

Operants

A Newsletter of the B.F. Skinner Foundation

Second Quarter 2008, Vol. II



In This Issue

Profile: Karen Pryor	1
Programs:	3
<i>Archival</i> : Volunteer Opportunities	3
<i>Educational</i> : Foundation Seminar Series	3
<i>International</i> : South Korea Liaison: Grace Cho	3
Chair's Column	3
News from the Foundation Board Members	4
Volunteer Opportunities	6
Upcoming Conventions	7
Letter from the Editor	7

Profile: Karen Pryor On *TAGteach* and *Clicker Training*



B.F. Skinner
Foundation
Board Member
Karen Pryor
has an interna-
tional reputa-
tion in both
marine mam-

mal biology and behavior analy-
sis. She pioneered modern,

force-free training methods. She
is also a leading proponent of
marker based teaching and train-
ing, otherwise known as the
TAGteach system.

TAGteach (Teaching with
Acoustical Guidance) is an in-
structional tool that focuses on
breaking skills down and shaping
using positive reinforcement.
The TAG refers to the distinctive
event made to mark or "TAG" a
moment in time, technically
known as a conditioned rein-
forcer. A TAG means "yes" and

the absence of a TAG means "try
again." The immediacy and clar-
ity of this instant feedback facili-
tates the desired movement or
position.

TAG points are the indi-
vidual pieces of a desired action
or position. Students receive a
TAG when the points are cor-
rectly performed. Because the
criterion for success is the at-
tainment of the TAG point and
not the completed perfect skill,
the student achieves many small
successes. This reduces frustra-

tion and increases confidence for both teacher and student.

Clicker training, another form of positive reinforcement training, overlaps TAGteach as a teaching tool. Desired behavior is marked with a "clicker," a device that makes a short and clear "click" sound. This click sound tells the animal exactly when it's performing the desired behavior. To the animal, the click means one thing: a reward is coming because of what it did when it heard the click. According to Ms. Pryor, "Clicker training is about reinforcement principles rather than social dominance. It's based on the observation of what is actually happening with the animal instead of what didn't happen and trying to figure out why. It's about much more than training a behavior. It's a global way of interacting."

Interestingly enough, Ms. Pryor became involved in Skinnerian science purely by accident. At the time, she was a young mother living in Hawaii with an academic background in marine biology. Her husband had just started SeaLife Park, at which dolphin shows were scheduled to be held. One of the advisors at the Park had just come across a new way of training, which led to the creation of an operant conditioning manual. Since Ms. Pryor was the only person at the Park with any animal training experience (all she had ever trained was a dog and a colt!) it was recommended that

she take over training the dolphins. At first, she was reluctant. She had small children, after all. But after reading the Operant Conditioning manual, Ms. Pryor was fascinated. "I could see where I had made mistakes in training the dog and couldn't wait to try it with the dolphins." Ms. Pryor stressed the three most crucial topics in training: the marker signal, shaping, and stimulus control. "Deprivation and punishment are completely eliminated," said Ms. Pryor.

I asked Ms. Pryor what Clicker Training has taught her. "Well, it taught me to stop yelling at my kids!" she said. "It also taught me to really think about the animals themselves, and to take a clear look at what's going on. Clicker training enables you to predict behavior and identify the causes of changes. You can read the innate species' behavior with far more accuracy this way."

Since Ms. Pryor's time at SeaLife Park, Clicker Training has come a long way. It has spread into public zoos, where previously chemical and physical means were used to immobilize the animals when they needed blood drawn or wounds treated. Clicker training is also starting to be used with lab and research animals as well as with veterinary technicians.

For new clicker trainers out there, Ms. Pryor strongly recommends taking her course.

Fifty students have graduated so far, and fifty more are expected to graduate this year. This program is a six month intensive on-line program, with four two-day workshops with the students' dogs. This course is intended for already-established dog trainers and includes four units on running a dog training business. Ms. Pryor also mentioned, "The Clicker Expo is another great place to learn about and meet professionals involved in Clicker Training."

You'll all be interested to know that Ms. Pryor has a new book coming out! Due out in spring of 2009, it's titled *Reaching the Animal Mind* and is published by Scribner. According to Ms. Pryor, the book is "a discussion of how animals learn, what they feel, how they communicate through operant training... I use only personal experiences in this book, and cover hundreds of different animals."

