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Dr. Stan Sharnofsky, Ph.D.

AHP's Tribute to Dr. Stan Charnofsky

By
Dr. Carroy (Cuf) Ferguson, Ph.D.
AHP President

The Association for Humanistic Psychology (AHP) mourns the “transition” of a very dear soul, Dr. Stan Charnofsky. And, while his transition is a tremendous loss to his family, friends, and colleagues, we also want to honor and celebrate a life well-lived. As a former AHP president, Stan provided outstanding leadership. Upon his passing, he also held the distinction of being the longest-serving AHP board member. He was very much cherished and highly respected by all board members throughout his long, dedicated and remarkable service to AHP and its members.

Stan was an extraordinary person. He was truly a “gift,” not only to those who had the privilege to know him and to be in his presence, but also a gift to society and to the world. Through his teaching, writings, and counseling practice, he embodied what it means to be

“authentically human” toward “the other” in society and in the world. In championing humanistic psychology, he also served as a “mirror” for what it means to respect and honor human dignity and worth, as well as to value the power of free will and choice.

Stan always proudly wore a butterfly pin near his heart wherever he went, symbolizing our potential as human beings to become, to transform, to transcend, and to be more than what appears to limit us. To some extent, Stan’s well-lived life was somewhat like the metamorphosis of a butterfly. Prior to entering the academic world and becoming a distinguished and beloved educator and author while at California State University, Northridge (CSUN), Stan had another passion which he pursued with some success. Stan and his twin brother Hal initially pursued the dream of becoming professional baseball players. Here too Stan’s humanistic approach to life was evident, profound, and impactful.

In the baseball world, both Stan and his brother were star college baseball players at the University of Southern California (USC), and both were on the USC Athletic Hall of Fame ballot together in 2009. In 1952, both brothers began their professional baseball careers, signing with the Bronx Bombers, the Yankee’s minor league affiliate in Binghamton, NY. Stan played professionally until 1960, and he even coached minor league teams in 1958 and 1960 with the Detroit Tigers and the Yankees, respectively. In 1962, Stan got a head baseball coaching job at San Fernando Valley State College. In three years, he was head coach at CSUN with a winning team. In 1966, Stan left the baseball world, leaving behind an impactful humanistic impression.

In a 2016 *CSUN Today* article about Stan, he is quoted as saying: “My players used to joke that I taught them about Abraham Maslow, the famous creative psychologist, and how to self-actualize themselves through baseball. Well, that wasn’t my goal. My goal was, ‘you have to want to do it. You have to believe in yourself. You have to actualize your potential.’” Through simply “being his authentic self” with his players, Stan just believed in human potential and self-actualization—two cornerstones of humanistic psychology. Indeed, in the article, legendary National Baseball Hall of Fame broadcaster Dick Enberg (Stan’s former assistant coach at Valley State and CSUN) remarked that he credits his home run call (“touch ‘em all”) from his days with Stan. Enberg added “...in his 55 years, Stan has touched them all...I love him. Everyone should.” In 2006, Stan and his twin brother were inducted into the Southern California Jewish Sports Hall of Fame. In 2016, at the age of 84, Stan was inducted into CSUN’s Matador Hall of Fame in recognition for his outstanding and meritorious contributions to athletics at the university.

In his metamorphosis into the academic and counseling worlds, Stan entered these arenas with the same kind of passion and humanistic fervor that he showed in the baseball world. Stan started his teaching career in 1961, and he blossomed into a highly respected professor of educational psychology and counseling at CSUN, where he taught for more than 50 years. In fact, Stan held and holds the distinction of being the longest-serving tenured professor at CSUN. Stan also became a licensed psychologist, and he started a very successful counseling practice. As a prolific writer in the academy, Stan authored 30 novels, 3 novellas,

2 collections of short stories, 11 non-fiction books and texts, 2 plays, and poetry. It is fair to say, therefore, that through his teaching, writings, and counseling practice, Stan humanely and humanistically touched and influenced thousands of lives in extraordinarily positive ways.

Stan's metamorphosis also included becoming the thirty-eighth President of the Association for Humanistic Psychology. Past Presidents of AHP include eminent, well known, and renown humanistic figures in the world such as James F. T. Bugental, Sidney M. Jourad, Charlotte Buhler, Jack R. Gibb, Stanley Krippner, Eleanor Criswell, Jean Houston, George Leonard, Virginia Satir, Lawrence LeShan, John Vasconcellos, Frances Vaughan, Maureen O'Hara, Arthur Warmoth, and J. Bruce Francis. In becoming President of AHP, Stan thus joined a long list of prominent thinkers, scholars, authors, and cultural creators who have sought to bring to consciousness the value and dignity of the human being in the field of psychology and beyond.

What an amazing, creative, meaningful and powerful life journey! Stan's marvelous accomplishments are without doubt a testament to a life well-lived. Thank you, Stan, for "being" you, and for all your wonderful contributions to make the world a better place. Rest well, my friend. With Heart!

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