

THE POWER OF TWO

The Power of Two - the Power of Many

Preserving the History of Erickson

By Roxanna Erickson Klein

This column was conceptualized to celebrate the manner in which a partnership generates a synergistic effect. The first column was dedicated to the collaborative efforts of Dr. Milton Erickson and his wife, Elizabeth.

Since then, we have featured other married couples, some of whom have one partner more in the foreground and some of whom are more equally collaborative. Phil and Norma Baretta, Michael and Diane Yapko, Alex and Annellen Simpkins, are among those who have been featured. With each column, we have described how in working harmoniously, *the power of two* extends the reach of both individuals. Also, the potential for influence is compounded exponentially.

While the synergistic effect is both felt and appreciated within a partnership, it is not always recognized by students or the public. In the case of Milton and Elizabeth Erickson, he was established in his profession when they first met she was a student. A team dynamic evolved between them, but professional recognition of Milton's work underplayed the centrality of Elizabeth's role. Together they strove for a change in the horizon -- how psychotherapy is practiced -- to gain acceptance of new ideas they put forth. *Together* they made an impact.

The psychotherapeutic approaches that have come to be identified as Ericksonian, have largely changed how contemporary therapy is practiced

worldwide. Although the ideas and pioneering works are credited to Milton Erickson and Elizabeth gracefully accepted her husband's recognition, between the couple it was acknowledged that she was an important part of the process. And, several of Dr. Erickson's followers, including Jay Haley, recognized this and wrote appreciative dedications to Elizabeth in their books about Ericksonian methodology.

Collaborative effort is a powerful force, even when it is not openly rec-



Dr. and Mrs. Erickson

ognized. Great works involve dedication, support, and often behind-the-scenes efforts by others, sometimes many others. With this column, we are extending beyond the reach of a partnership, beyond the *power of two* and instead reaching out to the *power of many*.

The illustration and feature of this column is the Erickson residence. I begin with a little background:

Milton and Elizabeth Erickson moved to Phoenix, Arizona from Detroit, Michigan in 1948. Within a year Dr. Erickson had established a private practice in their first home on Cypress Street near the Phoenix Heard Museum. Already a maverick, he broke with many of the traditional ways of

treating patients. Like the country doctor who had influenced him in his formative years growing up in a rural community, he practiced an informal approach, integrating Erickson family members and local resources into the care of individuals who sought his services.

Stalwart in his ethics of confidentiality regarding his patients, Dr. Erickson treated them as individuals, and even sometimes as neighbors. The natural respect he radiated for his patients gave them a sense of worth and dignity. Although a few chose to remain private about their lives, the majority of patients enjoyed interaction with the Erickson family. While today it may seem incredulous to imagine a patient wandering into a psychiatrist's kitchen for a glass of water, in the Erickson home during the '60s and '70s it was an everyday event. This interaction with a "normal" family and its reciprocal respect for the patient offered a casual atmosphere, and its freedom provided patients with elements of healing.

In 1970, Milton and Elizabeth Erickson moved to a modest ranch-style home on Hayward Avenue in north Phoenix. For the last decade of his life, Dr. Erickson saw patients, conducted teaching seminars, and worked with colleagues with the same sense of interplay between home and office that had worked so well at the Cypress house. Hundreds found their way to his doorstep and came to identify the Hayward home as pivotal in their healing, learnings, and understanding about the power of hypnosis and psychotherapy.

Milton Erickson died in 1980, and in 2008 the Erickson Foundation purchased the Hayward property with the intent that it become a museum destination for the many visitors of the Foundation and students who attend the Intensives Training Program. Master classes in psychotherapy and lectures on Ericksonian approaches have taken place at the museum for several years now. Mrs. Erickson had kept Dr. Erickson's office mostly intact and family members, along with Jeffrey Zeig, have donated or loaned memorabilia to the museum to further ensure



*Milton H. Erickson and
Elizabeth Moore Erickson*

its authenticity -- just as it was when Dr. Erickson practiced there. The office, and the Hayward home, is an accurate view of the humble lifestyle the Ericksons lived as Dr. Erickson developed his extraordinary work.

On a tight budget and spearheaded with the volunteer efforts of two Erickson family members, the Hayward house Erickson Museum is beginning to blossom. We sincerely hope that many will be moved to work with me and my sister Kristina to further develop contributions of memorabilia and other sources that will add to the current efforts of the museum.

In the morning shadow of Squaw Peak mountain (renamed Piestewa Peak), a visit to Dr. Erickson's simple office, with its modest surroundings and specimens from his cherished Ironwood collection, brings a broader perspective of how much can be accomplished with so little.

We invite you to book a tour to the Erickson Museum the next time you are in Phoenix. <https://erickson-foundation.org/erickson-museum/>

www.erickson-foundation.org