Lelon J. Peacock (1928-2013): Sixty-Sixth President of the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology

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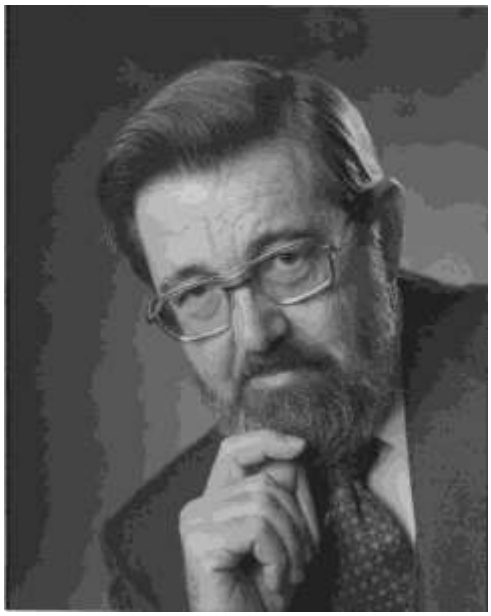
This biography is adapted from a chapter for forthcoming volumes about past presidents of the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology (SSPP; Rodopi Press, James L. Pate, Editor and SSPP Historian). Hence, the SSPP emphasis in the biography.



Brief Family History

Lelon James Peacock III, known to his family and friends as Lee, was born May 25, 1928 in Brevard, NC. He died on January 5, 2013 in Athens, Georgia. Peacock's father, Lelon J. Peacock, II, was born on March 31, 1910, and died on August 27, 1968. He served as a pharmacist's mate during World War II.,. Dorothy Barrett Peacock, Peacock's mother, was born on October 30, 1909, and died on September 3, 1990.She was a data manager for the National Weather Service in Asheville, North Carolina.[1]

Peacock met Marian Davis while attending Lee H. Edwards High School in Asheville, North Carolina. They married at age 17 and kept it secret for five years, as nursing schools in those days usually did not admit married students. Peacock enrolled at Emory University (Atlanta, Georgia) while Marian began her nursing education at Berea College (Berea, Kentucky). Peacock soon transferred to Berea. They had three children (Lynn Barrett Peacock, Janice Davis Peacock, and Timothy Lee Peacock), and at the time of Peacock's death, he had eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Education

High School and Undergraduate College

Peacock enrolled in the high school associated with Berea College, but transferred during his senior year to Lee H. Edwards High School in Asheville, North Carolina, from which he graduated. He enrolled at Emory University where he studied from September 1945 until June 1947. He transferred to Berea College in January 1948 where he earned the A.B. degree in 1950, with a double-major in biology and psychology.

Graduate Education

Peacock (Peacock, 1990) enrolled in graduate school at the University of Kentucky (UK) in September 1950 where he earned the M.S. degree (1952) and the Ph.D. degree (1956; Peacock's Curriculum Vitae). Peacock's nominal major professor was James S. Calvin in the Psychology Department, but his most influential mentor was L. L. Boyarsky, a neurophysiologist in the UK College of Medicine. Boyarsky supervised Peacock's master's thesis and doctoral dissertation. Peacock also identified Henry W, Nissen as being a significant mentor. Nissen was Director of the Yerkes

Laboratory of Primate Biology in Orange Park, Florida when Peacock was a Research Associate there. Peacock also expressed much admiration for Karl S. Lashley, and Peacock's mentoring style (see below) reflected Lashley's. As a graduate student, Peacock corresponded with Lashley, and Lashley hired Peacock as a Research Associate at the Yerkes Laboratory in 1956. Peacock succeeded Nissen as Acting Director of the Yerkes Laboratories until a permanent Director could be hired (Dewsbury, 2006).

Major Appointments

Peacock's Early Post-Graduate Career

During Peacock's graduate school years, he was employed as a psychophysiologist at the U. S. Army Research Laboratory, Fort Knox, Kentucky, from September 1954 to November 1956. In 1955-1956, Peacock was Head of the Environmental Factors Section of the U.S. Army Medical Research Laboratory at Fort Knox. From December 1956 to September 1959, Peacock was employed at the Yerkes Laboratories of Primate Biology in Orange Park, Florida, initially as a Research Associate. Upon Nissen's untimely death and as already mentioned, Peacock served as Acting Director until a more experienced, full-time Director could be appointed. Peacock became an Assistant Professor at the University of Georgia (UGA) in September 1959 where he remained until retirement as Professor Emeritus in 1990.