For more information on Ms. Pryor and Clicker Training, please visit www.clickertraining.com. For more information on TAGteach, please visit www.tagteach.com.

Foundation PROGRAMS:

Archival: Volunteer for the B.F. Skinner Foundation Archival Program Committee

Criss Wilhite, the Archival Program Committee Chair, is looking for volunteers. She's looking for people who:

1. have experience procuring funds through grants or in other ways
2. have experience in transferring documents, film or video into formats that allow easy dissemination via the website
3. have special knowledge of, ability to access, or particular skills regarding Skinner-related material in one or many areas of the world.

If interested, please contact Criss Wilhite via email, at crissw@csufresno.edu

Educational: B.F. Skinner Foundation Seminar Series

The first of the B. F. Skinner Seminar Series will be held in Chicago on October 16, 2008. Presentations will concentrate on services for children with autism, including a morning session by Andy Bondy from Pyramid Educational Systems on using visual communication strategies within a verbal behavior framework, and an afternoon ses-

sion on teaching for generalization by Brenda Terzich-Garland, from Applied Behavior Consultants in Sacramento, CA. Both sessions qualify for CEU credit for BCBA and BCABA certification, and the morning session qualifies for ASHA CEU's.

More details to come soon!

International: South Korea Liaison: Dr. Grace Cho



Dr. Grace Cho (pictured above), South Korea Liaison for the B.F. Skinner Foundation, recently participated in the 2008 China ABA Conference. Also present at this Conference were Dr. William Heward and Dr. Gerald Shook.

Invited by Ms. Sharon Chein, Dr. Cho gave a presentation at the Conference on her new Graduate ABA program at Namseoul University. Dr. Cho also spoke about the South Korean Institute of Applied Behavior Analysis (SKiABA).



During her presentations, Dr. Cho displayed and discussed BFSF newsletter *Operants*. Her audience included numerous medical doctors and professors who expressed a great desire to develop ABA programs at their respective Universities.

As a Liaison for the B.F. Skinner Foundation, Dr. Cho is responsible for translating each issue of *Operants* into Korean. Two of Dr. Cho's students, Sukho Myeong and EunJung Huh, are currently at work translating our latest issue.

Chair's Column By Dr. Julie S. Vargas



The B. F. Skinner Foundation held a reception at the May 2008 meeting of the Association for Behavior Analysis in Chicago. Many supporters and friends attended.



This year, a group from Taiwan attended, and had photographs taken with the President and Chair of the Board of the Foundation. They had come as a result of efforts by Sharon and Jonathan Chien, who had breakfast with Dr. Ernest and me.



The ABA convention had over 4000 attendees. The hotel

was an old one, with marble in evidence everywhere, and beautiful solid brass fittings. Although very large, the central location of the elevators helped create an environment where people bumped into others. It didn't feel as spread out to me as last year's convention.



Among the Foundation activities, the Archival committee held a meeting. The committee discussed the video project that Chelsea Wilhite will be doing.



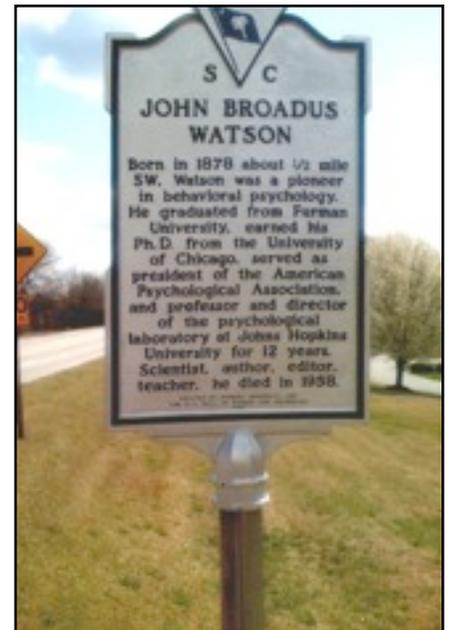
News from the B.F. Skinner Foundation Board Members

From Dr. Joe Morrow:



An essay about the university and home of John B. Watson

I noticed it as I passed Greenville, a small sign "Furman University next exit". I was driving south on I-85 on my way to Clemson to see a dear friend and give a talk. As I remembered from when I taught History of Psychology, Furman is where John B Watson did his undergraduate work. The talk I was to deliver "Behaviorism and the Autism Epidemic" had an elaborate Power Point slide on Watson.



