

CONTRIBUTORS OF NOTE

C. Alexander Simpkins Ph.D. and Annellen M. Simpkins Ph.D.

By Roxanna Erickson Klein, RN, Ph.D.

C. Alexander Simpkins, Ph.D. and Annellen M. Simpkins, Ph.D. are a husband and wife team. Their interest in psychology began as a deeply felt concern followed by a commitment to have a positive effect in the world. They became interested in the unconscious mind early on as a primary source for positive potential, and have been pursuing this interest in several forms, through hypnosis, psychotherapy, and Eastern philosophy for many years.

In their early years of training they decided to try to deepen their learnings by seeking out personal teaching from experts in the field of psychotherapy and hypnosis. As part of an independent study masters' degree program through Goddard College, they traveled to leaders in the field. Their independent studies continued at the University of Florida where they had private meetings with a number of superb teachers, including Arthur Combs and Sidney Jourard. This background provided a platform of understanding of humanistic therapy, self-disclosure, and self-actualization. There, at the University of Florida they ran groups under supervision to put some of the theories into practice and also studied behaviorism and gestalt therapy, comparing and contrasting methods.

Next they traveled to Baltimore where they began a long-lasting relationship with Jerome D. Frank, M.D. Ph.D., at Johns Hopkins Medical School's Phipps Clinic. Frank was involved in the latter years of a 25-year study of psychotherapeutic effectiveness. He taught the Simpkins to open their minds and look beyond the taken-for-granted level, to search for more universal underlying factors. They interned on the wards at Phipps and met with Dr. Frank regularly to discuss psychotherapy. They also interned at Sheppard Pratt under the guidance of Lawrence Kubie.

Their first hypnosis teacher was



G. Wilson Shaffer, retired Dean of Johns Hopkins University, Director of Training in Psychotherapy at Sheppard Pratt, and Director of the Hopkins Counseling Center for many decades. Learning to recognize and trust the client's internal capacity and potential under his supervision, they began their first hypnotic work with clients.

They came to San Diego for further development and higher degrees. During their graduate work at United States International University (USIU), they began their studies with Milton Erickson in 1976. They would never forget their first appointment, scheduled for 11 a.m. on a Monday. They expected it to last an hour or so at the most, but ended up staying for a week, attending his fascinating seminars. Every time they traveled to study with Erickson, they witnessed him disclosing his vast depth of knowledge in subtle and sensitive ways. Each seminar was unique, but the threads of the tapestry of his teaching led to many theoretical interpretations. The Simpkins also studied with, learned from, and were supervised by Ernest Rossi, who expertly helped to guide their graduate research comparing insight therapy to hypnotherapy. His creative and insightful interpretations of hypnosis helped to broaden their own understandings. Hypnosis later became one of their primary tools of therapy as they worked with clients at the USIU Counseling Center and later in private practice.

The work with Erickson and Rossi bridged their other research interests that include brainwaves and mental states, creativity, and creative learning. Additionally, another important tool for the Simpkins' inquiry into the unconscious has been through meditation, Eastern philosophy, and learning the martial arts. They became fascinated by the ancient understandings of mind in Buddhism, Zen, Taoism, and Confucianism. They have been writing books on these topics and teaching martial arts and meditation for many years.

Balancing their private practice, which specializes in hypnotherapy and meditation, they have evolved

writing as a primary occupation. Authors of eighteen books, with several more in process, they have written on self-hypnosis: *Effective Self Hypnosis: Pathways to the Unconscious* with a paperback version, *Self Hypnosis Plain and Simple*. This book has been translated into Italian, Spanish, and Bulgarian. They have also written a book on psychotherapy, *Timeless Teachings from the Therapy Masters*, which includes a large section on Dr. Erickson. This book won first-place from the San Diego Book Awards in 2001. Their early Eastern philosophy books were a series on meditation, *Principles of Meditation, Living Meditation, and Meditation from Thought to Action* and *Zen Around the World*. They have written two series on Eastern philosophy: a Simple series, *Simple Zen, Simple Buddhism, Simple Taoism, Simple Confucianism*, and

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Simple Tibetan Buddhism and a Ten Easy Lessons Series: *Zen in Ten*, *Taoism in Ten*, and forthcoming on *Buddhism in Ten*. These books have been translated into numerous languages. Their Eastern philosophy books not only inform people about these ancient traditions but also guide in incorporating the wisdom into everyday life. Most include chapters on psychotherapy and many refer to Erickson, pointing out the many overlaps with his ideas. They also have a book on martial arts, *Chung Do Kwan: The Power of Tae Kwon Do*

and a philosophical novel in an action-adventure genre, *A Perfect World*. Another forthcoming book is on yoga, and they are currently working on two new books on hypnosis. They continue their path and hope their books will enhance potential, as Erickson always encouraged.

We, at the Erickson Foundation are gratified and privileged to have Alex and Annellen Simpkins working with us on the *Newsletter* where they have recently accepted the responsibility as Reviews Editors. Their deep appreciation for the vastness of the pathways of healing is an asset to us all.