Peacock's Career at the University of Georgia

*Administrative duties***.** Peacock served in several important administrative capacities while at UGA. The first and, perhaps, the most important one was to lead the Psychology Department's participation in writing a grant to develop the Biological

Sciences at UGA. The National Science Foundation (NSF) funded a Science Development Award to UGA's Division of Biological Sciences for approximately $5,000,000.00; the funding ran from 1967 to 1973. Not only did the award have a significant impact on UGA's development in general, it gave Psychology a strong position among the biological sciences. The strength of this position remains today as psychology is a full partner in UGA's interdisciplinary doctoral program enabling a student to earn a Ph.D. degree in neuroscience. It also facilitated the development of the Biopsychology doctoral program within the Psychology Department. After nearly three decades the program's name was changed to Neuroscience and Behavior and in 2011 the latter was merged with other programs to form the department's Behavioral and Brain Sciences doctoral program.

Other administrative duties at UGA included more than one stints as Chair of the Biopsychology Doctoral Program. From 1979 to 1990, Peacock was Coordinator of Graduate Education in the Psychology Department; this was a significant responsibility as the department averaged about 150 graduate students a year during those years.

Teaching. While Peacock had significant accomplishments in research as will be discussed later, he probably had his greatest impact as a teacher. He was an outstanding classroom teacher as the following anecdote will indicate. It was written upon Peacock's death in 2013 by Brian R. Metcalf, Ph.D., currently Professor of Psychology at the University of Cincinnati..

> Professor Peacock was a professor's professor. I had the honor … of being in Prof. Peacock's . . .History of Psychology course as a . . . graduate student . . . . What an amazing experience! One didn't coast through a Peacock class! Or lose

> interest. I memorized . . . the titles, authors, and key quotations from ALL of about 250 key books . . . . His "Book of the Day" ritual is something I do [in] all of my . . . classes . . . . Dr. Peacock is what . . . professors . . . should strive even harder to be . . . .

Peacock was also a masterful teacher of graduate seminars which was how he taught most of his courses. The following anecdote, typical of Peacock's seminars, was provided in 2013 by Norman Ray Remley, Ph D., Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Texas Christian University. According to Remley, in Peacock's seminar "Other Senses" (all but vision and audition), he distributed a reading list of 18 or more pages. Many were books such as the whole of Volume III of the *Handbook of Neurophysiology*. Remley was Peacock's senior student, and the other members of the class asked Remley to talk with Peacock about how overwhelming the list was, especially considering all their other duties and assignments. Remley continued, "After I explained all of this, I stated that it was impossible for us to complete that reading list by the end of the term. He paused and then quietly stated, "I know, but I expect you to try."

Peacock often held his graduate seminars at his home in the evenings. After about 1.5 hours, his wife, Marian, would enter with some dessert she had made; for example, her Baked Alaska was my first experience with that delicacy. As the seminar wound down for the evening, Peacock usually brought out some of his home brew beer for everyone which probably facilitated some of the better academic discussions.

As a Ph.D. degree mentor, Peacock treated his students individually and usually found some way to test each one's mettle. For example, in my third graduate student year and relatively soon after I asked Peacock to be my major professor for the Ph.D. (I

earned the M.S. degree with another mentor), he and Milton H. Hodge hired me as their research assistant on their NIH grant. On my first day as their assistant, Peacock handed me a complex electronic diagram of the ultrasonic activity recording device that he and Marshal Williams had designed (Peacock & Williams, 1962). The diagram was hand-scrawled on an oversize sheet of plain wrapping paper, and Peacock told me to build it. I knew nothing about electronics or electronic diagrams. The only assistance he gave was to tell me to buy the *Radio Amateur's Handbook* and study Chapter 1. He teased me daily that when I finished building it that "it won't work." As I recall, to my considerable relief, it did.

The following two anecdotes were provided in 2013 by Ariel Y. Deutch, Ph.D. who currently holds a distinguished chair in Psychiatry and who is also a Professor of Pharmacology, both at the Vanderbilt University Medical Center. It was usual for a student facing a week of written qualifying examinations for the Ph.D. to ask their committee members for advice about how to prepare. According to Deutch, most committee members provided specific recommendations. "Until Lee. Who said, after slowly pondering for suitable effect, 'well (pause again), I suggest you start on the top floor of the science library and work your way down.'"

