



Roger K. Thomas: Autobiographical Sketch

Attending graduate school was an unplanned, fortuitous, "last-minute" decision (a story too long to tell here), and I earned B.S. (1961), M.S. ('63) and Ph.D. ('65) degrees in the UGA Psychology Department. That was followed with a 2-year postdoctoral fellowship (1965-1967) in the Center for Neurobiological Sciences in the University of Florida's College of Medicine where I also had the title "Honorary Instructor of Neurosurgery." Occasionally I taught non-neurosurgery faculty members neurosurgical methods needed in her/his research (e.g., I taught a faculty member from the OBGYN Department stereotaxic surgery on monkeys to enable him to investigate reproductive hormones associated with the hypothalamus).

I was hired on the faculty in Psychology at UGA in 1967 where I have remained (as Emeritus Professor since 2002). In the 1970s, there was a public controversy led by retired Dean William Tate who criticized UGA's upper administration for hiring too few UGA graduates as faculty members. The administration responded with tired, old arguments against "inbreeding," and in self-defense, I determined that many of Harvard's Psychology faculty members were Harvard PhD degree, I then felt justified in expressing the view that like Harvard UGA does hire its graduates occasionally but only the "brightest and best!"

I was department head for nearly 10 years (January 1984 – August 1993) which was about four years too many and served the second-longest tenure of a department head to date (A. S. Edwards served 32 years). I also have the distinction of coming out of retirement to serve as interim

head from August 2004-March 2005 which was about seven months too many!

In September 1993, I was appointed Director of the Franklin College of Arts and Science Public Service and Outreach Program. The primary function of the program was to provide volunteer speakers from all 31 departments in the Franklin College to any legitimate group that requested one (schools, civic clubs, retirement homes, etc.). The institutions got a free, expert UGA speaker and each speaker got \$300 per presentation in the form of funds deposited in her/his name in her/his home department for special use in teaching and research plus any travel expenses that might have been involved. In contrast to being a department head, everyone was happy! It was a one-third time position; with one-third teaching and one-third time research. It befell me both to develop and implement the program which I did for nine years until I retired in 2002. In my last year as Director we had a catalog of 138 speakers, each offering from 2-5 topics, and we were accommodating more than 300 requests per year for speakers.

My research career was (is) divided into three overlapping phases. Phase 1 began with my dissertation, supervised by Lelon J. Peacock, and it involved several years of brain-behavior research using rats and monkeys, where I focused mainly on neural substrates of learning and memory. I used "mainstream" behavioral measures (e.g., mazes and Pavlovian and operant learning methods) until deciding such were not representative of how even feral rats conducted their lives. I wanted animal models closer to how humans conduct their lives and thus began phase 2, an effort to develop behavioral measures that involved "higher-order" kinds of learning involving class and relational concepts. My plan was to use the "higher-order" methods in brain research, but I did no direct brain-behavior research after the late 1970s. I did teach Neuroanatomy and other brain-related courses until retirement and I did supervise graduate student theses and dissertations that involved brain manipulations until my third-from-last Ph.D. (1999) student, Aileen Bailey; Aileen developed a better rat model to study the brain in conjunction with Alzheimer's disease. Over the years I supervised 23 M.S. and 21 Ph.D. degree students. My most recent research phase which began in the early 1990s is researching history of animal psychology and behavioral neuroscience as well as historical biographical research. Doing historical research is fun (e.g, involves "detective" work), does not require a laboratory, and needs relatively little funding. To see more about my current research activities, please examine my website: <https://faculty.franklin.uga.edu/rkthomas/>

I have had a mostly happy life as a UGA faculty member, one that

continues with research. I just had an article published in 2016 and two lengthy entries, “Brain and Intelligence” and “Evolution of Intelligence,” in the 2016 publication of the *Encyclopedia of Theory in Psychology*. I hope to have many more happy years to come!