

C O N T R I B U T O R O F N O T E

Marion P. Kostka, Ed.D.

Written by Roxanna Klein, R.N., Ph.D.

A founding member of the Board of Director for the Milton H. Erickson Institute of West Virginia, Marion P. Kostka, Ed.D., also has been a full-time psychologist with the West Virginia Medical Center, Carruth Center of Counseling and Psychological Center in Morgantown, West Virginia, for more than 20 years. He first became interested in hypnosis when the late Kay Thompson, D.D.S., was brought to West Virginia University as adjunct faculty in the Behavioral Medicine and Dentistry department to teach hypnosis. Kostka wanted to attend her classes, but, because he was neither a physician nor a dentist, he was not eligible. He became even more interested as he heard glowing reports from attendees of her coursework. When several people from the Behavioral Medicine and Dentistry unit decided to do a series of formal trainings with Thompson, Kostka volunteered to film the sessions.

He became fascinated with Thompson's work and began organizing additional workshops for her. At each workshop he organized or filmed, he learned more and became even more interested in the ways in which hypnosis worked.

These workshops continued and expanded. Some faculty members for the new series of workshops were colleagues who accompanied Thompson from her hometown of Pittsburgh. Other teaching faculty were locals who had been through extensive training with Thompson. When Thompson died in 1998, the core faculty who had been collaborating for more than 18 years. They decided that the best way to honor her memory and teaching was have a memorial workshop.

Dedicated to Thompson, the ASCH approved workshop was a grand success and Kostka and the other faculty decided to continue the tradition. The workshops continue today with many of the same core faculty. Overall they train about 50 professionals each year; one year there

were 86 in attendance.

The group has expanded their efforts to include a mid-year workshop, "The Kay F. Thompson Memorial Symposium" co-sponsored by the Western Pennsylvania Society of Clinical Hypnosis, a component society of the ASCH. Both teaching events have become highly successful and have brought well-known clinicians as speakers and teachers to the area. The training is extremely important in bringing skills and information about new techniques and clinical tactics; it provides a welcome "brush-up" as well as networking opportunities to the rural environment of Morgantown and West Virginia.

Income from both workshops are dedicated to a scholarship in Thompson's name. This scholarship pays tuition and expenses for full-time graduate students in health-related fields to attend the workshops. In 2003, five people attended training on scholarship, including one from out-of-state.

As a graduate assistant, Kostka worked in the Counseling Center at WVU, teaching biofeedback and relaxation. He remembers that rollercoasters were among his favorite images in teaching relaxation. He always was aware that something "different"-- something more than just relaxation and imaging-- was happening. This was his first inspiration to investigate hypnosis. He was limited to reading and studying about it on his own until the series of Thompson workshops began.

Kostka met his wife Penny who is a LPC in private practice, when she returned to school. "I looked in the hallway," he recounted, "and there she was." Although Penny was a few years behind him in the hypnosis training program, she has been fully involved in the monumental effort entailed in putting together the programs each year. She is also a founding member of the Board of Directors of the Erickson Institute in West Virginia.

Kostka likes to illustrate the power of hypnosis with a story about his daughter. Years ago, he and Penny were re-modeling their home, a 100-year old farm-house. Their

daughter, who was six at the time, got a splinter deep in her foot. She was screaming with fright and pain as her mother worked trying to dig it out with a needle. With very little effort, Kostka, anesthetized her. The little girl became impatient at how slowly her mother was working. So she took the needle, from her mother and finished the job herself!

A prolific presenter for years, Kostka teaches on widely varying topics. These range from presentations on language, to pain management, from stress reduction, to the topic "Stress – It Ain't Necessarily Bad." Sponsors range from The West Virginia Psychological Association to the Department of Justice, from The American Association for Counseling and Development, to a Professional Engineering organization as well as various private corporations. He is faculty member for the Preparatory

Course for the Urology Certifying Examination, and a member of the West Virginia University Committee on Sexual Assault. He co-author articles on ways for nontraditional female students to deal with math anxiety, and is the author of professional publications on test anxiety, hypnosis and many other topics. He even wrote a fascinating unpublished short story about Erickson and Sherlock Holmes, "The Therapist as a Detective: Erickson and Holmes." Kostka is a man of many talents.

Marion, "Mon" Kostka, is a man to be celebrated for bringing hypnosis education to a vast number of professionals, thereby influencing more beneficial health-care for multitudes. And to think, it all grew from a one man's creative effort to find out more about hypnosis by becoming a camera-man!

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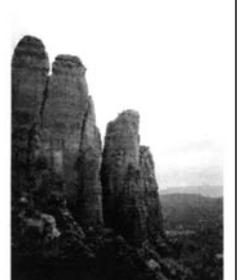
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