

IN MEMORIAM

Tom Trabasso 1935–2005

The community of scholars has lost a major figure with the passing of Tom Trabasso, one of the founders and the first president of the Society for Text and Discourse, and an important figure in the history of the journal *Discourse Processes*.

Tom began his educational life in Hyde Park, NY, and completed his BA at Union College in Schenectady, NY. He earned his PhD in General Experimental Psychology, minoring in quantitative and mathematical statistics, from Michigan State University in 1961. After an NIMH postdoctoral fellowship with Gordon Bower, Tom was hired as an Assistant Professor at UCLA, where he was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure in only 4 years. He moved to Princeton University in 1969, where he continued on the faculty until 1976. While on faculty at Princeton, Tom spent 2 different study years abroad, the first in Oxford and the second in Edinburgh. In 1976, Tom moved to the University of Minnesota as Professor of Child Development, and in 1979 he became Professor at the University of Chicago. Although he retired with the status of Emeritus Professor in 2001, he remained fully engaged and active in the profession.

Over the 45 years of his career Tom published roughly 110 refereed journal articles, almost all multiple authored. He edited 10 books and journal issues. The first third of his career focused on cognitive development, especially the development of concepts and logical thinking. The second third saw a shift to issues of narrative representation, memory, and causal network modeling. The last third extended causal modeling to explanation-driven understanding, along with an effort to use his models to account for cognitive and emotional phenomena in decision making, family conflict, and coping. Much of his scholarly impact can be reconstructed in the Festschrift in his honor, published in 1999 by Erlbaum, entitled *Narrative Comprehension, Causality, and Coherence*, edited by Susan Goldman, Art Graesser, and Paul Van den Broek.

These facts about Tom's career and his scholarly contributions do not do justice to his larger impact. When the news of Tom's death spread throughout the commu-

nity many came forward with comments and memories of their interactions with Tom. Recurring themes in these commentaries include his commitment to and enthusiasm for intellectual life, his support of young scholars across several generations, and his intellectual legacy in discourse psychology and developmental psychology. As Will van Peer summarized, “his drive for knowledge, his courage to break out of the boundaries of his own discipline, his profound will to understand the human psyche by all means available, and his bare and contagious enthusiasm are things I will remember dearest. We have lost in him an inspiring teacher and researcher, who should be an example to us all.”

Tom’s passionate approach to the study of discourse extended to his love of travel, good wine and food, and sports. It makes sense that so much of his later work would focus more and more on emotions. As his longtime friend and this journal’s publisher, Larry Erlbaum, put it, “Tom had a childlike delight in making people happy,” and we will remember “his humor, intelligence, integrity, loyalty, love, and enthusiasm for life.”

The Society for Text and Discourse extends our most sincere condolences to Tom’s family, his colleagues, and his friends, and we honor his memory.