

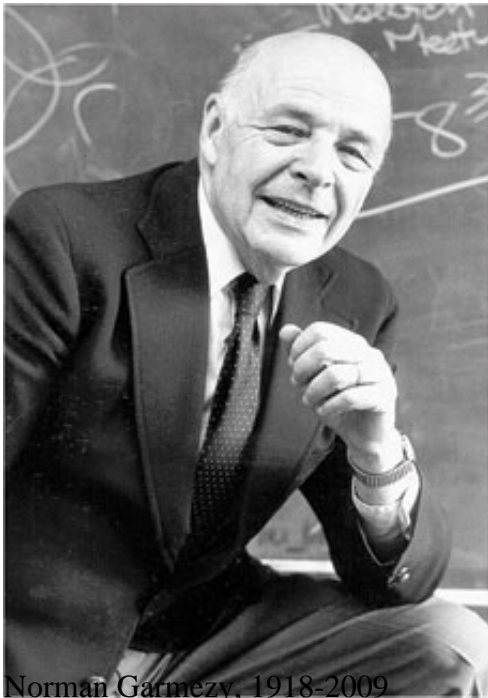
# In Appreciation: Norman Garmezy

March 01, 2010

**Sir Michael Rutter**

*Institute of Psychiatry, London*

I first met Norm in the early 19



Norman Garmezy, 1918-2009

70s at a conference at Lake Blodin Yugoslavia, when we got talking at some length while going in a small boat to some island. We quickly got on very well as individuals, but also found that we had many shared professional interests. This led to Norm and his wife Edie coming to London to spend a year in my department, during which we first talked about putting together a group to spend a year at the Center for Advanced Studies at Stanford in order to study stress, coping, and development. This came to pass in the 1979-80 academic year with a wonderful group of researchers who, under Norm's facilitating leadership, discussed key issues in an incisive, problem-solving way. For Norm and me, resilience proved to be a central theme, and I learned a great deal from Norm on how best to think about the concept, and the related (but quite different) concept of competence. Norm's own prospective longitudinal study with Ann Masten on these issues has blazed new paths through a forest of complex influences. Equally, however, Norm's pioneering of developmental psychopathology, on which we wrote a joint chapter for the *Handbook of Child Psychology*, greatly influenced my thinking, as it did

that of all working in the field.

For me, however, my remembrances are at least as much about good times together with Norm and Edie as two of our best and closest friends. We shared holidays together and many meetings at their home in Edina and ours in London and in the British Lake District. Those who were aware of Norm's extreme reluctance to engage in any form of physical exercise would be surprised to know that our times together included mountain walking! Moreover, I have what is, I'm sure, a unique photo of Norm and me sprinting in competition along a lakeside path in Minnesota.

Norm had a great talent for bringing out the best in other people and his wit and social style made him both an outstanding collaborator and someone who was great fun to be with. Along with numerous others I will hugely miss all of that but the legacy of his immense contributions to psychology will live on for many years.

### **Auke Tellegen**

*University of Minnesota*

The following is an edited portion of my tribute to Norman Garnezy on the occasion of his retirement in spring 1989. Although my remarks were delivered more than 20 years ago and use the present tense (and are probably more irreverent than if they had been composed more recently), I can think of no better way of conveying my appreciation of Norman as a psychologist and friend:

"...On occasions like this, it is customary not just to speak of the honored person's legacy, but also to reveal some weakness or inconsistency, perhaps to show that the speaker himself is nobody's fool. However, to me, Norman has always been a person of one piece. No situational or psychodynamic contradictions here. I don't think a psychoanalyst would get Norman on the couch anyway unless Norm could have his own notepad and telephone. Nonetheless, there are noteworthy juxtapositions in Norman's life: He likes Sinatra's singing but not his political tune. He loves the theatre, but not Ronald Reagan's act. He keenly appreciates talent in students and colleagues and generously acknowledges it, but his heart truly warms to those who really try hard, who are serious self-improvers.