Deutch then reported that after all his hard work to prepare a written dissertation proposal which in those days had to be typed with carbon copies, an onerous addition to an already difficult task, he submitted the proposal to Peacock for his comments.

> After the week had passed, I received back the document . . .[where] he had scribbled on the front page: "A byzantine farrago of gerundives. Redo". This first sent me running to the library to figure out what he had said, and then to Allen's

[an Athens, Georgia beer tavern] to drown my sorrow.

Research. There was no single focus in Peacock's research, except that all might be described as being related to biopsychology. Nevertheless, most of his research fit within four areas: (a) ionizing radiation and behavior, (b) biological bases of motivation, (c) human psychophysiology, (d) design and construction of scientific instruments. Related to his expertise with scientific instruments, Peacock became an expert trial witness on the fallibility of "lie detector" evidence.

Following are some examples of Peacock's research that were among those about which he seemed proudest. Perhaps, the earliest was a study done at the Yerkes Laboratories of Primate Biology (Orange Park, Florida) and published in *Science* (Peacock & Rogers, 1959). Based on 118 chimpanzee births, they found a mean gestation period of 227 days and a range of 196-260 days; humans have a mean gestation period of 280 days and a range of 259-294 days. Additionally, Peacock and Rogers found a twinning rate of approximately 50 in 1,000 chimpanzee births which is about twice the rate for humans.

Peacock had many scholarly publications and presentations. He co-authored a general psychology textbook (Heckel & Peacock, 1966) that was intended for beginning students. For such a book Peacock wrote two chapters pertinent to history of psychology that was unprecedented in its scope and which has likely never been surpassed in an introductory textbook. He also co-authored two book chapters (Peacock & James, 1962, 1964) that involved the effects of ionizing radiation on behavior, especially radiation-induced taste aversion. The research on ionizing radiation and behavior ranged widely and was summarized well in his presidential

address for the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology (SSPP); this address will be discussed further below (Peacock, 1974).

Perhaps, Peacock's most enduring interest was in scientific instrumentation. Regarding publication, this appears to have begun with construction of a constant current electronic shocking device (Hammes & Peacock, 1961). This was followed soon by his design of the previously mentioned ultrasonic activity measuring device (Peacock & Williams, 1962). The goal was to have a way to measure an animal's general activity using a device that did not influence the animal's activity as, for example, did the running wheels so commonly used to measure a rat's general activity. Essentially, a rat's cage could be "filled" with standing sound waves of a frequency above the rat's ability to hear, and the rat's movement though the field disrupted the sound waves. The energy associated with the disruption of the sound waves was transduced to activate counters that reflected the amount of the rat's activity (Peacock, Hodge, & Thomas, 1966). The device was also used with several other species including humans (McFarland, Peacock, & Watson, 1966).

In two publications that resulted in considerable national and international recognition, Peacock's role was primarily that of constructing the instrument used. In the first, Kahl and Peacock (1963) measured the speed of the bill-snap reflex of the wood stork and found it to be the fastest reflex ever measured, namely, 19-thousandths of a second. *Time Magazine* included an article titled "Portrait of a Predator" (August 23, 1963) about Kahl's and Peacock's research. It was noted that the wood stork used the reflex to catch small fish that swam though its opened bill. The *Time* article concluded,

“This reflex makes the wood stork the fastest fisherman on record, and certainly gives it the fastest jaws in the drawling south” (p. 58).

In the second instrumentation example, Peacock constructed the instrument that was used to measure the effect of acute alcohol intoxication on the female orgasmic response (Malatesta, Pollock, Crotty, & Peacock, 1982). The instrument measured blood volume changes in the vagina during orgasm by means of photoplethysmography. Blood alcohol levels were not allowed to exceed 0.075%; the national standard for legal intoxication in the United States of America is 0.08%. The main findings were that increased alcohol consumption delayed the onset of orgasm, but the subjects reported a more enjoyable orgasmic experience with moderate levels of alcohol consumption. Peacock was proud that this article received the Hugo Beigel Research Award for best article of the year in 1982 in *The Journal of Sex Research.*

