Obituary

In Memory of Mark D. Wood, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology (1960–2015)

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On 26 April 2015 Mark Wood, Professor of Psychology at the University of Rhode Island, suddenly left this life while indulging his passion of running. Though an experienced marathoner and triathlete whom all viewed as a paragon of fitness, his passing was all too difficult to comprehend for his family, friends, colleagues and students.

Mark grew up in Owasso, Oklahoma, served in the US Navy, and then went on to the Arizona State University to obtain his B.A. in Psychology (1990). Following graduation, he pursued graduate training in Social Psychology at the University of Missouri. While at Missouri, Mark met Ken Sher, a clinical psychologist, who became his advisor and who helped him develop a multi-faceted and influential research program in college student drinking. Most importantly, Mark met his future wife, Noelle, at Missouri who quickly became the love of his life. After receiving his Ph.D. in 1996, Mark went on to Brown University as a Post-Doctoral Fellow and in 1998 was appointed to the faculty at the University of Rhode Island (Department of Psychology), becoming a Full Professor in 2006. One of Mark’s greatest legacies will be the long list of very grateful graduate students he mentored who went on to productive careers in alcohol research. At the time of his death, Mark was the Director of the Behavioral Science program where he was beloved by his colleagues. In addition to his scientific research on alcohol misuse in youth, he was active on campus and in the community in organizing and contributing to “grass roots” programs targeting teen and young adult drinking problems. A generous spirit who always tried to give to each community he was a part of, he founded the 5K Run/Walk at the annual Research Society on Alcoholism Meeting helping to raise money for the educational program.

On a personal level, occasionally we meet a person in our lives who for some innate reason really connects with us. Mark gave generously of his time to many people and causes. He spent countless hours with his graduate students to help shape their theses, dissertations and publications. He loved to spend time with his friends, watching the Red Sox whether at home or away (and in 2004 maintained the faith when all looked lost to the rest of us), sharing his wit and stories while having a beer or two or simply enjoying dinner together. Above all, Mark loved spending time with Noelle, Olivia Grace his daughter and son Chance. Mark loved being a father and was loved by his family, friends and colleagues from around the world. Mark and Noelle also made time for Tiffany Stevens who they mentored as a Big Brother and Sister from the age of 9 through college and beyond, and who was at his side until the end. Mark touched the lives of many and will not be forgotten. His last act was to donate his organs so others could live, just the way he wanted it. Mark’s wonderfully infectious personality may just be in our memories, but he is not far from our thoughts and our hearts, and he will be so missed. Importantly, we keep his family in our prayers.