Another juxtaposition: early in his career, Norman, in a classic series of investigations with Rodnick, made intensive study of severe psychopathology. Later, he focused on coping and overcoming. Norman's interest in adaptation under adverse circumstances culminated in Project Competence. But in his personal sphere, Norman was remarkably constant, holding fast to what I would call old-fashioned values of work and friendship. It seems therefore that Freud's plain-spoken later dictum is more appropriate than his earlier conflictual message. Asked in his old age what a healthy person should be able to do well, Freud's curt reply was "Lieben und Arbeiten" ("love and work"), an apt characterization of Norm's life and personality.

Yesterday, I ran into Norman as he was leaving Elliott Hall to go home. In one hand, he carried his famous and astonishing 60-pound briefcase filled with books and homework. In the other, he held a bouquet of flowers given to him by his students at what had been the final meeting of his last seminar. This little scene said it all, the bouquet and the briefcase were perfect icons for Freud's late insight. Norman, as he often does, offered to drive me to my car, and I accepted as usual. A word about these

rides: Instead of having to walk to my garage (one-quarter mile), all I need to do is accompany Norman on foot to his garage (one-half mile). We then drive away, continuing our animated conversation until Norm drops me off somewhere, often within easy walking distance from my car. I am not about to part with this ritual.

When Norm joined our department many years ago when I was still a graduate student, he became a caring and generous mentor and friend — both Edie and Norman have been good friends to Licia and myself. Our heartfelt thanks to both of them.”

**Keith H. Nuechterlein**

*University of California, Los Angeles*

Norm Garnezy was the most generous and generative mentor of young psychologists that I have known. When I was an honors undergrad and then a PhD student at the University of Minnesota, I remember how much I always looked forward to meetings with him. His warm, engaging style, his infectious enthusiasm for teaching and research, and his genuine support for his students were legendary. Norm was able to help students find a productive research direction, encourage their intellectual and personal strengths, build their confidence, and launch their careers in a most effective way. I started out somewhat awestruck by this distinguished professor that I just hoped would sponsor my undergraduate honors thesis and ended up in later years feeling that he was a dear academic friend.

Norm had the rare gift of combining the qualities of a visionary and a rigorous empirical scientist. His experimental psychopathology seminar at the University of Minnesota displayed his strong empirical bent, and he urged all of us students to do very carefully designed research. At the same time, Norm was a master at understanding the big picture in a field. While I was in graduate school, I remember how his overview articles of studies of children at risk for schizophrenia in the *Schizophrenia Bulletin* integrated that burgeoning research field and helped to inspire future directions that examined combinations of genetic and environmental factors. During that same period, Norm’s interests were moving from the identification of the factors in vulnerability to schizophrenia to an emphasis on the positive influences that allowed some children to flourish despite risk factors and disadvantage. He was able to inspire a broad range of developmental psychopathologists and developmental psychologists in the 1980s and 1990s to examine factors in resilience in the face of disadvantage and stress. His pioneering impact on these fields continues to this day through his many students and their students.

Another of Norm’s endearing qualities was his love for movies, plays, and story-telling. When the challenges of graduate school and clinical research were particularly great, I could always count on Norm to liven things up with an enthusiastic personal review of a new movie or some clever new story about one of his many interests in life. His ability to balance academic pursuits with a hearty love of life and family made him a wonderful academic role model and treasured friend.

**Margaret O’Dougherty Wright**

*Miami University, Ohio*

I met Norm in 1970. I was 19 years old, engaged to be married, and shortly thereafter, needed to drop out of college because of financial difficulties. I was struck immediately by Norm's warmth, his genuine interest in getting to know me, and his wonderful wit. He had confidence in my abilities, and believed, even more than I did at the time, in my possibilities. When my circumstances improved, he encouraged me to go back to school, and in time I was accepted into graduate school in clinical psychology with Norm as my mentor. What I found to be so truly unique about Norm was that in his interactions with students across so many settings, he never focused much on himself — it was always about you. That generosity of spirit and abundant compassion sustained all of us, over such a long time. Norm had such a big heart, such a generous nature. He gave unhesitatingly to each of us, when we were in need, or struggling, or unsure of what path to take. For me, he was my rock, my most robust protective factor.

