In Memoriam

W. Frank Epling 1943–1998

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Frank Epling relaxing at the Cameron cottage on Pigeon Lake, Alberta, Canada, Summer 1997.

About 26 years ago, I walked into the office of a young graduate student named Frank Epling. He had books of Mao Tse-Tung on his shelf, he belonged to a left wing motorcycle club,

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and as I was to learn in the next few days, he had an unquenchable lust for life. I visited Frank a few weeks before he died. The Mao books were still there, his motorcycle was in the garage, and his lust for life was clearly unabated.

Frank loved wine, women, and behavior analysis. The order depended on

the context. The first two remain a part of his legend. For the third, he has left a record that few could match. He presented more than 100 papers at conferences, published over 50 papers and book chapters, and with his indefatigable colleague, David Pierce, wrote two books on anorexia, which they termed *activity anorexia* (Epling & Pierce, 1991/1992, 1996). They authored a standard text in behavior analysis, now in its second edition (Pierce & Epling, 1995, 1999). The behavior analysis text was reviewed in *Contemporary Psychology* (Steele, 1996), and the anorexia books were reviewed in this journal (Cheney, 1992), *Contemporary Psychology* (Lowe, 1993), and elsewhere (Mizes, 1991).

The anorexia books were in large measure based on their own empirical research published in the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior* (Pierce, Epling, & Boer, 1986) and seven other refereed journals (Epling & Pierce, 1996). Frank and David strip the cognitive curtain from the understanding of anorexia and offer an objective account based on contingencies of survival and contingencies of reinforcement. Their theory of anorexia is being widely researched, and the latest *Psych Lit* has seven citations to *activity anorexia*.

The readers of this journal have been treated to eight Epling and Pierce or Pierce and Epling articles, including the widely quoted "What Happened to the Analysis in Applied Behavior Analysis" (Pierce & Epling, 1980). Although he was sometimes critical of what he perceived to be poorly addressed problems in the field, to his department colleagues, Frank referred to himself as a radical behaviorist.

Frank loved teaching and he was good at it. His department, at the University of Alberta, where he was full professor of psychology, awarded him the outstanding teacher of the year in 1996–1997. He taught behavior analysis to literally hundreds of students each year and consistently received high ratings. A University of Alberta

publication headed "Department of Psychology Loses Outstanding Colleague" said the following:

No recounting of professional facts and accomplishments, however distinguished, can capture the full impact of so large a personality. His family, students and colleagues will remember his insistence on deflating pomposity, challenging conventional wisdom, provoking argument, and, at times, fomenting rebellion. They will also remember the support he gave to them in their personal, academic and professional lives.

Despite his many accomplishments, Frank was a modest and self-effacing person, who reveled in the successes of others. As his beloved wife, Judy Cameron, began to be recognized for her scholarly publications, he glowed. When she published a behavioral paper in the *American Psychologist* (Eisenberger & Cameron, 1996), he called many of us to announce it.

Frank had five children: Salena, Anna, Jessica, Emily, and Nathan. He was important in their lives and they in his. At Frank's memorial, each bravely stood before a few hundred people, and through tears, spoke of their father and his impact on their lives. This was clearly expressed by his eldest daughter who said, "You taught us to be confident, to be independent, to be strong . . . to form our own opinions and to say to hell with the majority. . . . You taught me how to laugh and how to love my child."

Frank identified with the working class and developed a "B.S." detector second to none. He could not bear pretentiousness, elitism, or hypocrisy, and he displayed little reticence in their presence. This included certain ABA presenters, though he typically saved his stronger remarks for his friends in the bar. Frank was not appreciative of *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994) and considered it to be scientific racism. He wrote a bitter satire about it called *The Bell Bottom* (Epling, 1995). Along with Judy, he wrote a Swiftian satire on what they considered to be the scientific racism of J. P. Rushton (Rushton, 1989) and called it "Be-

yond Reason and Dignity" (Epling & Cameron, 1991).

In one of their lighter moments, Frank and Judy wrote "Multiple-Body Disorder: A New Psychiatric Syndrome" (Cameron & Epling, 1994). The notion was that because there was the multiple personality syndrome with many personalities occupying one body, logic called for a syndrome in which one personality occupies many bodies. They cited the U.S. Marine Corps as one of many possible examples.

Shortly after we met, Frank said, "Let's go tear up Albion." He lived in Albion, a tiny town outside the small town of Pullman, Washington, where he went to graduate school. There wasn't much to "tear up" in Albion. Frank had run for mayor and lost. He had been dismissed from the volunteer fire department, according to his dear friend Doug Wahlsten, when the department "realized that alcohol was flammable." But, "tearing up Albion" was to become a metaphor between Frank and some of us that meant to extract the most fun possible from a situation even when there was a dearth of possibilities. On January 28, 1998, I picked up Frank and Judy from the San Francisco airport and we drove to the Claremont in Berkeley, where he was delivering an invited address the next day. Late in the afternoon, Frank called and said, "Let's go tear up Albion." He hung up the phone and died.

At his memorial, Jane Cameron aptly described Frank by quoting William Wallace, who said, "Every man dies. But not every man really lives!" In his tribute, Doug Wahlsten spoke for all of us when he said "Oh Frank, you crazy, wonderful man. . . . How we will miss you."

Judy Cameron has established a memorial fund in Frank's name, to support basic research at the University of Alberta. Donations may be sent to the

Frank Epling Memorial Fund, c/o The Development Office, 4th floor, Athabasca Hall, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2E1, Canada.

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