

# STORIES History Keepers & Seekers

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# History Keeper Memories

Elaine Camerota



In 1977 or 1978, I was the protagonist in the first psychodrama workshop I ever attended. Bob Siroka, the director, invited me to re-enact a dream in which I was trying to help a wounded bunny in my garden while simultaneously being the silent, frightened bunny. I was apprehensive about the implications of the name “psychodrama,” so when Bob asked if I’d like to do a dream drama, I quickly declined. Then he asked if I’d mind choosing group members to stand in for me in the enactment while I watched safely from the background. I readily agreed. After the first exchange of dialogue and role reversal, Bob asked me if it was accurate. I said ‘No.’

When he invited me to come forward and correct it, I was suddenly in the drama. During the whole psychodrama, I was in a hypnotic fog. All I remember is that at the end, when sharing began, some members were crying. I was baffled by the whole experience. What was the point? This workshop was part of a graduate class at Rutgers. We were to reconvene 2 months later to present final projects. As class started, Bob asked us to reflect on that weekend and to share whether anyone had been affected by any of the dramas. One woman, an artist, raised her hand and shared her project, a painting of a woman asleep dreaming of a bunny, titled, “Elaine’s Dream.” She shared that since her divorce, she’d felt stuck. She had dated a series of inappropriate men and lived in her house with 3 grown sons who refused to leave. Recently she’d met a nice appropriate man. Her usual pattern was to sabotage such relationships and continue coddling her sons. After my drama she decided to sell her house and move in with the nice man leaving her sons to fend for themselves. Finally I understood that psychodrama could change lives and I’ve spent the next 40 years using it to help others.

# Two Wise Elders: tête-à-tête

Linda Ciotola



Other than conference workshops, I did not meet Zerka until she moved to Charlottesville and began leading workshops from her cottage there. I attended her workshops when I could and particularly loved hearing her living history and seeing the old reel-to-reel film of JL at the Hudson Valley School for Girls. Zerka was a spellbinding storyteller.

Another innovative pioneer and great storyteller had been in my life for 14 years and her name was Edie Seashore. I became her personal trainer following her hip replacement. She told her doctor she wanted to keep doing her work as an organizational development consultant – flying all over the world – for the rest of her life. She regaled me with many stories of her work in the field of organizational development during our personal training sessions.

The more I heard from Edie the more I realized there was a historical connection between the Morenean arts and sciences and the field of OD. Edie was a past president of the National Training Labs (NTL) and so I shared stories with Edie about psychodrama and my journey to becoming a psychodramatist. These, of course, included stories of Zerka. The more stories I shared with Edie the more intrigued she became and she recalled that much of organizational development theory and practice had Morenean roots. Edie mused that there were likely journals that would clearly identify the connection between Moreno's work and OD giants like Kurt Lewin and others. She wondered if Zerka might have these journals. She also very much wanted to meet Zerka. I told her I would see if that could be arranged.

On November 15, 2009 we drove to Charlottesville to Zerka's cottage. Zerka greeted us with her warm smile and as we entered her living room there on the coffee table lay an array of journals all discovered by Zerka and all illustrating the strong lineage from Moreno to the field of OD. "Wow!" Edie exclaimed. That was all the introduction necessary. Their excitement and enthusiasm in meeting one another and discussing the strong influence that Moreno's work had on the field of OD electrified the room. Having just received my TEP certificate, I sat like a sponge soaking up the brilliant wisdom and the energy of the creative sparks that flew between them. Even then I knew it was a moment in time I would never forget. And the time did seem to fly. Hours seemed like minutes. Upon leaving, Edie, then age 80 exclaimed "Now I have a role model!". Later, both women described the other as "brilliant and charming".

Needless to say the ride back to Maryland was filled with nonstop sharing about the day. This was 3 years before the publication of Zerka's memoirs in 2012, *To Dream Again*. I gave Edie a copy as a gift as soon as it was published. Edie wanted to thank me for the experience of meeting Zerka and she did so in her own inimitable way: she discovered an old psychodrama journal in her NTL library at her Bethel, Maine home that had been signed by JL. She gave it to me as a gift.

However, the truly great gift was having the two of them in my life, introducing them and soaking up as much of their wisdom, creativity and love as I could. I am truly blessed.



# History Keeper Memories

Anath Garber



At 23, while a student in Jerusalem and convinced that I had discovered psychodrama, I learned about Moreno. I knew I must come to the states and study with him. I remember arriving at Beacon (Moreno Institute in Beacon, NY) for the first time. I recall the smell and the picturesque tree lined long path up to the house. I thought I'm "in a beautiful painting"...