For Norm, belief in the resilience of the human spirit was something deeply embedded in his psyche. From him, I learned about resilience as a construct, and learned how to examine individuals' recovery and ability to withstand extreme adversity through participation on Project Competence and through a lifelong collaboration with Norm. Most importantly, I learned about resilience on a personal level. When I struggled with painful issues regarding the mental illness of a family member and how this had impacted me, Norm arranged for me to consult a leading authority in the area of schizophrenia and supported me throughout my difficult journey through this family trauma. When I faltered, he was there as a steady presence, his confidence in my ability to get through it never hesitating, his high regard something I could count on. He fostered resilience in so many of us, and that, more than anything else, has really shaped the work that I now do with people who are struggling to recover from very painful past experiences. The strength, wisdom, and encouragement that I received from Norm will last my lifetime. Now I hope that I can pay it forward. In Ireland, there is a toast made to a true friend, "never above you, never below you, always beside you." With gratitude I will remember all Norm taught me, and with grief, I say goodbye to a much loved mentor.

### **Dante Cicchetti**

*University of Minnesota*

When I was at the end of graduate school and en route to Harvard where I was appointed Assistant Professor, Norm called me into his office. He told me he had some concern about the intensity with which I pursued my studies; he didn't want to see me "burn out." Norm walked me over to a bookcase in his office where he kept *Psychological Abstracts*. He systematically removed each of the volumes, stacking them on top of each other from the earliest years up through when he received his PhD. Norm turned to me and said, "This is what I had to know when I obtained my PhD." He kept stacking the remaining volumes and stated, "This is what you need to know. It's impossible to learn everything. Pursue your dreams, but make sure you enjoy other areas of life." This is but one example of how Norm cared for the "whole person." He was always there for me, especially during the toughest times.

At the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) meeting in 1987, Norm's closest graduate

students and colleagues honored him with a Festschrift dinner and a volume dedicated to his work. I organized a symposium in his honor, and several of his former students and closest colleagues were participants.

When I learned that this symposium had been scheduled as the final event on Sunday at SRCD, I was worried that few people would attend. Many people choose to fly home on Sunday morning, and the symposium was scheduled to begin during that period. Despite my concerns, the attendance was by far the largest I have ever witnessed for an SRCD symposium. Held in a very large ballroom, every seat was taken; moreover, people were standing around the perimeter of the entire room and sitting on the floor in the aisles. This resounding recognition of Norm was very moving. Although Norm received his PhD in clinical psychology, he was internationally admired across a number of disciplines.

During the last years of his academic life, Norm wrote me a letter. He remarked upon the nature of our relationship — how it had evolved from him being my mentor and me his student, to being transformed full circle, with me as mentor and he as student. Even though Norm meant what he said, I couldn't agree with his assessment. We had a very special relationship and he continues to “teach” and “mentor” me in countless ways, even though he has passed away. He will be alive in my heart forever.

## **Ann Masten**

*University of Minnesota*

I met Norman Garmezy as a young gofer at NIH and research assistant to David Shakow. Although I did not know it at the time, David (73 when I became his assistant) had mentored Elliott Rodnick, who in turn had mentored Norm. Many famous people visited David, but few noticed his gofer. Norm, in contrast, knew all about my life within a few visits, and I was already hearing his stories about growing up in New York City and military training during World War II, stories that grew funnier with each retelling. Norm also talked about his new research on competence in children at risk. His passion for research and life was infectious, and I was fascinated with the project he had in mind, so off I went to Minnesota, expecting to stay a few years for a PhD in clinical psychology. I did get away for an internship at UCLA, but my path after that kept me in Minnesota. I joined the faculty in the Institute of Child Development and continued to collaborate with Norm and Auke Tellegen on the Project Competence longitudinal study as I struck out in new directions of my own. It was an amazing journey with one of the greatest mentors of his generation.

