

Letters to a Lawyer

Donald M. Baer

INTRODUCTION

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A chapter by Donald M. Baer enhances immensely the legitimacy and value of any book that claims to be about applied behavior analysis and education. To say that Don Baer was an important figure in applied behavior analysis is akin to saying that Babe Ruth was a pretty good baseball player. After receiving his PhD in 1957 from the University of Chicago, Don took a teaching position at the University of Washington, where he and Sidney Bijou established the "behavior analysis" approach to child development (Bijou & Baer, 1961, 1965). In 1965 Don moved to the University of Kansas, where he and his colleagues, Montrose Wolf and Todd Risley, formally founded the discipline of applied behavior analysis and the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis* (Baer, Wolf, & Risley, 1968).

Don published more than 200 articles, chapters, and books on an amazingly wide range of topics: experimental methods and design; inter-

vention research in early childhood education, developmental disabilities, chronic aberrant behavior, and the generalization of treatment outcomes; basic and applied research on imitation, language development, self-regulation, and social development; and professional issues such as training practitioners and the role and acceptance of behavior analysis in society. The experimental data and conceptual analyses contained in this body of work provide significant contributions to our knowledge of how "behavior works" and how to build and use a technology that takes advantage of that knowledge for the betterment of society.¹

Don had an unparalleled ability to speak extemporaneously about any topic in behavior analysis and to do so with words that were not only conceptually sound and empirically current, but socially important and practical as well.

1. To learn more about Don Baer's contributions, as both a scholar and a teacher, to behavior analysis and to education, see Budd and Stokes (2003), Cataldo (2002), and Sherman (2002).