We worked mostly with Zerka in the theatre at Beacon meeting two times a day with her. In the mornings the students honed their directorial skills on their own. Moreno could no longer walk that distance to the theater. He came down to the theater only few times. The stage itself had three distinct levels. There was theatrical lighting that could be controlled by the director, setting the tone for the production. Center stage there were two empty chairs: Zerka sat on one of them, her left and only arm was always draped around "Moreno's chair" establishing his presence on the stage. Over the years Moreno's chair disappeared and it was only Zerka center stage. Zerka had more arms than anyone I've ever known.

There were squeaky rooms where we slept and we were sure they were haunted with ghosts. And of course there was Queenie, the Irish woman who ran the Moreno Household. My first meeting with Moreno happened that Friday evening when the students (anywhere from 4 to 9) were invited to the big house up the hill. It was always a special time to hear Moreno talk and to ask the many questions that were on our minds. It was obvious that Zerka had shared everything about each of us and what we were doing from the comments and questions Moreno asked. Zerka served us a huge assortment of cookies and drinks.

I couldn't believe how often people chose ME to direct them. I had directed a drama for everyone in the group, and yet I began to notice people were becoming distant from me. I felt like an isolate. Then it dawned on me, of course, I had never done my own drama to reveal myself to them. Then it happened, Zerka directed my first drama and it was about my Mother. Oh my Goodness, Zerka (in a role - Editor) was yelling at my Mother – that would never happen in real life. I truly was in another world. Decades later, I am still enthralled by this world and its possibilities.

# History Keeper Memories

Merri Goldberg



It was the summer of 1966 and I had recently returned from almost two years overseas in order to finish my B.A. degree and begin graduate school. I had moved to the Washington D.C. area and although the times were exciting and I had a terrific group of new friends, my career choice lacked excitement and passion.

I heard about a grant from NIMH in psychodrama from a friend. I had no idea at that time what psychodrama was – but on a whim decided to apply for one of the five openings.

It was the decision that in so many ways changed my life.

I entered St. Elizabeth's Hospital for the first time – into a large auditorium with rows of seats and patients. Most of the interview was live acting on stage. I was to play the wife of a maximum security patient. I was scared. I remember little of the "test" but at one point the patient, that I knew nothing about, yelled at me "I killed you once and am going to kill you again" as he came at me. I will never forget that moment as I ran off the stage and out the door, sure I had just destroyed my chances of receiving the grant. Well – here was certainly passion, and excitement.

Amazingly I got the grant and for the next year spent about 10 hours a day immersed in psychodrama, dance and art therapy training with the most demanding and skilled American and European teachers as therapists (Jim Ennis, Norm Zinger, Bert Ramsey and Marian Chase among others). The students were Judy, Diana, Steve, Don and me and summer interns from Canada.

In addition to action training in both psychodrama and all aspects of group therapy, a written thesis was required. Since then I have studied and taught at Universities around the world but I have never again seen the depth and quality of the education we received in both Group Psychotherapy and Psychotherapy. In later life this training allowed me for 45 years of practice, to see patients, write, and travel the United States and much of the world. As well I have lectured on cruise ships in between teaching others about group and psychodrama.

My training and time with the Moreno's changed my life and my direction. At that time I didn't imagine that I would spend the next 50 years seeing private patients individually, as well as traveling the United States and widely abroad training other professionals in psychodrama. I will never forget my Chinese students who spoke little English singing WE Love You Merri (from Bye Bye Birdie), the only American tune they all knew. The psychodramas had touched them deeply in the week we were together not only in China, but also in Japan, Brazil, Italy, Holland, Denmark and a dozen other countries.

Many of the participants spoke little or no English and I was constantly reminded that psychodrama crosses barriers of language, culture and distance to bring people together in healing and love in a way I had never seen other therapy forms do. All the while respect for the individual, his life and his story, was key as well as a firm belief that positive change was possible.

I had been leading the Pre-Congress yearly Institutes with a traditional and analytic bent at AGPA. In the 70's I was given permission to lead the first two day Psychodrama AGPA Institutes. It was successful, broke some previous biases and has continued yearly. This has expanded to IGPA, the International group.

# Lady Zerka

## Lorelei Goldman



She stood there with great poise and was as straight as an arrow. It was startling for me to witness her empty shoulder with no arm extending down through her blouse. After several minutes the “phantom arm” fell away. Her persona was to me so strong that I lost the compulsion to stare at this empty space on her body. I observed her strong articulation, slight Amsterdam accent and lovely tones.

