In Memoriam

Ellen P. Reese 1926–1997

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In 1986, Ellen P. Reese was given the American Psychological Foundation's (APF) Award for Distinguished Contributions to Education in Psychology. A year ago, on April 2, 1997, we lost Ellie Reese—renowned teacher, creative scientist, and outstanding professional. She died in South Hadley, Massachusetts, of pulmonary disease. Why APF bestowed the award and what we have lost may be gleaned, in part, from Ellie's philosophy of education:

Education is, *by definition*, successful; the only measure of a teacher's success is the students' success. As for the goals of teaching, Gardner Murphy said it best: "The teacher should so conduct himself [sic] that his students surpass him as rapidly as possible."¹

That was Ellie: direct, pragmatic, unselfish, and successful.

Ellen Hayward Pulford was born in Hartford, Connecticut, on August 30,

Ellen P. Reese. (photo by Tom Jacob)

Ellie died as she lived, organizing antecedents and arranging consequences. For instance, knowing of my affection for *The Behavior Analyst*, several weeks before passing away she wrote to ask that I prepare this *in memoriam*. This brought forth a flood of emotions, from deep sadness evoked by news of her impending death, to the feeling of great honor evoked by her request. Her request also taught me a lesson. Previously, I would have preferred to die without foreknowledge of the event. Ellie demonstrated that foreknowledge enables a more fulfilling farewell, both for oneself and for others. Thank you, Ellie. Correspondence may be sent to me at the Department of Human Development, Dole Human Development Center, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-2133.

¹ Several versions of this quotation appear in interviews with Ellie and in her publications and presentations. This one was taken from the *American Psychologist's* 1987 citation for her APF award (American Psychological Association, 1987, p. 335).

1926. She attended the Hartford public schools through the eighth grade, by which time she had read every book on animals in the West Hartford Children's Library. She completed her secondary education at the Chaffee School (now, Loomis Chaffee) in Windsor, Connecticut, where expectations for academic achievement were high: Every student would learn. These became Ellie's expectations for herself and her students:

We want our students to know enough and to care enough to cherish all of the inhabitants of this planet. We want them to have the skills to

use a microscope and the vision to use a telescope.²

In 1944, Ellie entered Mount Holyoke College with an interest in zoology, which became an interest in psychology, because psychologists study animal behavior, too. She also became interested in human behavior, receiving honors for an independent study—"The Attitudes of White Children Toward Negroes in Social Situations"—which she presented at the 1948 meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association (Pulford, 1948).

After graduating *magna cum laude*, Ellie remained at Mount Holyoke to work on military-funded research and as a research assistant in psychology (1948–1956); she married Thomas W. Reese (1949), a recent Columbia University doctorate; and she earned a masters degree in experimental psychology (1954). Soon thereafter, she was hired as the assistant director (1956–1964) of the Mount Holyoke Psychological Laboratories, and later as its director (1964–1969). Following this, she became a research associate and lecturer (1969–1980), and then an associate and full professor (1980–1988). She completed her extraordinary half-century tenure at Mount Holyoke as the Norma Cutts Dafoe Professor of Psychology (1989–1994).

Ellie's research, teaching, and service were closely allied. As a researcher, she designed, established, and directed animal laboratories, among them the first laboratory in Turkey (1951–1952). She resolutely perused the experimental analysis of behavior, both in the context of teaching and in research on animal behavior and in comparative psychology. For the latter, she studied with the ethologist, P. P. G. Bateson (see Bateson & Reese, 1968) and eventually worked with over 45 species (see, e.g., Reese &

Reese, 1962). More important, Ellie wrote and produced groundbreaking laboratory manuals, films, and texts that described and illustrated the science of behavior and its application. Her laboratory manual, *Experiments in Operant Behavior* (1964), instructed students in the research methods developed by Fred Keller and Nat Schoenfeld for their curriculum at Columbia University (Keller & Schoenfeld, 1949), begun in 1946 concurrently with a similar program at Mount Holyoke. Her four-part film, *Behavior Theory in Practice* (1965), was translated into over 40 languages by the United States Information Agency, thereby introducing hundreds of thousands of viewers to basic and applied behavior analysis. Her often-reprinted book, *The Analysis of Human Operant Behavior* (1966), was responsible for bringing many a prospective undergraduate psychology major into the field of behavior analysis.