I had prepared to say that the "root" of Skinner's "radical

behaviorism” was the writings of Watson. It was Watson who said: Psychology must be the study of behavior; behavior can be accounted for without recourse to private events; the task of psychology is the prediction and control of behavior; consciousness is a non useful inference.

Skinner had no interest in the psychology of his day. But in the emphasis of psychology as an objective science, Skinner found what he had been looking for and set off to study it.

I had the feeling that somehow I had passed hallowed ground and with my Arkansas cultural heritage emerging, I vowed to return and stand there.

I did so two days later. My friend had classes to teach and I had a free day, so I set off for Furman. Greenville is a rather large town for the area and I followed the signs to Furman until they ceased. It was a hostess in an IHOP that wrote out for me the last four turns. In the soft hills a bit beyond the town lies a beautifully manicured campus of modest and barely modern buildings that is Furman.

The students had not returned from Spring break and the only life I saw was at the Admissions building. As I entered a woman behind the counter smiled a greeting that led me to believe that she would be helpful. I had not rehearsed exactly what to say so I stammered out something about John B. Watson, my

being a professor, and talking to someone in the Psychology department. She averred that she did not know Professor Watson having been there only a couple of years herself, but that professor Brewer, who had been there “forever” could possibly help me. She immediately called Dr. Charles Brewer who seemingly picked up on the first ring. “He would be happy to see me” she said and began to give me directions to his office. In mid direction she stopped and began to walk me to his office some 150 yards away.

As we emerged from the elevator on the second floor there was a display of Watson and several of his documents. She took me down the hall and knocked on Dr. Brewer’s office door. He came to the door and instead of inviting me in, guided me to an empty conference room across the hall where we sat down. To the question “what would you like to know”, I had no specific answer so we began to talk. He told me that when he first came to Furman in 1967 there was nothing on Watson. The Baptist trustees and “the little old ladies in tennis shoes” at the historical society deemed that the “scandal” (more on this later) precluded Furman from showing any interest in the history of John B. Watson. “I told them that was almost 50 years ago and this man and his history at Furman was

important. So I began to do something about it.”

First, there was the display in the hall I had seen. Then an historical sign down the road a couple of miles that proclaimed this to be the birthplace of Dr. Watson. But, most importantly, Charles began the systematic accumulation of knowledge about Watson. “I probably know more about John Broadus Watson than anyone in the world” he said as a matter of fact and not at all immodestly. He told me his office is full of materials, manuscripts, and films that he intended to leave to the University of Chicago (rather than Furman). (Charles Brewer is quite an accomplished scholar: <http://www.furman.edu/depts/psychology/brewer/index.htm>)



Dr. Watson's home

Most of our conversation consisted of discussing special events in Watson’s life such as the “scandal”. I never understood why Johns Hopkins University fired the most prominent

psychologist of his day based solely on an affair with a graduate student. While improper, surely it was not that uncommon. Well, it is a bit more complicated. The student, Rosalie Rayner came from a prominent Baltimore family. Watson was married to Mary Ickes whose brother Harold was to become a cabinet officer under Roosevelt. Watson himself was prominent in the higher circles of Baltimore. According to Charles, they were all at a dinner one night at the Rayner house. Mary Ickes feigned a migraine headache and asked to lie down. She went to Rosalie's room and instead of lying down began to rummage through it looking for some incriminating material. She found a packet of explicit love letters from Watson to Rosalie.

A divorce ensued and Harold Ickes gave the letters to every newspaper that would take them. "The letters were plastered on the front page of every newspaper in the country" according to Charles. The additional facts that Rosalie refused to go to Europe "until this thing blew over" and Watson's refusal to end the relationship, left the Trustees at Hopkins with little alternative.

Charles Brewer in his many talks on Watson had occasion to meet and speak with Mary Cover Jones one of the pioneers in behaviorism. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Cover_Jones.

[org/wiki/Mary_Cover_Jones](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Cover_Jones). Rosalie and Mary were roommates at Vassar. They attended a lecture by Dr. Watson where Rosalie was smitten according to Mary and announced she intended "to marry Dr. Watson". Both went on to do graduate work at Hopkins with Watson.

