

# Tribute to Dr. Lou Brown (May 1, 2021)

(Professor Emeritus, University of Wisconsin-Madison)

It is with a very heavy heart that I write this brief tribute and introduction to Lou Brown Ph.D., who only recently passed away on May 1, 2021. In this issue of the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation (JVR)*, we will be publishing the proceedings of the 2020 APSE Conference. However, by coincidence, I had received a paper from Lou and his colleagues providing a follow up of 50 persons with severe intellectual disabilities who began work in 1984 and who Lou and his colleagues had tracked for over 35 years. As his paper noted, no one else had published a follow up of this length of time. An earlier version of this follow up had been published before in JVR. Since JVR is a member benefit of APSE members, it seemed natural to him to publish these papers in JVR. I strongly urge all to read this paper, which is a wonderful tribute that Lou had for the competitive employment work capacity of persons who few thought could work or be included meaningfully in the community.

Hopefully, many of you who read his paper and my necessarily short comments due to publishing deadlines, will be aware of Lou's status in the field of special education, transition, employment and truly, the civil rights of persons with severe disabilities. If you have not, please look up the historic values and legacy he leaves behind.

Lou's departure is especially meaningful to me. Besides my parents, I have had two genuine mentors that I felt embedded in me, true long-standing values that shaped my professional life. They are both in what I am sure is a better place now. My time with Lou at the University of Wisconsin-Madison as a doctoral student was not very long, but it was deeply impressionable. Lou believed that, not some,

but ALL children, youth and adults with the most severe disabilities should go to regular schools, live in the community, go to real jobs, and have normal lives. He believed this and powered forward with it when it was not fashionable, in the years when large state institutions housed thousands of persons with severe disabilities. When I met Lou, there was no federal law mandating all children with disabilities have a legal right to go to school from ages 3 to 21. He helped get that federal law passed. And together, Lou joined Norris Haring and Wayne Sailor and started TASH, an organization dedicated to the values of equity and inclusion for ALL people with disabilities.

Lou's presentations were so incredible that people would come back and hear the same stories 3 and 4 times. In the end, this was a great man, an incredible pioneer and an irreplaceable voice for persons with all disabilities, but especially those with the greatest challenges. When he wrote, he talked to the reader, he made the reader believe in what true inclusionary values were and why all people with disabilities should be a normal part of our local communities.

It was a privilege to have learned from him and to call him my friend. It is also a privilege to have perhaps his final paper lead off this issue of the APSE 2020 conference proceedings.

What a wonderful man and how he will be missed! There will be longer and more in depth tributes, I am sure, to Lou Brown but at JVR, we are happy and proud to publish his final paper in the employment area.

Paul Wehman, PhD  
Editor-in-Chief, JVR