

CONTRIBUTOR OF NOTE

Sharon McLaughlin M.A.

By Roxanna Erickson Klein

Managing Editor of this Newsletter, Sharon McLaughlin, M.A., brings many talents to the forefront of the Erickson Foundation. A quiet person, she has a frankness tempered with good humor, as well as an outstanding ability to adapt to individual needs, while focusing on organizational needs. She does not need to push her way to the top; she rises like cream when opportunity presents itself.

After graduating from Seton Hall University in 1985 with a degree in psychology, McLaughlin earned two Master's degrees in counseling, one in school counseling, the other in Marriage and Family Therapy, at the University of San Francisco. She initially became interested in Ericksonian approaches as an undergraduate during practicum at a large inpatient psychiatric facility. There, McLaughlin read her first articles by



Erickson, one about getting stubborn calf into a barn, the other about treating a boy with enuresis. McLaughlin recalls several comments about motivation related in the stories. Unaware at the time, she now recognizes that those two articles planted seeds for what was later to become the cornerstone of her philosophy in both professional and personal life.

Twelve years later, when in graduate school, McLaughlin again encountered Ericksonian therapy.

Her long term advisor and mentor, Larry Palmatier PhD (deceased), who himself had attended Erickson workshops, recommended she take a class on NLP, and another on Ericksonian hypnosis. One classroom experience involved the whole class, as a group, doing an induction using a nine-year-old boy for the subject. Afterwards, the boy described the experience, "Like dreaming only I knew I was awake."

The 1996 Brief Therapy Conference in San Francisco was described by McLaughlin as a life-changing event. She attended workshops by Zeig, Rossi, Yapko, and many others, bringing to life many of the books she had read. After that conference, she began attending any trainings or workshops she could find, even if it meant repeating some. She once served as a volunteer during a class taught by Zeig, which, she reports cemented her belief in the efficacy of experiential learning.

McLaughlin cites her greatest professional influences to be Erickson, Zeig, Palmatier, and personal experience. Having worked her

way through graduate school as the director of a child and family development center that housed five preschool and after school classrooms, she explained, "When you spend seven years watching almost one hundred children interacting on the playground, you begin to notice patterns of behavior and some predictability. The same patterns repeat throughout life, although the contexts may change; it became an invaluable tool for doing therapy."

McLaughlin has spent the majority of her career working with abused children, and adult survivors of abuse. After leaving the child and family development center, she spent two years working in an emergency residential shelter for abused and neglected children. She completed her internship working children's mental health services in Lake County, California. Upon getting her MFT license in 2000, McLaughlin was appointed Clinical Director at a non-profit family services center in Northern California. There she had the opportunity to build mental health programs from the ground up. She also began teaching workshops to community volunteers on subjects of

See CONTRIBUTOR on page 10

CONTRIBUTOR*continued from page 6*

communication, relationship addiction, secondary trauma and child abuse. McLaughlin has taught workshops on metaphor construction at the last two Erickson Congresses.

Currently working night shifts at a psychiatric emergency response unit, McLaughlin describes the setting as a natural fit for Ericksonian therapy. "When there is often only a single session for assisting an individual or family, you want to elicit and utilize every idea or resource that can be generated at the moment." To McLaughlin, her identity as an Ericksonian means, in a nutshell, the therapy begins with the client's own words and perspectives, and proceeds by generating alternate views and behaviors.

Having begun contributing articles and columns to the Foundation Newsletter in 1997, she caught the attention of Dan Short PhD, then Executive Editor of the Newsletter. He invited her to become the guest editor for the Introducing the Institutes column. After Dan Short retired from his position on the Newsletter, the editorship was restructured into several different components. These include a triad of Editors. The Executive Editor sets the tone of each issue and selects the focus; the Reviews Editors solicit and overview the reviews of books and media; and the Managing Editor is the one to work with and encourage cooperative effort from the entire team of contributors. The team is rounded out with a group of writers and Guest Editors who contribute columns on the Institutes, Spirituality and other topics, and those who write the Reviews.

McLaughlin was invited to become the Managing Editor in 2001. It became rapidly apparent that she was immensely talented in her ability to engender team spirit and cooperation from a diverse staff. Her friendly sensitivity and sense of humor both provide tools that she uses to keep the volunteers active, motivated and to remain involved. She is the glue that holds all of this work together.

Thank you Sharon McLaughlin for who you are, and for what you give to the Ericksonian movement.



**Subscribe to the Erickson Listserv:
www.topica.com/lists/EricksonList**