

Tribute to Ted Carr

The first time I met Ted Carr was at a conference in the 1990s when I was still in graduate school. A doctoral student colleague and I joined Drs. Robert Horner and Ted Carr for lunch. At that time, I was in awe of Dr. Carr and his prodigious accomplishments. However, my first impression was of his down to earth nature and sense of humor. Showing not an iota of airs about himself, it was fun to observe Rob and Ted banter back and forth, revealing the deep affection that these two leaders in the field held for each other. More recently, Ted served as an informal consultant to my research work with families, unfailingly offering sage advice by way of phone consultation, e-mail correspondence, or conference meeting. One phone consultation a few years ago characterized well his brilliance as well as kindness and compassion. A graduate student and I presented a formative case of our work with a family of a child with multiple disabilities who engaged in severe problem behavior during a going to bed routine. Things were not going particularly well and we sought Dr. Carr's input and advice. After presenting the case and the problems that we encountered, Ted immediately focused our attention on a contextual variable related to the child's overall quality of life, which in our focus on the routine itself, we had largely ignored. Attention to this variable proved essential to the family's subsequent success in helping the child go to bed and sleep through the night. The oversight on our part might have been embarrassing if it were not for Ted's kind appraisal of our interventions strengths and shortcomings and the warmth and enthusiasm that he communicated as he helped us understand how to better help the child and family.

Needless to say, Dr. Carr's untimely death in a senseless car accident is a powerful blow to the field of positive behavior support and to each of us who came to know and love him for his many gifts as a scientist, educator, colleague, and human being. In my present reflections on Ted and who he was in the deeper sense of that term, I have found myself searching the internet for what it has meant through the ages to be a great man. Below are several quotes that I believe characterize well Ted's character, body of work, and influence in the fields of autism/developmental disabilities, applied behavior analysis, and positive behavior support:

There was never a truly great man that was not at the same time truly virtuous

- Benjamin Franklin

If any man seeks greatness, let him forget greatness and ask for truth, and he will find both

- Horace Mann

The qualities of a great man are vision, integrity, courage, understanding, and profundity of character.

- Dwight D. Eisenhower

A really great man is known by three signs – generosity in the design, humanity in the execution, and moderation in success.

- Otto von Bismarck

True greatness, first of all, is a thing of the heart. It is all alive with robust and generous sympathies. It is neither behind its age, nor too far ahead of it. It is up with its age and ahead of it only just so far as to be able to lead its march. It cannot slumber, for activity is a necessity of its existence. It is no reservoir, but a fountain

- Rosewell Dwight Hitchcock

He alone is worthy of appellation who either does great things, or teaches how they may be done, or describes them with a suitable majesty when they have been done, but those only are great things which tend to render life more happy, which increase the innocent enjoyments and comforts of existence, or which pave the way to a state of future bliss more permanent and more pure.

- John Milton

The great men of earth ..., having lived and died, now live again and forever through their undying thoughts. Thus living, though their footfalls are heard no more, their voices are louder than the thunder, and unceasing as the flow of tides of air.

- Henry Ward Beecher

These quotes on greatness suggest that, for a few precious decades, we have all had the good fortune to have in our midst a truly great man. As sad as this present moment is, we may take some comfort in this. As time goes by, as our sorrow abates, and as we continue to strive to bring to life Ted's robust vision of science and practice, we may find gratitude and a measure of joy in this knowledge as well.

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