

CALIFORNIA, THANKS A TON!

Ogden R. Lindsley, University of Kansas

The award

At its thirteenth annual conference the Northern California Association for Behavior Analysis presented its annual "Outstanding Contributor to Behavior Analysis" award to me on the evening of 11 February 1994 in Oakland.

My dilemma

As I am really a very shy person, I seldom know how to accept compliments. For my entire youth and young adulthood I used to deprecate myself. When I was complimented on my sports jacket, I would put my head down, and mumble while pointing to a worn sleeve, that it really is just an old worn jacket left over from my high school days. This of course, put down the complimenting person. In an early Precision Teaching workshop in Hibbing, Minnesota, a lovely, concerned, middle aged teacher told me during the noon break, "Dr. Lindsley, you don't know how to accept compliments! You hurt people's feelings." I answered, "I know it. I have always had trouble accepting compliments. No one ever taught me what to say." The wise teacher answered, "I will teach you now. Just say, 'Thank you, thank you very much.'"

However, after the long and complimentary introduction that Joe Morrow had just given me, it would have been totally disrespectful just to say "Thank you, thank you very much," and sit down.

Our early song tradition

In the early 1970's it was a tradition at Precision Teaching workshops for the trainers to make up a complimentary parody of a well known folk song the night before the last day.¹ At the closing the next afternoon all the participants in the room would sing along with the bouncing pointer to the words on an overhead projector. Hank Pennypacker, of Precision Teaching of Florida, was exceptionally good at making up these parodies.

¹ I even sang my introduction of Hank Pennypacker, the incoming president of the Association for Behavior Analysis, before his presidential address.

California,
thanks a ton

Following this tradition, my solution token of gratitude was to sing them one of their California songs. The lyrics went:

California, here I come.
Right back where I started from.
Where bowers of flowers,
bloom in the spring.
Each morning, at dawning,
the birdies sing and everything.
A sun-kissed Miss says "don't be late."
That's why I can hardly wait.
Open up your Golden Gate.
California, here I come!

Then I sang for them the very rare second verse, that I said I had located in the technical library of the University of Lethbridge in Canada². Here are those rarest of rare second verse lyrics:

California, thanks a ton,
for recognizing what we've done.
However, I never
did it alone.
It started with Skinner,
then Carl, Eric, Hank, Harold and Owen too
Samson's, Hunter's, and Lester McCabe's
charts taught us how they behaved.
They all proved performance multiplies!
California, thanks a ton!

² I Lied.