The Power of Two; the Power of Many
A story for history
By Roxanna Erickson Klein

This column was conceptualized some time ago to celebrate the manner in which a partnership generates a multiplier effect. The first column was dedicated to the collaborative efforts of Milton and Elizabeth Erickson and told a little about the behind the scenes ways that the two of them worked together as husband and wife and as colleagues to advance their commitment to the healing power of hypnosis and psychotherapy. We have gone on in this column to feature other couples, some of whom have one partner more prominent than the other, and some of whom appear to be more professionally balanced in their works ---- Phil and Norma Baretta, Michael and Diane Yapko among them. With each description, we have shown how together working in harmony, the power of two extends the reach of either individually and compounds the potential of impact. While this effect is both known and experienced within the partnership, it is not always so keenly seen by the students or public.

Between Milton and Elizabeth Erickson, neither sought individual recognition, rather they sought for ways to gain acceptance of new ideas, and strove for a way to change the horizon or how psychotherapy is practiced. Together they worked, and together they made an impact, the approaches that have come to be identified as Ericksonian, have largely changed the face of how psychotherapy is practiced around the world today. though the ideas and pioneering works are credited to Milton Erickson, Elizabeth knew she was part of the process, and was gracefully accepting of the pivotal influence she gave. While individual recognition was not her aspiration, she enjoyed the awareness that many her husbands students gained for her and appreciated dedications to her in so many books written by followers.

With this column, we are extending beyond the reach of a partnership, beyond the power of two--- we reach out to the power of many. The illustration and feature of this column is the Erickson residence.

We will begin with a little background: Milton and Elizabeth Erickson moved to phoenix Arizona from Detroit in 1948. Within a year after the move, he established a private practice in his private home in downtown Phoenix. Already a maverick, he broke many of the traditional and standard ways of treating patients. Like the country doctors who had influenced him in his rural formative years, he practiced informal approach to integration of family members and local resources into the care of individuals who sought his services. While he was stalwart in his ethics of confidentiality regarding patient problems, he treated them as individuals, neighbors, people. The natural respect that he showed to fellow man radiated a sense of dignity of the individual. It is now widely recognized that his uncommon approaches led to healing outcomes that other psychiatrists and psychotherapists could not achieve.