Whether as a researcher or writer, laboratory instructor or teacher, Ellie was never the coldly detached scientist. She was, instead, a constant advocate for animal welfare. Among her most significant contributions was serving on APA's Committee on Animal Research and Experimentation (1984–1986) during the development of its *Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in the Care and Use of Animals* (American Psychological Association, 1985; see Reese, 1990). Ellie also had a strong, personal affection for dogs, especially German shepherds. She raised and bred them, trained them for shows, founded kennel and animal training clubs, and served as a judge in American Kennel Club sanctioned events.

Ellie was, of course, more than a scientist and a scholar. She was renowned as a teacher, mentor, and model, especially in the professional development of women. We can see why in her philosophy of teaching:

If I am teaching students about psychology, I want them doing what psychologists do. I want them to ask questions about behavior, and I want them to go about getting some answers. One value of hands-on experience is that it is

² This quotation may also be found in several places. In this instance, it was drawn from the printed program for the memorial service conducted for her at Mount Holyoke College, May 3, 1997. It was attributed to comments she once made at the Loomis Chaffee School.

easy to evaluate the results. . . . If the students are shaping behavior, the subject learns; if they are observing behavior in the field, they get interobserver agreement of at least 90%; if they are building apparatus, the apparatus works; if they are conducting a project, they get systematic data. (American Psychological Association, 1987, p. 335)

In other words, education is most effective when teachers work directly with their subject matter—the behavior of students—and when students work directly with *their* subject matter—the behavior of organisms. Ellie constantly advocated for and required independent student research and scholarship, eventually establishing the T. W. Reese Fund at Mount Holyoke to provide financial support for such work.

As a teacher, mentor, and model, Ellie's success is substantiated by an extraordinary pedagogical measure: Over 35 of her undergraduate students earned doctoral degrees. An institutional measure of her success was Mount Holyoke's 1996 dedication of its Psychology and Education Building in the names of Ellen and Thomas Reese. A professional measure of her success was APA's selecting her as a 1985 G. Stanley Hall Lecturer, the criteria for which describe her exactly:

The ideal lecturer for this series is a dynamic speaker who has mastery of the relevant material, a strong interest in teaching psychology, experience in teaching introductory psychology, and an understanding of the special problems inherent in teaching this [introductory] course. (Makosky, 1986, p. 2; see Reese, 1986)

Given that students are, and always have been, the future of behavior analysis, our discipline is today much of Ellie's making.

Ellie contributed professionally, too. She served on journal editorial boards (e.g., *The Behavior Analyst*, 1980–1982) and APA committees (e.g., Women in Psychology, 1979–1981). She was a valued member of the Executive Committee and the Board of Trustees of the Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies (1982–1994). And, she served three times on the Executive Committee (1973–1990) of APA

Division 25 for the Experimental Analysis of Behavior, where she was notably successful in promoting student involvement, a practice that unfortunately has lapsed.

On the basis of these and Ellie's aforementioned accomplishments, three APA divisions conferred on her the status of APA Fellow: Division 2 (Teaching), Division 6 (Comparative), and Division 25. She was elected president of the Association for Behavior Analysis International in 1984 and of APA Division 25 in 1990. And, in 1992, APA honored her as one of the 100 most important women in the history of psychology. Such was the magnitude of her contribution, and now of our loss—but Ellie would not want us to grieve. She would want us to move forward in our basic and applied analyses of behavior, in teaching and disseminating behavior analysis, and in serving our discipline and profession. When and where we do, Ellie lives on in our behavior—she is alive in the present.

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