

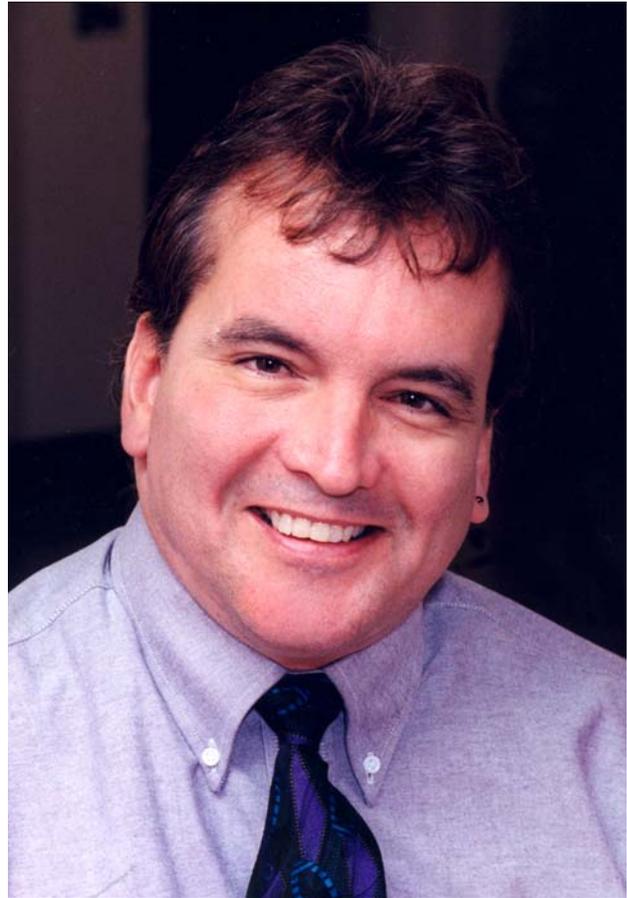
MEMORIAL

In Memoriam: Dr. Thomas J. O'Connor

The final article authored by Thomas J. O'Connor, PhD, appears in this issue of the *Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development (JRRD)*. It is fitting that Tom's final work appears in the *JRRD* because of his dedication to veterans. Tom passed away in March 2002 in Houston, Texas. At the time of his death, Tom was a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Research Health Scientist at the VA Rehabilitation Research and Development Center of Excellence for Healthy Aging. Before joining the VA, he had worked as an assistant professor at the Texas Technical University in Lubbock, Texas. Tom had been supported for his doctoral work through a National Institutes of Health Disability Supplement through the National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research.

Dr. O'Connor began working with Dr. Rory Cooper in 1993 while they were both still in California. Tom joined Dr. Cooper in Pittsburgh in 1995, where he worked at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System until 2001, when he completed his doctorate in Rehabilitation Science from the University of Pittsburgh in spring 2001. His dissertation was on the GAME^{Wheels}TM, a device that allows wheelchair users to play video games by propelling their wheelchairs on a roller system, encouraging exercise, and improving cardiovascular fitness among people with disabilities. This topic was perfect for Tom because of his love for sports and fun. Laughter could often be heard from the laboratory when Tom was working with participants in his studies.

Tom developed a close rapport with the people who participated in his studies. As a person with a disability, he had a unique understanding of rehabilitation research and the people who participate in it. Known



Dr. Thomas J. O'Connor, PhD

Department of Veterans Affairs Health Scientist, VA Rehabilitation Research and Development Center of Excellence for Health Aging, Houston, VA Medical Center

for his fun loving personality, he became a close friend to many students, faculty, and staff wherever he worked. Tom had a bright future that was extinguished by his sudden and unexpected death. He is missed by all of us who knew him. In remembrance of Tom, his family and friends have established a scholarship in his name at the University of Pittsburgh.

Rory A. Cooper, PhD