

Memories of Fred Keller

Ogden Lindsley

One of the major reasons I do what I do today is Fred Keller. At my very first ABA (1979) he looked at my poster, told me I had not just used his system--I had improved it; then he kissed me. Later in the conference I told him that I had called my mother to tell her I might never wash my cheek again. He laughed and said, Honey, that's just the beginning of our relationship. As usual, Frances looked on adoringly.

I, Ogden, recall my first reinforcer from Fred Keller: ...It was a rainy Sunday morning at 8:00 AM at the spring 1952 meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association in Brooklyn New York. Sunday morning presentations were the least favorable spots because most attendees were still in bed getting much needed sleep from the late parties the Saturday night before. In the room with seats for fifty were about twelve seated in the first two rows. All of the presenters were graduate students, mostly from Columbia. I was the lone Harvard graduate student and presented cumulative records of our daughter Cathy's panel pressing in her Aircrib on various intermittent schedules reinforced by bells, buzzers, and flashes of colored lights. I was the last speaker, and when I finished, Fred Keller stood up, left his group of Columbia graduate students that were surrounding him, and approached me with his hand out as I was putting my glass slides in their box. As we shook hands, I can still feel the warmth of his left hand covering the back of my right hand as he took it in both his hands, and with a twinkle in his eye said, "Fine work, Ogden. Keep it up! We need more human operant research."

Bob Worsham

My first reinforcer from Fred Keller was in early 1976 when I was preparing to teach a senior seminar at Ramapo College on B. F. Skinner. I had obtained the book "Festschrift for B. F. Skinner," and was captivated by Keller's contribution to the book titled "Psychology at Harvard (1926-1931), A Reminiscence." His writing was like a window on history, and at that time I knew that this was a man I would like to know. In my last two years teaching at Ramapo College I used his PSI system for teaching Psychology of Learning, and Experimental Psychology. I was never fortunate enough to meet him in person.

Charles Merbitz

My first reinforcers from Fred started with reading "Goodbye Teacher..." in 1971 or 1972. Then, in 1973, I wrote a paper for Hank Pennypacker discussing the Jesuit educational system of the 17th century in which I argued that the Jesuits had deployed some of the elements of PSI. Hank suggested that I send the paper to Fred, which I did, never thinking that he would pay any attention to an unpublished paper from an unknown student. I was thrilled when Fred wrote me back a charming letter...and then, when I finally met him in person several years later, he actually remembered the Jesuit paper. Actually, he referred to it on and off for years, as we met and talked at each subsequent ABA. Gracious, polite, sharp, kind, funny, deep...a good model, our Granduncle Fred.

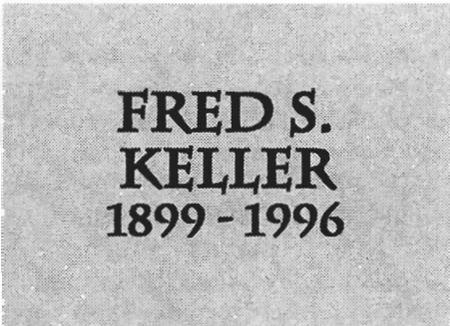
Tom Lovitt

It is sad that he has left us, but my what a life he had! The one and only time I was with him was in Mexico in about 1972. He and I and several others were in Mexico City for a conference that was set up by Emilio Ribes (another great friend of Fred's). We had several chats about one thing and another while there. Some of our talks might have had something to do with education and psychology. I don't remember. I do remember him as a thoughtful and charming man. He said something to me about his confidence, that he was not as sure of himself as he once was. At that time he would have been about 73 years old. I couldn't imagine how he could have felt that way, what with his nature and his record of achievement. I never saw him again but kept up with him through others. This afternoon I intend to read (for the umpteenth time) Summers and Sabbaticals.

Claudia McDade

Fred was the most positively reinforcing person I've ever known. I first met him at ABA 1979 in Dearborn, MI when Chuck Merbitz dragged him over to our poster session. He studied our poster carefully, asked several thought-provoking questions, then pronounced his approval by announcing that we in the Center for Individualized Instruction had not just used his approach--we had improved on it. Then he did the most amazing thing--he kissed me on my cheek. I was most awe-struck. Later in the conference I bumped into him and stammered, "Oh, Dr. Keller, I was so excited by your comments about our work that I called home and told my mother I may never wash my face again." He laughed and replied, "Honey, that's just the beginning of our relationship." As usual, Frances looked on adoringly. He was right because he always checked on our progress at every ABA or SEABA meeting we both attended and kept a lively correspondence of support. Years later, I was privileged to participate in an

ABA symposium in Fred's honor organized by Celia Gershenson. I titled my contribution, "Hello, Teacher..." because Fred Keller taught me how to be a teacher through encouraging students in moving from where they are to where they need to be in a totally individualized, positively reinforcing way. I will truly miss "Mr. Reinforcement."



**FRED S.
KELLER
1899 - 1996**