Every student should have a mentor like Norm, but Norm always said that everyone should have an Edie, referring to his vivacious wife of 63 years. They were an incredible mentoring team, with Norm focused on academic development and Edie attending to the other aspects of life. When Norm's research team of students met at their home, which was often, Edie always prepared wonderful food and caught up with everyone, her eyes sparkling with interest. She provided balance for us just as she did for Norm. My children thought of them both as grandparents. During the years of decline from his Alzheimer's when we were missing Norm's intellect and humor terribly, Edie continued to nurture us, right up until her death this past year, just 9 months before Norm.

Norm loved life as an academic and his work with students. He transmitted his conviction that good science was the key to helping people. Unexpected results excited him as much as confirming hypotheses, because they could open new research pathways. Norm always was very modest about his extraordinary contributions, despite many awards and accolades. Yet he took great pride in the achievements of his students and their students. Academic life is a bit more challenging these days, but it is still a life imbued with the joys of mentoring, sharing ideas, and discovery. In science and life, Norm always kept me aligned to true north and still does. Over the years, I have tried to do the same for his grandstudents.

### **Lisa Berg Garmezy and Family**

Dad was born to study resilience, really. For his generation of sons of Jewish immigrants, America truly was a golden land, and educational achievement, identification with the underdog, and fighting for social justice were central to the culture. In his life, through the postwar boom, things just kept getting better. He became the optimist who could notice and be captivated by positive outcomes among children of schizophrenics.

Only an optimist and a person of passionate idealism would undergo surgery so he could go to war. From 1944 Northern Ireland, waiting for the invasion of France, Dad wrote home to his fiancée, “I am grateful for the lucky break that I’ve received.” He was risking “desk spread,” he said, because “our food was too darn good,” particularly the late-night pancakes at the Red Cross tent.

Later, he had another mission — that’s how Mom described his frequent travels to spread the resilience message. They shared the belief that in time Dad’s words would inspire sounder social programs that would reshape children’s lives.

Dad was maybe not a great man but an excellent man . . . gentle, witty, honorable, intelligent. He loved talking politics and seeing movies with his daughter Kathy. He and his sons, Andy and Larry, were regulars at the Minnesota Vikings games and after baseball games he’d stand in line with you to get an autographed ball. If a pretty view was available, he’d have his back to it. For 65 years, his Edie was all the beauty he needed.

Dad had two families, biological and collegial, and he was truly devoted to both. To both, he brought the same passions, starting with a striving for excellence. Do the best you can, he told his kids, so you can get into the best high school, college, graduate school, job...it seemed endless. Another guiding principle, at least from the youngest child’s perspective, was “no passive dependency” — be self-reliant and don’t interrupt. And if you see or experience injustice, “write a very strong letter.”

We all loved his humor. He was the marvelous story teller who once contemplated a radio show and tried stand-up during that deployment to Ireland (a “debacle”). He wrote the class skit at City College of New York — his co-author has an Emmy — and created parent skits for Larry’s elementary school fundraisers.

What was most central about Dad, though, was his love of all kinds of people. He was endlessly

fascinated with what made them tick, with what affected and formed their lives. He taught both his families to assume that most people are good, that you can do good too, and to always be aware of the intricacies, the fragility, and the possibility within each of us.

In 2009, in a Nashville nursing home, flashes of that profound interest in others remained. He'd come up with a "wonderful" or "lovely" for visitors, especially for his grandchildren's accomplishments. One of his last statements was a painstakingly vocalized "I love you." The adversity of his illness could not quash the character of this extraordinary man.