

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

## Roxanna Erickson-Klein, RN, Ph.D.

Interviewed by Sharon McLaughlin

**Sharon McLaughlin (SM):** How did you become involved in the work of The Milton H. Erickson Foundation?

**Roxanna Erickson-Klein (REK):** My parents Milton and Elizabeth Erickson raised eight children of which I am seventh. Dad literally and figuratively brought his work home with him--so it is really a matter of circumstances. Growing up in the family we all learned a familiarity with and an appreciation for his approaches to hypnosis and psychotherapy.

**SM:** You have worked with the Foundation for a long time...

**REK:** Yes, for over 20 years. The Foundation was founded in 1980; my mother and sister Kristi were both on the Board of Directors. In 1990, I took Kristi's place on the Board. In 1993, I worked with another sister, Betty Alice, on the Newsletter for a five-year interval. Now my efforts emphasize Archival work; I manage to volunteer about five hours a week on projects that I think are most important.

**SM:** Who would you say had the most influence on you?

**REK:** That is a hard question. My parents were both loving and powerful people whose influence is felt far and wide even after their deaths. In answer to your question though, I think I will identify my oldest brother Bert, as being the person who was always there to help me navigate difficult waters or to help me find meaningful guideposts. My youngest sister Kristi also has a strong internal compass that I know I can depend on. The strongest relationship I chose for my life is with Alan, my husband of 35 years. Our lifetime commitment through all our own growth and the joys of raising our five children is an extraordinary blessing.

**SM:** What professional activities are you involved in?

**REK:** I consider my most important endeavor now to continue working with Ernest and Kathryn Rossi on the compilation of the *Collected Works of Milton H. Erickson MD*. These are cen-



tral to the Archives, and the royalties help to fund more projects; Ernest with his insurmountable energy is hard to keep up with; this year there will be four more volumes published. With the unpublished works we still have on hand we foresee numerous volumes on the horizon.

I enjoy serious writing. Dan Short invited me to be third author in his book *Hope and Resiliency* about my father's therapeutic techniques. I have also worked with Marilia Baker writing about my mother. I feel great gratification when others honor me by asking that I contribute to a book. Right now, I am involved in what I feel is among the most important original projects of my professional career—I am working with my daughter Hayley to compile an Ericksonian Glossary. This offers definitions of terminology used to describe Dad's work and will have a Multi-lingual component to facilitate translation. One of the very important aspects of this project is the teamwork involved to make it a reality. I consider teamwork to be a central element of the whole Ericksonian ideology. This particular project has involved positive cooperative efforts that reach beyond anything I have had the privilege of working on in the past. Writing is enjoyable and relaxing for me. I have a lot of ideas, and have outlined some additional works that I hope to follow through to publication.

I am also back in school. I am studying counseling at Argosy University of Dallas. I want to have a deeper

understanding of how psychological interventions enhance the physical healing process. Being a student again is stimulating. My background with my parents, my work in nursing and my involvement with the Milton H. Erickson Foundation gives me a rather broad perspective of the fields of counseling and psychotherapy and how it has been influenced by the context of time over the last half century.

**SM:** What do you consider the most important work of the Foundation?

**REK:** Without a moment's hesitation it is the Archives. Few people realize the tremendous effort that is involved in the gathering and compilation of archives of any productive person. It is a very labor-intensive process that involves time, patience, resources and cooperative effort.

Archives provide central understandings about the history and evolution of ideology. Generations benefit from viewing the art of masters; Erickson's work is art within science. As scientists, we are only at the most rudimentary stages of understanding how suggestion and perception can influence our entire life course. My father's work offers us glimpses of how powerful that influence can be.

**SM:** How is your own work like that of your father?

**REK:** I get invitations to come and

teach because people are looking for experiences that resemble studying with Erickson. Yet, if I were really like him, I wouldn't be true to his ideas. Each of us who is loyal to his work developed in our own ways; he advocated finding one's own path and style, and evolving through inspiration from within. My commitment is to honor his legacy while also simultaneously developing my own unique style. I have an interest in the underpinnings, foundation, methodology, and ideology including the principles of cooperative efforts, unselfish giving and teamwork. It goes unsaid that fundamental principles involve an ethical commitment to the well being of the client and to society. There is room for everyone to achieve a high level of professionalism and to do so without compromising the basic tenets of the Erickson message.

**SM:** Where are you going from here?

**REK:** I want to finish school at Argosy, complete my internship, continue working with the Rossis on following through with the *Collected Works of Milton Erickson*, and continue working with Hayley on the *Ericksonian Glossary*. On the personal side, nothing could exceed sharing with my husband the pleasures of our children developing into a diverse constellation of productive young adults.