

Passings: Peter Fernald

UNH emeritus psychology professor remembered for his passion for the discipline and teaching

Monday, April 26, 2021

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Peter Fernald, emeritus professor of psychology

On March 29, 2021, Peter Fernald died quietly in his sleep, with his wife, Susan Kanor, by his side. Peter was professor of psychology at UNH for 46 years, retiring in 2012. As a scholar, he designed, developed and evaluated various innovative techniques for teaching psychology. Peter often quipped, "My research passion is to build better and better teaching/learning mousetraps." With his brother, Dodge, he co-authored five editions of a leading introductory psychology textbook. He also published papers addressing various clinical and psychotherapeutic issues.

A skilled, passionate and beloved teacher, for many years Peter taught large sections of UNH's Introductory Psychology course. He also taught the advanced-level graduate course, Seminar and Practicum in the Teaching of Psychology, a course central to the program's dual emphasis on research and teaching, and to preparing graduate students for the Professoriate.

Peter was greatly influenced by the writings of Sigmund Freud, B. F. Skinner and Carl Rogers. These diverse perspectives — Freud's psychoanalysis and the pervasive nature of emotions and the unconscious, Skinner's behaviorism and the precise control of behavior, and Rogers' person-centered approach that prizes discovery learning, experiential learning and the unique nature of every human being — were cornerstones of his teaching and learning philosophy.

Peter was a sportsman and lover of nature. His favorite outdoor activities were sailing and skiing. He and Susan spent many summers on Damariscotta Lake and winters at Sunday River in Maine. They also enjoyed camping in Maine and New Hampshire State Parks and canoeing on the Allagash River.

Peter received the College of Liberal Arts and the Brierley University teaching awards, and he was the 1993 recipient of the American Psychology Foundation's Award for Distinguished Teaching. He dearly loved the discipline of psychology, the craft of teaching and his students. To his teachers-to-be graduate students, he joked, "Teaching psychology is like getting paid to eat ice cream."

When Peter's health began to fail, but prior to his death, the Peter S. Fernald Scholarship Fund was established in his honor and Peter was actively involved in its design. To contribute to the fund, [please use this link](#).

- WRITTEN BY:

[David Pillemer](#) | Department of Psychology | David.Pillemer@unh.edu

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