
Clifford L. Fawl (1930–2002)

Cliff Fawl was the kind of psychologist who gets lost in psychology's history. He did not develop a theory of attachment, or invent a chamber for animal testing that bears his name, or devise a test to measure personality. What he did was dedicate his career of more than 40 years to ensuring the achievements and success of many others. He was a selfless man whose delight in life was in his role in helping others.

Clifford Leroy Fawl was born in Topeka, Kansas, on August 3, 1930. He grew up during the Great Depression in a family of modest means. His father, Clifford Phillip Fawl, was a barber, and his mother, Esther Mae Johnson, was a homemaker. Cliff was able to afford college at the University of Michigan because of a baseball scholarship. Stimulated by contacts with Wilbert McKeachie, Cliff majored in psychology, graduating with honors in 1952. While at Michigan, he married Barbara Lee, a childhood sweetheart from Topeka.

Cliff pursued his doctoral degree at the University of Kansas, working principally with Roger Barker and spending several years at the field station that Barker had established in Oskaloosa, Kansas, to study life in that small town. Cliff's work at the field station produced a new understanding of childhood frustration, based on observations of children in natural surroundings. It led Barker to observe that earlier work, including that by Kurt Lewin, "simulated frustration very well as we defined and prescribed it for our subjects (in accordance with our theories); but the experiments did not simulate frustration as life prescribes it for children" (*American Psychologist*, 1965, p. 5). Cliff had observed and reported frustration as life prescribes it.

Barker's research showed that small communities had the same roles found in larger communities, but in a small community, for all the roles to be filled, everyone had to participate, and many people needed to play multiple roles. Thus in small communities, people could not be bystanders; everyone was needed. In that spirit, when his doctorate was awarded in 1960, Cliff declined an interview at the University of California, Berkeley, and instead accepted the job as head of a two-person psychology department in the small community of Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU) in Lincoln, where he felt he could make more of a difference. He remained there for 41 years.

At NWU, Cliff created a psychology major that provided students with a wealth of hands-on experiences in their classes. He added laboratories to many courses, paired the students in the abnormal psychology class with a patient at the state hospital in Lincoln (not as a junior therapist but as a companion), created a senior seminar course that exposed students to cutting-edge books in psychology and related fields and polished their public speaking skills, and added an independent research requirement for all psychology majors that required them to develop their own research question, design the study, carry it out, analyze the data, and write up the results. Many students would send copies of their research paper with their graduate school applications, a fact that no doubt, in part,

accounted for the incredible success of NWU psychology students being admitted to some of the best doctoral programs in the country.

In his tenure at NWU, Cliff was instrumental in creating arguably one of the best undergraduate psychology programs in the nation. The faculty size grew to six and a showplace new facility was built in 1975 that included 26 rooms in the psychology laboratory. A biennial psychology fair that he began in 1975 continues today to draw more than 1,000 high school psychology students and their teachers to the psychology laboratories for a day of demonstrations staffed by the NWU psychology students.

For 20 years, Cliff worked a half day a week at the Lincoln Child Guidance Clinic and later saw clients at his home on Saturdays in a small private practice. As was his way, he charged very small fees for those services. This clinical work informed his classes and fulfilled a different need he had for helping. He also volunteered at a local soup kitchen. Still, the bulk of his energies were dedicated to NWU, where he pushed students to think for themselves. The grades students made were not the issue for him. He wanted students to learn to think. For him to describe a student as "a thinker" was the highest compliment he could pay.

Cliff was president of the Nebraska Psychological Association and a fellow in Division 2, Society for the Teaching of Psychology, of the American Psychological Association. He won teaching awards from NWU and the Nebraska Psychological Association, and NWU established an annual lecture series in his name in 1997, a series endowed, in part, by many of his colleagues and former students. On several occasions, he taught classes at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln, including a graduate history of psychology course there in the summer of 2001. The brain tumor that would end his life was discovered during that course, but he delayed treatment until he could finish the class.

Cliff's death on June 8, 2002, leaves behind many colleagues and students; his wife of 50 years, Barbara; and their four children, four grandchildren, and great-grandson. The historian Henry Brooks Adams has written that "teachers affect eternity; they can never tell where their influence will end" (1961, p. 300). And such is Cliff's legacy as it will be continued through generations of his students and their students and their students and beyond. These students, yet to be, will not know his name, but they will bear his stamp. And they will be better thinkers.

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