My current trainer encouraged me to travel to Beacon, New York and take further learning. Zerka had brought her sister, Binny who was mentally ill to the States to be under the treatment of Dr. Jacob Levy Moreno the “father of group psychotherapy” at his sanitarium. Dr. Moreno employed action techniques especially role reversals to heal the universe. Binny never fully recovered yet did become a librarian as she matured.

Zerka became the wife of J.L. Moreno and we corresponded about our mentally ill siblings. I remember she sent me an article entitled, “sibling loss” that gave information on the state of mental health. She worried about Binny and I worried about my brother Ron. We had a common regard and bond. Zerka became the muse of Psychodrama and the Doctor’s main double. A double in psychodrama is taught to support the protagonist by speaking their inner voice, showing the mannerisms and adding what is unsaid or not shown. It is a very powerful role- basically saying and showing unexpressed feelings and thoughts.

With Zerka I could be the favorite child. The one chosen and given attention which was not the case in my own home. She challenged me, was firm and yet loving and became my wise mentor. It was thrilling to be taught by Zerka T. Moreno. She knew the story and the legend of “Die Loreley” written by Henrich Heine, a German Jew and poet. She then named me “Lady on the Rock” and she used that salutation when she corresponded. This seemed to me a better name than, “lingerlooch” a Yiddish term for “long noodle” given to me when I was very young. I loved “Lady on the Rock.” She taught me about the vicissitudes as well as the demons that can be around. I named her as my secondary trainer and she guided me in the techniques and philosophy of Psychodrama. She once told me, “you may never become a trainer.” I showed her and did become a trainer. It did take me almost ten years. I passed the first level and became certified, and then the board had me take an oral exam. I remember the orange suit that I wore as I anticipated the test. I did pass and have been doing this passionate and compassionate work to this day.

I watched her as she directed with empathy, power, wisdom, creativity and ease. I had those qualities too and knew that the early days of watching my mother teach drama in our home, listening to

my mother recite pieces from Shakespeare and with her articulation reminded me of Lady Z and so Lady Z became my spiritual mother. I had an affinity for helping and was once told by an analyst that I had a “salvation complex,” the need to save others. Zerka and I carried no competition with each other and I trusted her completely.

At a large training group at Omega Institute, Zerka asked me while we were in action to sit on her lap. I was very hesitant and timid but did so and could feel her prosthesis through her white silk blouse where her missing arm should have been. She had lost that arm to cancer. It was in this enactment that I told her and the group at large that my mother was mentally ill and my brother was diagnosed as schizophrenic. Zerka responded, “oh, two in one family.” No one who cares had ever said that to me.

At a large gathering at one of our conferences we experienced Playback theatre. Here we saw Zerka’s history and immigration from Amsterdam. When it was time for her to board the boat to America she was asked by the director to choose her sister Binny for role-playing. She chose me and said, “I choose Lorelei, she knows the role.” I felt blessed. I felt confident and I felt grateful and excited. She was right, I did know how to play the role of a sibling in distress. Then there was being on the original Psychodrama stage near New Platz, New York and enjoying Zerka singing, “vun de bar” on the balcony of the stage. As I was looking up at her I sang with her as well. She once had lunch at my home and was always eating yogurt and cranberry juice. She was histrionic, clever and wise- just like my mother. She had the capacity of being present, tender and caring which my mother lost with me because of her medical condition. Zerka filled a much needed gap in my development.

She taught me that one needs to have a heart and not just a head when directing and in life. She taught me, “that the mind remembers what the body forgets” a statement that I repeat consistently in my teaching.

At another conference she walked over to me, took my hand saying that she wished to show me something. We walked over to a sketch of “the empty chair” and she remarked that was not created by Fritz Perls another psychotherapist, it was invented by J.L. Moreno.

My last time with Lady Z was in her home in Charlottesville where she invited me to come and use her library. Five of us held a training in her home. I was to double a participant who had polio. I had to lie on the carpet and be her inner voice and support. This was not easy for me, as I had never had any experiences like hers. We were in an iron lung. I shared possible wishes with her that she may have had in that very solitary and irregular iron lung. What did she yearn for and what did she need? Zerka created surplus reality which practitioners employ in directing. This is when we move out of our own reality into a novel and different reality. I can still hear her laugh and sometimes I actually sound like her when I laugh and it is truly her giggle that I hear

# A three part story of my life with Zerka

## Kate Hudgins



1986 or 7, the Roosevelt Hotel, NYC.

