

College of Arts and Sciences



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2006 Distinguished Career Award for the Practice of Sociology:
Acceptance Remarks by Art Shostak (allotted time: ONE minute): -

"We marked last year the 100th anniversary of the founding of our national Sociology Association. Now, in 2006 we celebrate the holding of its first Annual Meeting. That small gathering of possibly less than 100 was presided over by one of the outstanding Fathers of our profession - Lester Frank Ward. As the first president of our organization he had just published a major, if now forgotten work entitled Applied Sociology, a moving testimonial to his commitment to sociological practice, and a road mark of continued relevance and value. Long before many other sociologists marched in support Ward championed women's rights. He urged establishment of universal free schooling. And he was among the first to urge a thoroughgoing reassessment of how American males were socialized, the better to help them become far less macho and far more mature.

Throughout his wide-ranging career as a pioneering applied sociologist Lester Frank Ward urged appreciation of the contribution our profession could make to alleviating pressing and emerging social problems. Admired as a theorist for his schema (Social Telesis), and also respected an early methodologist, Ward taught that applied sociology drew on comparably on abstract ideas, statistical tools, and heart-felt passion. I regard this ASA Award as a tribute of sorts to Ward's continued relevance and influence. I urge us all to give his example, his advocacy, and his writings fresh and warranted attention.

Supporters of Ward's stripe of sociology are now found in both the long-standing Sociological Practice Section of the ASA (which I was proud to head for a year in the 1980s) and in a new organization, the Association of Applied and Clinical Sociologists (AACS). Members of both organizations, people like Ross Koppel, Jay Weinstein, and Jan Fritz, among scores of others, have been very helpful across my 45 years of practice, and I cannot thank them enough. Panels, workshops, and journals offered by these two bodies, and in the case of the AACS, its two precedent organizations (Sociological Practice Association and Society of Applied Sociologists) fed my need for cutting-edge ideas and field reports of successes and disappointments (we have no failures - only challenging opportunities for corrective learning).

On this note of support, I would also like to thank role models from

my years as a graduate student - Mel Tumin and Jessie Bernard, in particular, along with early colleagues whose practice inspired me - people like Marv Wolfgang and Thorstein Sellin - and Drexel University colleagues over my recent 37 years there - especially able practitioners like Julia Hall, Doug Porpora, and others. Above all. I owe more than I can adequately express to Lynn Seng, my wife of these past 20 years. She has helped me chose projects, shared my doubts and confusion, smiled along in the good times, and in 101 other ways, helped me accomplish just a little more. Applied work can be lonely and trying: Lynn has understood in important private ways.

Finally, there is the vital matter of metaphor: How can sociological practice be succinctly understood? I commend in this matter counsel I adapt from the 2,000-year old writings of Lao Tzu - The Sage is self-effacing and scanty of words. When his/her work is finished, and something of consequence has been changed, the people have good reason to believe it is THEY who have accomplished it.

Over four decades of learning as an applied sociologist (for that is what we always remain - learners) has me persuaded this prescription of the Eastern Master is a sound guide to the collaborative, empowering, and life-enhancing work Ward would have some of us take as our Mission. I salute all who have taken up Ward's challenge, and I urge more and more young sociologists to try their hand at practice: Every other mode of sociology - theorizing, methodological experiments, policy analysis, and so on - goes better when aided by practice, and, vice versa. We have so much yet to help others try to accomplish: let's get on with it!"