In Memoriam: Logan Wright, Jr., PhD (1933–1999)

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Logan Wright, Jr., PhD, 66, co-founder of the Society of Pediatric Psychology (SPP), died suddenly at his ranch in Norman, Oklahoma, on December 18, 1999. Logan will be remembered by pediatric psychologists for his pioneering role in founding the SPP, serving as the organization’s first president (1969), and for his early innovative behavioral techniques with health-related disorders in children.

Logan was born December 3, 1933, in Wellington, Kansas. In 1952, he graduated from Will Rogers High School in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where he was an All-State “miler” in track. He attended Oklahoma Baptist University on a track scholarship and was captain of the track team during his senior year (1956). Logan then attended Golden Gate Seminary in Berkeley, California, where he received a Master’s degree in religious education. He took his first teaching job at Bethel College in Hopkinsville, Kentucky; from there he pursued a Master’s of Arts degree in clinical psychology at George Peabody College (awarded in 1962) and a PhD degree from Vanderbilt University (awarded in 1964). He completed his internship in clinical psychology at the University of North Carolina. His first position as a faculty member was in the Department of Psychology at Purdue University (1964–1966). The Department of Pediatrics at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center (OUHSC) lured Logan “home” in 1966, and he served as Associate Professor and Professor of Pediatric Psychology from then until 1979. It was at this institution that Logan co-founded SPP and put pediatric psychology on the map.

At OUHSC, Logan wrote his first article on pediatric psychology, “Pediatric Psychologist: A Role Model,” published in the American Psychologist (1967). In this article, Logan called for the establishment of an interest group for SPP within Division 7 or 12, the publishing of a newsletter for “intragroup communication” (p. 324), and emphasis on training in pediatric psychology at the internship level, so that psychologists could become pediatric psychologists by virtue of both formal training and ex-
Logan also wrote about the training that pediatricians should have in developmental psychology, and without realizing it at the time, he described the subspecialty now known as Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics. He advocated that knowledge of developmental psychology was crucial for both psychologists and pediatricians. As a result of the article in *American Psychologist*, George Albee, as president of Division 12, suggested that Logan chair a Committee on Pediatric Psychology under Section 1 of Division 12 (the Section of Clinical Child Psychology). Lee Salk of Cornell Medical Center and Dorothea Ross of Stanford University were invited by Logan to serve on this committee. The rest is history well known to SPP. Section 1 nourished and supported SPP until the Society formed its own Section (V) under Division 12. Logan’s later articles focused on health and laid the groundwork for the American Psychological Association (APA) to form the Division of Health Psychology. His writings also led to psychology’s increasing role in attending to the interface between health and behavior.

Logan’s use of innovative clinical skills in the health care setting also served as a model for the practice of pediatric psychology. As an example, children in hospitals across the nation suffered from tracheostomy “addiction” in the 1960s, and they were spending long periods in the hospital as a result of long-standing problems with decannulation. All attempts to successfully wean these children from their cannula failed, and passage of time seemed to be the only cure. As reported in an early article, Logan and colleagues demonstrated that use of behavioral interventions could result in successful decannulation within 3 weeks (Wright, Nunnery, Eichel, & Scott, 1968, 1969). Logan was viewed as a miracle worker at Children’s Hospital of Oklahoma after this feat! Other early articles documented his use of successful interventions in pediatric settings with children who refused to take oral medications, children with encopresis, and children with self-induced seizures (Wright, 1973a, 1973b; Wright, Woodcock, & Scott, 1969).

In 1979, Logan left OUHSC to devote time to his businesses. He was on the ground floor in developing Sonic Drive-In franchises, a chain of fast food restaurants with a broad menu. He built 66 of them from North Carolina to Arizona. He also developed the Logan Wright Foundation—a nonprofit, charitable organization. Logan had always tried to help those less fortunate by sending them to school, supporting them in his home while they attended school, or supporting them through his charitable foundation. He was a Sunday School teacher at First Baptist Church in Norman, Oklahoma, and he freely gave of his time to provide academic assistance and support for young men and women in various athletic programs at the University of Oklahoma. From 1984 to 1993, Logan was Professor of Psychology at the University of Oklahoma, and in 1995 the university awarded him Professor Emeritus status.

From 1986 through 1987, Logan was President of the APA—perhaps the first American Indian to serve in that role. Logan also was one of the founders of the American Psychological Society, the American Association for Applied and Preventive Psychology, and the North American Association of Masters in Psychology. He is the author of four books and approximately 100 articles on medical and child psychology. One of his books, *Parent Power* (1978), won an APA media award.

Logan’s awards and achievements are numerous, among them the Distinguished Psychologist Citation from the Oklahoma Psychological Association in 1985, Outstanding Alumni Achievement Award from the Oklahoma Baptist University in 1984, Distinguished Service Award from the Society of Pediatric Psychology in 1978, former trustee of World Neighbors, and former world record holder in the Masters Division 200 Meter Hurdles (this feat was accomplished after his cardiac bypass surgery!).

Logan was mentor and friend to countless students, young psychologists, and colleagues, including me. I learned a great deal while working with Logan, first as a postdoctoral fellow and then as a young faculty member at OUHSC, and I count him among my most important mentors. Logan was committed to “giving psychology away,” by which he meant that psychology should be made available to all those who could benefit from its services and teachings. In so doing, he helped establish a new field of practice that has now grown to maturity in its influence on both the medical and psychology professions. His model of interdisciplinary collaboration and practice was an anomaly in its early days, but now reflects state-of-the-art care of children in health care settings. Logan Wright was a scholar, businessman, rancher, theologian, writer, musician, horseman, public speaker, teacher, humorist, ath-
lete, philosopher, excellent and innovative pediatric psychologist, and nurturing father and husband. His legacy will be felt by all who have known him personally, and by a grateful profession who will always remember his pioneering contributions to the field.

References


