavior Analysis (1980-1981), as editor of the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis* (1970-1971) and the associate editor of this and other journals (e.g., *American Journal of Mental Deficiency*), and as a reviewer of federal grants and for numerous additional scientific journals. Finally, Don was widely invited to give colloquia and was often an international distinguished visiting professor (e.g., in Australia, Brazil, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Spain). This summer, he was to have been a distinguished visiting professor in Poland.

Don will be remembered in the Department, as well as professionally, for his intellectual brilliance and wit, his high standards for experimental proof, his incisive logic in conceptual analysis, his deep and abiding concern for creating and disseminating empirically-based interventions, his advocacy on the behalf of individuals with mental and developmental disabilities, and his great generosity and good will toward students and junior colleagues. He will be deeply and sorely missed, and fondly and forever remembered.

Coda

Services for Don will be held at the United Methodist Church, 947 Vermont Street, Lawrence, KS on Friday, May 10 at 1:30. They will include a string quartet, a minister, a rabbi, comments from Jim Sherman for the Department, comments from John Smagner for the students, poems, a eulogy, and a prayer. A reception will follow in the church's reception hall. The burial will take place at sunset that evening in the University's Pioneer cemetery on West Campus.

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¹ Contributions to the Donald M. Baer Faculty Award may be sent to the University of Kansas Endowment Association, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045 or to Ms. Wanda Lowe, Department of Human Development and Family Life, Dole Human Development Center, University of Kansas, 1000 Sunnyside Avenue, Lawrence, KS

66045. Contributions to KANU may be sent to Broadcasting Hall, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas 66045.