

**MICHAEL F. HOYT, Ph.D.**

By Roxanna Erickson Klein, R.N., Ph.D.

A senior staff psychologist at the Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in San Rafael, California, Michael Hoyt is a respected and wide-ranging brief therapist. He is a multi-theoretical thinker and expert clinician, a prolific author and editor and has taught numerous highly acclaimed workshops in the U.S. and internationally.

Hoyt completed undergraduate studies at UCLA, an internship at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and received his Ph.D. at Yale University in 1976. After a two-year postdoctoral fellowship at the University of California in San Francisco, he took a position at Kaiser Permanente in Northern California, where he remains today. He says, "When I started at Kaiser, I discovered the 'real world.' We have to find ways of working with many different kinds of people and problems, rather than selecting patients that will fit one brand of therapy." He described some of these experiences in a 1992 presentation and paper, "Managed Care, HMOs, and the Ericksonian Perspective."

Since 1988, Hoyt has given workshops on "Single-Session Therapy" at several Ericksonian Congresses. He also presented an invited address entitled "Termination: How and Why to Say When," as well as an analysis called "What Can We Learn from Milton Erickson's Therapeutic Failures?" His views and diligent preparation as well as his broad perspectives stimulate audience members to consider a multi-theoretical framework and to think outside the box.

His wide interests and encyclopedic knowledge are reflected in the various books he has authored, including *Brief Therapy and Managed Care*, *Some*

*Stories Are Better than Others*, *Interviews with Brief Therapy Experts*, and (forthcoming) *The Present Is a Gift*. He edited several books, including *The First Session in Brief Therapy*, *Constructive Therapies (Vols. 1 & 2)*, and *The Handbook of Constructive Therapies*.

Hoyt's mind moves with remarkable ease back and forth among ideas for psychotherapy, including quotations from a poem or novel, a reference to a movie or song, a metaphor from sports, and maybe a joke or quip. He balances a busy schedule, seeing clients fulltime at Kaiser along with his other endeavors. His many contributions, both to the work of the Erickson Foundation and to the field of psychotherapy are appreciated by all who have the pleasure of working with or knowing him.

I asked him how he found his energy and how he held on to the inspiration for continued professional growth. We talked about the importance of seasoned mentors, including Erickson and Haley, and how he was able to learn so much from his teachers. After a moment of seriousness, Hoyt paused as he re-experienced a meaningful moment. "Sometime in 1992," he told me, "I contacted Jay Haley, by letter and telephone, asking him to participate in an interview for a book I was working on at the time. He indicated his preference not to do a formal interview, but then graciously added, 'How about if we just get together for a drink?' And so we did, at the *Fifth International Ericksonian Congress*, in December 1992. Sitting atop the Hyatt-Regency hotel, we chatted a bit. I had no specific agenda, other than to enjoy the pleasure of Haley's company. Finally, however, an important issue came to my mind. 'Jay, may I ask you a question?' 'Sure,' he replied. I paused, then asked: 'What do you feed your twinkle?' Jay smiled. 'You have one, too, don't you?' he replied. 'Well, yeah, but yours is older-I want to make sure I'm feeding mine the right stuff!' We both laughed."

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