

INTRODUCING THE INSTITUTES

The Milton H. Erickson Institute of Dallas

Interviewed by Marilia Baker, MSW

The MHE Institute of Dallas is unique among the other 108 institutes around the world; two of its founding board members can be said to have studied with Milton H. Erickson, M.D., from the day of their birth! Actually, one could add, they probably heard and became familiar with their father's memorable hypnotic voice before their birth.

The idea of establishing an Institute in Dallas emerged from Betty Alice Erickson's monthly hypnotherapy seminars. A small but enthusiastic group of professionals had met monthly for several years and in Fall, 1997, decided to create an Institute. Deborah Beckman M.S., and Will Handy, L.C.S.W., offered their services as teaching faculty which allowed emergence of a vision for the Institute to focus on training in Ericksonian approaches. The Board of Directors was rounded out by co-seminar member, Richard Long, Ph.D., Dan Short, Ph.D., Betty Alice Erickson, M.S., and Roxanna Erickson Klein, Ph.D.

The Institute training brochure best describes their vision: "Rather than relying on a formula or set of rules, Erickson developed treatment from his own vivid, astute observations of the person in front of him. Our training strives to teach the same standards: to develop each participant's ability to create a unique therapy for their clients." Following the guidelines established by the Erickson Foundation, and with the invaluable and generous input of Rubin Battino, M.S., president, the Milton H. Erickson Society of Dayton, Ohio, the Dallas Institute created beginning, intermediate and advanced training workshops with 120 hours total class time.

The MHE Institute of Dallas continues to provide monthly meetings, some as a forum for each attendee to



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teach a particular area of expertise. Other meetings serve as a means to hone hypnotic skills. In these, a client, from the practice of a regular attendee, agrees to be presented, similar to a patient being presented at Grand Rounds in the medical arena. Each professional provides a healing trance for the client. Afterward, the client critiques what was received and after the client leaves the room, members discuss their own and other people's approaches. As Deborah Beckman says, "This on-going opportunity for refinement of professional clinical skills, with an emphasis on hypnosis, provides a rich learning atmosphere and a spirit of camaraderie."

Beckman, institute training coordinator, is a therapist in private practice in Dallas and has distinguished herself for developing an effective method of treating sleep disturbances and creating individualized therapeutic metaphors. She has presented at major conferences, including the 8th Erickson Congress (2001); Rome (2002), and at the 2002 Brief Therapy Conference in Orlando. She is scheduled to present at the 2003 Brief Therapy meeting in San Francisco. Beckman is currently writing a self-help book on sleep disorders, based on her methodology of working with these patients.

Will Handy, also a primary faculty member providing training, is described by his fellow team members as excelling in making

Erickson's philosophy intimately available to clients and peers alike. The brochure describes his unique style: "Will weaves the (Ericksonian) method into a more traditional-looking session, only occasionally using outright hypnosis." Will has a private practice in addition to working with HIV patients at a mental health agency where he also supervises therapists.

Richard Long, Ph.D., clinical psychologist, is particularly talented in working with children and adolescents. He is in private practice while holding a teaching position at Southern Methodist University. Richard's expertise, academic focus and years of clinical work, provide both a balance and broader perspective for evaluation of services and activities of the Institute.

Dan Short, Ph.D., former executive editor of the *Foundation Newsletter*, resigned as a founding board member when he moved to Phoenix to become associate director of the Foundation, where he has focused on developing the Erickson Archives.

Roxanna Erickson Klein, Ph.D., is a registered nurse for St. Paul Hospice, working with terminally ill patients in their homes. Additionally, she is a member of Board of Directors of the Erickson Foundation and considers the Archives to be her area of special interest. Roxanna also served as editor of the *Newsletter* for more than a decade.

The final Board member, Betty Alice Erickson has been part of the Institute's training programs since its inception. In addition to her private practice and tenure as an editor for the *Foundation Newsletter*, she is currently writing a book about Milton H. Erickson with Bradford Keeney, Ph.D., for the *Profiles in Healing/Cultural Healing Series*. She maintains a busy teaching schedule with a particular interest in bringing Ericksonian ideas to areas not commonly associated with the Erickson movement such as Azerbaijan, Siberia, Bali and Nepal.

Future plans include sponsorship of workshops in other regions which have not had financial resources to provide Ericksonian training. Some of this will be funded by the prize money awarded to the Erickson Family by the German Institutes (M.E.G.). Betty Alice has also received the first *Premio Franco Granone*, awarded by the *Centro Italiano di Ipnosi Clinica e Sperimentale*, of Torino, Italy, in October, 2003. The money given with this honor will likewise help fund workshops in areas of the world with limited financial means.

It is an important goal of the Dallas Institute to pursue communication with other Erickson Institutes and other teachers of Ericksonian work in order to exchange information, compare methods, and ideas for future programs. "Cross-fertilization with other creative people can only enhance programs," commented Roxanna enthusiastically. "The generous efforts of Rubin (Battino) helping Will and me with our curriculum is a prime example of Dr. Erickson's philosophy of sharing" adds Deborah. Another such cross-fertilization is happening through the contributions of Albina Tamalonis, Psy.D., who has been a guest presenter at the Intensives and at the monthly gatherings. The Institute faculty is grateful for her generosity, enthusiasm and continued support.

The Dallas MHEI through its members' vision, mission, programming and talent exchange efforts is a true embodiment of Milton H. Erickson's profound belief in the *cooperation principle* in hypnosis and psychotherapy and the deep respect for the uniqueness of each individual.

The Milton H. Erickson Foundation NEWSLETTER