Charles suggested that Watson was not above an apocryphal story. For example, in a well known account, Watson insists that he flunked a course at Furman because he handed in a term paper "backwards". Yet in examining Watson's actual transcripts, Charles found no F's.

In 1979 to celebrate the Watson Centennial, Charles invited Keller and Skinner, both of whom were recorded and the tapes sit in Charles' office. Skinner told him that choosing "radical" to describe his behaviorism was a mistake because of the political connotation. Charles and I then both laughed over the term "negative reinforcement".

Watson's granddaughter (with Mary Ickes) the actress **M a r i e t t e H a r t l e y** <http://www.mariettehartley.com/> was also invited. She declined, not being a fan of Watson. She sent an autographed picture instead.

Another anecdote has to do with the filming of the famous work with "little Albert", now memorialized on You Tube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aG6A66iV5tk>,

(Charles came to know who little Albert was but then lost contact) There was some question if the people in the film were really Watson and Raynor. So Charles brought in their son who identified them as his parents.

At one point Charles asked if I wanted to see Watson's house. I heartedly agreed thinking I would be given an address. Instead, he said "well let's get in the car and go see it". We drove out a few miles to a well kept and occupied, rather large wood framed house. I took pictures and we went on to Watson's grandfather's house.

I'll end the story here. Those are the highlights. I counted it a good day.

Volunteer Support



The B. F. Skinner Foundation, located in Harvard Square, is looking for volunteers.

The Foundation provides information about B. F. Skinner and current conceptual, experimental, and engineering efforts deriving from the behavioral science he began. The Foundation also collects and catalogues archival materials on the science's impact. Volunteers begin by helping with administrative tasks, such as filling book orders, han-

dling permissions, and updating databases. With experience, volunteers become involved in interviewing leading professionals for *Operants*, the Foundation newsletter, designing new products (such as the cover to the CD of B. F. Skinner reading *Walden Two*), and helping update the Foundation website (www.bfskinner.org). Experience with Apple/Mac computers and willingness to learn new Apple systems is a must.

Applicants of any age may apply. We are especially interested in retired persons or those over 50 years of age who will be with the Foundation for at least two years. Volunteers will learn new computer programs and processes, and work on their own. Hours and days must initially overlap with current staff. Times are otherwise flexible, and do not need to be the same every week.

Please send a resume of your skills. Please include hours and days available, and particular skills and interests.

To contact the B. F. Skinner Foundation by email: info@bfskinner.org, or eavargas@bfskinner.org or by Telephone 617 661-9209. 2 Arrow Street, Suite 200 Harvard Square, Cambridge.

Looking Ahead...

Upcoming Behavior Analysis Conventions

★ The 2008 FABA Conference will be held in Bonita Springs, Florida from *September 17-20, 2008* at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point. For more information, please visit: www.fabaworld.org/

★ The very first B.F. Skinner Foundation Seminar Series will be held in Chicago, Illinois on October 16, 2008. CEU credits will be offered. More details to come soon!

★ The 5th International ABA Conference will be held in *Fall of 2009* in Norway. Plans are currently underway, more details to come soon! For more information, please visit: www.abainternational.org/events_intl.asp

Letter from the Editor



Dear Reader,

For those of you who attended the ABA International Convention in Chicago this past May, I hope you had a chance to enjoy the B.F. Skinner

Foundation reception. It is our chance to say thank you to all of our supporters and donors!

I'd like to thank Dr. Joe Morrow for contributing to *Operants*, once again, with his essay on John B. Watson. Thanks also to Dr. Grace Cho for another update from South Korea. Lastly, I'd like to thank Karen Pryor for her interview on TAGteaching and Clicker Training. The Foundation will strive to continue to keep our readers up to date on the Board Members' and Liaisons' latest news and activities.

Please remember to keep an eye out for the latest news regarding the Foundation's first annual Seminar Series! New information will be posted on our website in addition to being published in *Operants*.

On a personal note, I would like to thank all *Operants* readers for your interest and kind support over the past year and a half. This issue will be my last, as I am relocating to attend graduate school. It has been my pleasure to serve as Editor of *Operants*, so I thank you for giving me that opportunity.

Thank you all, and have a wonderful summer!

- Elizabeth McGlinchey, Editor