The last example of Peacock’s research to be considered here reflected both his keen interest in history and his sense of humor (Peacock, 1975). The background for Peacock’s article involved Harry Harlow’s and Stephen Suomi’s well-known series of experiments in which infant rhesus monkeys were separated at birth from their mothers. The infants were raised by inanimate surrogate mothers that varied in terms of how much “contact comfort” (Harlow’s phrase) the surrogate mother provided. An important purpose of a Harlow’s research was to investigate how such traumatic separation affected subsequent learning ability. Using humor and language that could be only Harlow, he claimed to have conceived of the concept of an inanimate surrogate as follows:

> Many creative ideas have suddenly appeared in a flight of fancy, But the surrogate mother concept appeared during the course of a fancy [airplane champagne] flight. . . . . Whether or not it was an immaculate conception, it was certainly a virginal birth. (Harlow, Harlow, & Suomi, 1971, p. 539)

Peacock's (1975) response was, "I suggest that this fruitful event was neither an immaculate conception nor a virginal birth. Harlow may well have been inseminated by some ideas read long ago and subsequently forgotten" (p. 1018).

Peacock then referred to reports of a surrogate mother for an infant orangutan invented by Alfred Russel Wallace (1856), and Peacock noted that Wallace (1962) had discussed it in his well-known book, *The Malay Archipelago.* Peacock acknowledged that while Harlow might not have known of Wallace's publications, "it was "probable that he [Harlow] was familiar with Yerkes and Yerkes (1929)" (p. 1018). Yerkes and Yerkes had discussed Wallace's book extensively, and they had cited Wallace's 1856 article. Peacock concluded, ". . . the exact ancestry of the artificial mother is a minor question, but one which illustrates once more the essential continuity of scientific thought and its dependence on earlier achievements" (p. 1019).

Peacock had sent Harlow a draft of his manuscript before submitting it for publication, and Harlow had written to Peacock in a letter dated February 26, 1974. "I have read with deep appreciation and fascination your proposed paper on the evolution of the surrogate mother. In my opinion it is totally faultless . . . ."

Peacock and the SSPP

Peacock told me in a private conversation in the fall of 2012 that he first attended SSPP in 1959. According to his *CV* his first presentation at SSPP was in 1963 during a symposium on the role of the reticular formation in behavior.

Peacock's students and the SSPP. Peacock was a long-time, enthusiastic supporter of SSPP, especially among his students. It was due to his influence that five of his students (one M.S. degree and four Ph.D. degree), including me, drove from Athens, Georgia to Lexington, Kentucky to attend and to present papers at the 1964 SSPP meeting. At the 1966 SSPP meeting in New Orleans, five of Peacock's recent post-Ph.D. students, including me, competed for the Junior Achievement Award. Norman Ray Remley, one of Peacock's students, won the award in 1966. In 1971, the award was renamed the Richard M. Griffith Memorial Award. Peacock had four students who won the Griffith Award; they were/are G. Rufus Sessions in 1973, Mary Ellen O'Connor Chernovetz in 1974, Sarah McLeod Miller in 1980, and Kelly Gurley Lambert in 1991.

When Peacock retired from UGA in 1990, a two-session festschrift in honor of Peacock was held at the 1991 meeting of the SSPP in Atlanta, Georgia. Including my Introductory Remarks, other Peacock students in the first session and in alphabetical order who presented or co-authored papers were M. L. J. Crawford, Ariel Y. Deutch, Ralph L. Elkins, Josephine Johns, Kelly Gurley Lambert, and Paul L. Walters. N. Ray Remley chaired the second session, and papers were presented by Peacock's

students, Donald K. Ingram, Mary Ellen O'Connor, Antonio E. Puente, G. Rufus Sessions, and me.

Following the SSPP meeting, Arthur J. Riopelle, Editor of the *Journal of General Psychology: Experimental, Physiological and Comparative Psychology,* invited me to assemble a Festschrift based on the SSPP papers in honor of Peacock to constitute a special issue of that journal (1993, Volume 120, Number 1). It was understood that the manuscripts would undergo normal editorial review. A few had already committed their SSPP presentations elsewhere, but participating in the published festschrift in alphabetical order were M. L. J. Crawford, Josephine Johns, Kelly Lambert, Mary Ellen O'Connor, Antonio Puente, Roger Thomas, and Paul Walters.

