

Dear Colleagues,

I received this e-mail from NASP historian Tom Fagan describing the life and achievement of Sam Bonham Jr., an early OSPA president, who recently died. Every one of us who has gone through an Ohio internship owes a debt of gratitude to his memory.

Juliette Madigan

Ohio Delegate

S. J. BONHAM, JR.  
(April 12, 1925 August 10, 2007)

S.J. Bonham, Jr., known to all as Sam, passed away on August 10 at his home in Sarasota, Florida. His survivors include his wife, Martha, two sons, Jim and John, and five grandchildren. A son, S.J. Bonham, III, preceded him.

Sam was a seminal figure in Ohio's Special Education Program and served as State Director for 16 years from 1965 to 1981. He was Ohio's fourth Director. His tenure was at a transformational time in the history of special education. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL94-142) was passed by the U.S. Congress in 1975 and companion Ohio Legislation (Am. Sub. H.B. 455) was enacted by the Ohio General Assembly in 1976. Sam ably guided Ohio's educators through the process that made special education a right for all handicapped children and required informed parental consent. His genius was in systems development and implementation. Under his leadership, the current Special Education Regional Resource Center network was put in place and a comprehensive state program was developed and operationalized.

Sam came to the Ohio Department of Education in 1960 as Chief Psychologist. He had been instrumental in the development of school psychology in Ohio and nationally. As the Director of Pupil Personnel in Montgomery County (Dayton) he instituted the first state paid internship for school psychology. He also was active in OSPA and served a term as its President in 1956. He also served as president of the Ohio Psychology Association. He was one of the founders of the Journal of School Psychology. Sam worked as a school psychologist in Cleveland Heights and in Summit County as well.

Sam was born in Niles, Ohio where his father was Superintendent of Schools. On a personal note, Sam Bonham was critical in my career. I worked under his leadership as a school psychologist in Montgomery County. As my supervisor, he made it possible for me to obtain my clinical training at Dayton State Hospital. Later, we were colleagues in the Division of Special Education at the Ohio Department of Education. He was a true professional, a visionary, and a great leader.

Sam Bonham will be missed by all of us who knew and respected him.

Thomas M. Stephens