

IN MEMORIAM

Florence Bridge Moreno Gunsher

Dear Psychodrama friends and colleagues,

On December 10, my grandmother, Florence Bridge Gunsher (formerly Florence Bridge Moreno) died peacefully in Queens, New York at the age of 95. Many of you who have studied for the history question on the American Board exam know her as the first wife of Jacob Levy Moreno and mother of their oldest child, Regina Moreno. Some of you may have known her personally. In my study of the history of psychodrama, she is mainly portrayed as the failed muse of J.L., my grandfather. In fact, she was an accomplished professional in her own right. She held a masters degree in psychology and published in the field with my grandfather and independently. She also had a successful career as a music and classroom teacher in New York City's public schools. However, her greatest success in my eyes was as my grandparent, a role which none of my other grandparents valued as much as she did. I would like to let you know a little about how important her role as a grandmother was to me.

My earliest memories of my grandmother were filled with love and affection. She was warm and cuddly. She loved me in a way that was completely unconditional. I remember once as a small child I sang a hymn for her over the phone called 'Away in the Manger'. She couldn't always see me on significant occasions but she always called and sent packages with the items I most wanted. She cried as I sang to her, valuing the gift of my small voice and the song I had chosen to please her more than any other physical gift I could have given.

I didn't learn of my grandmother's success as a professional until I was almost an adult. I knew that she loved the students she taught for she spoke of them often. Loving those children, who were usually impoverished both financially and emotionally, was her ministry and her joy. I thought those children were very lucky to be able to be with my grandmother all day long when I could only see her in the summers.

I spent many hours listening to my grandmother play the piano. She was incredible at improvisation. I could sing almost any song and she could accompany it beautifully. In addition, she could make up melodies and embellish any piece. My grandfather recognized her gift and he bought her a beautiful Steinway piano, which she loved. He encouraged her to pursue her dream of becoming a concert pianist. When she expressed her stage fright, he offered to let her play a surplus reality piano on the psychodrama stage and experience being seen as a pianist. She told me at the end of her life that she regretted that at the time she was too afraid to accept his offer.

My grandmother told me during last years during which

she was bedridden that she sat in her bed mending her regrets. My experience of her was that she often looked to those with great status in the world and longed for that kind of recognition. I don't think she always valued the importance of the success she had, the ways she touched the lives of her students, her peers in her church, and the gift she gave me of deep and abiding love and attention. That gift was more important in my development than any other claim she could have made to world fame. It left me as deep and profound a legacy as the one my grandfather left me from the work he did. For in loving me and nourishing my dreams, she embodied the spirit of his work, which is to nurture the 'god' in each person we touch. My grandmother recognized the divine in me and modeled for me how I can see and nurture the divinity in my own children and the children that I teach. Therefore, in my eyes Florence Bridge Gunsher was a wonderful grandmother. I will always be grateful to her and I will miss her deeply.

Peace,
Miriam Zachariah, MA, CP, PAT

Eugene "Gene" Eliasoph

Eugene "Gene" Eliasoph, MSW, TEP, died on January 5, 2008. He was one of the early pioneers of psychodrama, the "first generation" after Moreno. He was a major trainer of psychodrama — indeed, in 1961 he founded the New Haven (Connecticut) Psychodrama Institute - which might then have become one of the longest-running training programs!

Gene was active on the executive committee of the ASGPP in the late 1970s, and was the organization's president 1981-1983. In 1991 he was recognized with the J.L. Moreno Award for Lifetime Service to the field of Psychodrama; in 1996 he was given the Innovator's Award, and in 2000 the ASGPP granted Gene the Hannah Weiner Award. In the last decade or so Gene was also active in investigating a number of associated issues, such as the values of assisted technology in the treatment of people with autism.

Mary Jo Amatruda wrote: Our dear Gene (Eugene Eliasoph) is gone. I feel so fortunate to have worked with him, first as his student and then as his colleague, for so many years. I know many of you have stories connected with him as well. He was a man of great courage and generosity and, of course, brilliance. He continued to run the autistic group until the end! He loved that group. Gene was a great group therapist. He was a sociologist before becoming a social worker, and he always had that group therapist/sociologist hat on. He really kept his trainees focused on the group therapy aspects of what they were doing.