Twenty-three years after the festschrift, a symposium, "Biopsychology of Lelon J. Peacock" was presented in his memory at the 2014 meeting of the SSPP in Charleston, South Carolina. Participating in 2014 and in alphabetical order were Ariel Deutch, Donald Ingram, Josephine Johns, Kelly Lambert, Antonio Puente, and me.

Peacock's service to the SSPP. Peacock served as an elected member of the Council from 1969 to 1972. He also served as president-elect in 1973, as president in 1974 and as past-president in 1975. As past-president he served as co-chair of the Richard M. Griffith Memorial Award Committee. In addition to these positions, Peacock also served as SSPP's representative to the American Association for the Advancement of Science from 1971 to 1990.

As mentioned earlier, Peacock's (1974) SSPP presidential address was titled *Ionizing Radiation and Behavior*. He began by tracing the history of the discovery and early use of ionizing radiation by Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen, especially its use in x-ray

machines for medical diagnosis. Peacock described how within only seven months of Roentgen's discovery, it had made its way into use by the scientific forefathers of physiological psychology who directed x-rays into human eyes and found that they produced visual sensations. Nevertheless, Peacock noted that in the first review of the behavioral effects of ionizing radiation (Furchtgott, 1956) only 16 journal articles were cited. A second review covering the years 1955 to 1961 by Furchtgott (1963) found a tenfold increase. Peacock then gave, mostly in non-expert terms, as easy a lesson as he could on the physics of ionizing radiation. That was followed by a discussion of John Garcia's pioneering work on the radiation-induced taste aversion in rats. Most of the remainder of his address was about some of the research done by his students to whom he gave most of the credit; of course, they could not have done it without his teaching and guidance. The research covered a range of manipulations, too many to summarize here, but one example is that several students investigated how damage to various areas of the brain did or did not influence the effects of ionizing radiation on behavior.

Many years ago, Peacock asked me to present his Necrology in the Memorial Minutes of the SSPP Business Meeting following his death which I did at the 2014 meeting of the SSPP. He specifically asked me to recount a story that occurred at the 1966 SSPP meeting. The following is quoted from the Memorial Minutes of the SSPP meeting in 2014 (Thomas, 2014).

> Five of Lee's PhD students, including yours truly, competed for the predecessor to the Richard M. Griffith Award. Lee's student Ray Remley received the award. In those times it was considered manly to be able to

drink a lot and more so to be able to “hold your liquor.” Lee and the five students likely started that day’s drinking at the SSPP cocktail hour. Alcohol consumption continued through dinner and as we strolled about the French Quarter. Around 11:00 we ended up in somebody’s hotel room, not Lee’s, with a bottle of Scotch, Lee’s favorite, and a bottle of bourbon. I do not remember any conspiracy, but Lee believed we had conspired to “to drink the old man under the table.” About 2:00 AM, as Lee sat in his chair all vibrant and conversant, the rest of us were slumped in chairs or lying on the floor barely awake. Lee rose from his chair and strolled steadily to\ the door. With his hand on the door knob, he turned and recited:

Not drunk is he, who from the floor
Can rise alone, and still drink more;
But drunk is he, who prostrate lies,
Without the power to drink or rise.

The verse was written by the 19th century English poet, Thomas Love Peacock; they were not kin as far as Lee knew.

Honors, Awards, and Other Recognition

In his CV, Peacock listed as his three main honors: (a) being President of the SSPP, (b) receiving UGA’s most prestigious research award, the M. G. Michael Research Award, and (c) receiving *t*he Hugo Beigl research as a co-author on the article deemed the best in 1982 in *The Journal of Sex Research*. He did not list it as an honor, but he was a Fellow in the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Currently, UGA boasts proudly in its weekly newsletter, *Columns*,

and includes information about each recipient, anytime a UGA faculty member becomes a Fellow of AAAS. He was an Honorary Life Member of the SSPP. He was a member of eight national and international societies. In addition to the various formal offices he held in the SSPP, he was elected President of the UGA Chapter of the Society for Neuroscience in 1986-1987.

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Author Note

All unpublished information provided in this biography resulted from the author’s access to many documents associated with Lelon J. Peacock, such as, his *Curriculum Vitae*, his University of Georgia Personnel File, interview notes I made talking with him in the Fall of 2011, and having known him as student, colleague, and friend from 1960 to 2013. When this biography has completed the editing process, all unpublished information used here will be donated to the University of Georgia Archives that are maintained in the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, a subdivision of the University of Georgia Libraries.