

MY TRIBUTE TO DR. DANIEL SHEER, PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF PSYCHOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to and express my gratitude to the late Dr. Daniel Sheer. I first learned of Dr. Sheer and his research from the late Dr. Richard Benton, when he was a graduate student and teaching assistant in the undergraduate course, "Experimental Psychology." After I told Richard that I was very interested in Dr. Sheer's EEG research and electrical stimulation of the brain, Richard took me around to see Dr. Sheer's lab and many of the research projects being conducted in his lab. Sometime later Richard took me to Dr. Sheer's office to meet him and discuss graduate school, specifically, the Experimental Clinical Training program. Dr. Sheer, seated behind his desk, piled high with journals and student papers, was smoking a cigar and reading something, probably a journal article. When he saw us at the door, he put his cigar down, and with an infectious smile, invited me to sit down and talk about my graduate school plans. After 15 or 20 minutes of conversation, Dr. Sheer invited me to submit to him my GRE scores, Miller scores and GPA in Psychology to be considered for one of the Experimental Clinical Training stipends he supervised. Needless to say, I was awarded one of his training stipends which supported me through getting my MA and PhD in Psychology from the University of Houston.

Dr. Daniel Sheer was a tall, dark, athletically built man who always seemed to be in a hurry, but if he saw you, would pause and say, "Hi, Buddy." I will never forget how impressed I was with his vast knowledge when he taught the Physiological Psychology sections of our pro-seminar. He would lecture and write notes and diagrams on the board non-stop for over an hour without looking at his notes or texts, pausing only to take a drag on his cigar. In several other courses and seminars I took with him, I continued to be amazed by his intellect and skills. One of the funniest incidents that I ever saw with Dr. Sheer happened in one of his advanced seminars. He was pacing back and forth in the front of the classroom, lecturing and smoking his cigar at the same time. When he had smoked the cigar about as far down as he could hold it, he flipped it in the trash can at the front of the room and continued lecturing. After a while smoke began to come out of the trash can because the cigar had ignited the paper in the trash can. Dr. Sheer saw the smoldering trash can and stomped his foot in it to put it out. Because he had large feet his shoe became stuck in the smoldering trash can. With his shoe still stuck in the trash can, spewing expletives, he clanged out of the classroom to find a fire extinguisher. After about 5 minutes, Dr. Sheer quickly strode back into the classroom and picked up his lecture right where he left off without a word about the fire in the trash can, as if nothing had happened.

Some students thought Dr. Sheer epitomized the "Absent-minded Professor," because he would seemingly forget what some student was doing or where he left his lecture notes. However, I firmly believed that he played this role to see how a student or students would react. When he attended our graduate student parties, our wives would tell us what a great dancer he was and how cool and charming he was.

On a personal level, Dr. Daniel Sheer was a mentor, counselor and friend to me. Shortly after I had completed my MA thesis research, my first born son died after only 20 hours of life. I was very depressed and told Dr. Sheer that I didn't know how I was going to be able to complete my thesis and graduate school. He listened to me very empathically and used his clinical skills to help me deal with my grief and get my thesis writing back on track. Although I wrote my dissertation in the area of Developmental Psychology, Dr. Sheer continued to be supportive and friendly to me. After I had successfully defended my dissertation before my committee, Dr. Sheer came up to me and said, "Congratulations, Bill!" "Please call me 'Dan' from now on." I am convinced that Dr. Sheer's research and publications as well as the students he trained and supported are his legacy to the University of Houston and mankind in general.

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