

The Changing Landscape -- The Milton and Elizabeth Erickson Museum Its History and Transformation

Contributions by Roxanna Erickson-Klein, Marnie McGann, and Jeff Zeig

A Call for Donations:

Milton Erickson is known for his ability to promote change and to transform limitations in adaptive ways. The Erickson Foundation and Erickson family members are subscribing to his approach with the recent changes at The Milton and Elizabeth Erickson Museum.

Shortly after purchasing the Hayward home, the Foundation began working with Erickson family members to transform it into the Erickson Museum. The Foundation assigned financial resources for the maintenance and caretaking of this unique asset. Countless visitors have been hosted and many classes have been held on site. Each step of the way the budget was scrutinized to reduce unnecessary expenditures, while preserving the opportunity for visitors to know the Ericksons in an experiential way.

As costs for the Museum were tallied, it became apparent that the largest expense was for water required to maintain a green lawn in a desert environment. The Foundation and Erickson family members searched for ways to decrease costs and it seemed that transitioning to a xeriscape desert lawn was the most sensible choice in the dry Southwest climate. Therefore, water has been gradually turned off in some areas so that the transition could begin.

Our Vision:

In both the front and back of yards of the Hayward home, we envision a desert lawn that will wrap along the west side to include the front of Dr. Erickson's office. Existing cacti and trees will be integrated into the landscape design. Shrubs and grass that are not water conservative will be eliminated and replaced with hardy native plants. Berms and rocks will be incorporated to enhance the beauty of the landscape. Plantings will be clustered so that the yard has a natural look that reflects shaded areas that one could find in a natural desert setting. We will create walkways with benches and rest areas that will aesthetically add to the overall experience. Although the new landscape will be different from the original design, Erickson's love of nature, especially desert plants, cactus, and shrubs will be honored. Wherever possible, we will select those that Erickson himself would have chosen.

The Strategy:

With the few donations we have already received, a variety of plans for this transformation have been considered and bids were sought. Unfortunately, professional landscaping is a costly venture and all of the bids exceeded our budget.

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THE MILTON H. ERICKSON MUSEUM



Donate now, and help us celebrate Dr. Erickson's love of the unique and distinctive nature of the American Southwest.

Log on to our website and click on the Landscape Project.

Landscape Project



erickson-foundation.org/donate

Milton Erickson Biography

Jeff Zeig continues to interview Erickson family members, including Bert and Lilian Erickson, Robert and Kathy Erickson, and Lance and Helen (Cookie) Erickson for his biography on Milton Erickson. This summer, the Institute for the Advancement of Human Behavior awarded Dr. Zeig a grant so that he could write this important biography. And although he has myriad stories to tell about Dr. Erickson, he is soliciting all Newsletter readers for their personal stories. If you have a story to tell, please contact Dr. Zeig at the Foundation, or email him at: jkzphd@aol.com.



Bert Erickson, Jeff Zeig, and Bert's wife, Lilian



Lance Erickson, his wife Helen (Cookie) and Jeff Zeig

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So we are moving forward with volunteers to explore more economical ways to re-landscape. Erickson always endorsed a "pay as you go" method, so we will not spend more than what is donated for this cause.

We have embarked on a capital campaign of \$20,000 to cover the costs of the landscape transformation. This is approximately half the cost of what was comparably quoted in other bids. The funds that we are soliciting will be sufficient to cover the complete transformation, including the costs for materials, labor, and plant. The timeline for the landscape project is to have it completed by summer 2015.

To Donate:

To make a contribution to this project, please visit: <https://erickson-foundation.org/donate/>. Be sure to select the box marked Erickson Museum Landscape Project box under Donation Distribution so that your contribution is allocated for this project.

Our Promise:

All those involved in the project -- Foundation employees, Erickson family members, and volunteers -- are committed to using resources in the most efficient way. We will maintain the integrity of the Erickson home, and honor Dr. Erickson's appreciation for natural materials and desert habitats. **We will recognize donors who give \$500 or more with a strategically positioned plaque.**

Background:

The Milton and Elizabeth Erickson Museum houses many precious items. Each requires special attention and care. Several Erickson family members have loaned or donated to the Museum prized possessions so that others can see the objects used by the Ericksons in their everyday lives. Visitors will also get a glimpse of the ordinary lifestyle of an extraordinary man and recognize the seeds that germinated the transformation from the way psychotherapy was practiced, to how it is practiced today. The Museum is open to visitors by appointment only.

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While the rest of the Hayward property has undergone transformation, Dr. Erickson's office has been successfully preserved, remaining as intact as possible since his death in 1980. It has become a mecca for visiting students from around the world -- a trend that did not stop with Erickson's death, or even with the death of Mrs. Erickson.

Traveling to visit Dr. Erickson has been a tradition for many students. His ideas were so revolutionary that the unique opportunity to see him work and teach in his own environment was not to be missed.

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In the 1960s, Dr. Erickson lived and practiced on Cypress Street in central Phoenix. By 1970, he had become increasingly frail with post-polio syndrome and was confined to a wheelchair. With the youngest of their eight children leaving for college, the Ericksons decided that it was time to move to a home that would be more conducive to Dr. Erickson's handicap needs and provide space so that he could continue to teach and practice. The Ericksons also wanted a home where they could not only welcome visitors, but their own growing family. They found that place at 1201 E. Hayward Avenue in north central of Phoenix.

The Hayward home had three key features that attracted the Ericksons. First, it had a separate office that adjoined the house with a comfortable waiting area and a spare bedroom and bath. This adjoining structure was deemed "The Little House." Second, the Hayward home offered an exquisite view of the nearby mountains. And third, in the backyard a magnificent Palo Verde tree stood as the centerpiece. It was this striking tree that suggested to the Ericksons they had arrived at the right place.

Over the next decade, Dr. Erickson continued his private practice, although he eventually practiced less and delegated more time to teaching. Whether scheduled or not, students and colleagues who sometimes arrived unannounced, were always graciously received by Mrs. Erickson. Several of Dr. Erickson's more serious students, including Ernest Rossi, Jay Haley, and Jeff Zeig often stayed in the Little House for extended periods of time.

After Dr. Erickson died in March 1980, Mrs. Erickson continued to enjoy the steady stream of mostly foreign visitors who found their way to the Erickson doorstep. It was not unusual to see small groups of people with cameras peeking into the windows or leaning over the backyard fence. While the Erickson children would often respond to the interest quizzically and cautiously, Mrs. Erickson was delighted by it and welcomed many who had traveled long distances, spoke little English, and were visiting with their only hope being that they could get a glimpse of Dr. Erickson's office. Mrs. Erickson never tired of their interest and often sat by while they posed at his desk and shot photos. Later, she would call her children to report that "four more visitors came today -- from China -- from Japan -- from Scandinavia," and other faraway countries.

Shortly after Mrs. Erickson died in 2008, the Erickson Foundation purchased the property and Erickson family members worked with the Foundation to preserve the office and home so that visitors could continue their pilgrimage. Three of the Erickson children -- Roxanna Erickson-Klein, Kristina Erickson, and Robert Erickson have helped develop the Hayward property to create The Milton and Elizabeth Erickson Museum. Ceil Gratz, a longtime family friend, was hired to host visitors and help maintain the property.

Of note: This summer, in the midst of a powerful thunderstorm, the beautiful, historic Palo Verde tree in the backyard (loved by all the Ericksons) finally fell. At the end of its long life, it now lies still and branchless on the lawn, as if to announce its own peaceful transition -- one that is inevitable for us all.