The first is when I heard “Kate, Kate dear....aren’t you the one that just won an APA research award on doubling? And I turned to see it was Zerka, who then preceded to tell me all about her work on developing and researching doubling and how it is the core technique of psychodrama. She shared about being her sister’s double and in that way really being the creator of doubling. I think in that moment she touched me to bring research to psychodrama and that has been a mission of mine for over 30 years!

The second is ten years later, 1996 — at the Psychodrama Theatre of Protection in Black Earth, WI. Zerka had given me the original plans of the Moreno stage at Beacon and I had built what she called the most beautiful psychodrama stage in the world...on 38 acres of Wisconsin farmland with wide open vistas of light. We had been planning the opening for at least a year as the theatre was built and during that time I supported her to change from “always quoting JL and giving him credit for psychodrama.....and own what was her own. I think I made a difference and the Theatre was dedicated to Zerka and opened on October 31, 1996 when we hosted our first international workshop and she said “it was a good night for witches to fly”.

As Zerka gave her opening speech, she looked up at the balcony built along the back wall of the stage and said “When people were suicidal, we would put a mattress on the floor, in the center of the stage and tell people to jump”. Without thinking, I jumped up and said “And we don’t do that anymore!”. Thus began our on-going discussion about the changes in psychodrama from the early days and how she “always told JL it needed to be more contained!”.

To end, I’d like to return to the importance of doubling in Zerka’s life. In 2013, about 3 weeks after she had moved to her nursing home, I visited and asked her if she was lonely and she said “No, of course not, I always have my double to talk to!” I did suggest she might not want to tell that to the nursing care staff!

I am forever grateful Zerka lived in my home town for 12 years and let me experience a truly good enough psychodrama mother who supported my work every step of the way.



# The Empty Cinema Screen

Marcia Karp



It is 1968 in Vienna. I am sitting next to J.L. in front of an empty cinema screen. It is at a Conference of the International Council of Group Psychotherapy, an organization created by Moreno in 1951. This was before the founding of IAGP in 1973.

The Conference room went dark. Onto the screen, in black and white, came a filmed sequence showing a handbag counter in a department store. The camera slowly panned the handbags section and then went up an escalator and into a ladies dress section showing a rack of women's clothes. The camera panned the scene showing the sizes and types of the dresses on the rack. Women were trying on Japanese kimonos. We realized the film was being made in Japan. The clothes ceremoniously parted, like curtains on a stage, and indeed showed a stage. It was a wooden psychodrama stage. On it were two women in kimonos with a man directing them. Behind the stage, the life of the women's section went on as normal. There were women trying on dresses and looking at themselves in a mirror. The stage was in front, the customers at the back. It was a combination of a clothes section in the store and a psychodrama stage.....all very odd. At some point, Moreno slapped his hand to his forehead and said, "Oh my God. I told him to set up psychodrama in his department!"

The reality was that Moreno had been training a doctor from Japan in the Beacon Academy. I think his name was Professor Matsumura. In order to get psychodrama started within his professional world, Moreno suggested that he establish a group in his medical department. Since Moreno didn't speak Japanese and the man's English was challenged, a mistake had been made by both in understanding the meaning of the word "department." Moreno meant at his work and the student understood it as establishing a psychodrama group in a downtown department store. Incredible.



# History Keeper Memories

Joke Meillo



At the time, 1972, it was still an adventure to travel to the US. Tickets were expensive, the dollar was expensive, 3.75 guilders for one dollar. Then the expenses for the training period in Beacon. I was lucky as I got a scholarship from the Amsterdam Theatre School where I worked, three weeks training plus one week in New York to visit theatres, plus paid leave. Those were the times.

On arriving at the airport a limousine was waiting to bring me to Beacon, crossing New York, the skyway, the highways. By comparison, Amsterdam was a cozy European village. Now I was arriving in another world. Seeing the house, from the outside, a movie set, Hitchcock memories. Quinny (The Moreno's housekeeper) received me, and then I came down to earth. She was so friendly and helpful.

The first session in the theatre, I met Zerka, a mixture of a star arriving and a mother coming home. This wooden stage, practical and at the same time a beautiful design, pointing back to Berlin's renovated theatres in the twenties. Never had I experienced so many emotions in a theatre; I was surprised by the closeness I felt. Also the rule: sharing is not critiquing. Coming from a different background, that was not easy. Zerka told me that Moreno wanted to see me the next day, and that the office would call me.

Meeting Moreno, history came alive. I had read a lot of his works. He was pleased that I had read one of his first writings in German: Stegreif Theater. He had organized it in Vienna, while still a student after World War I when Austria was without the emperor - a leaderless country. There he introduced in an open theatre the "empty chair", a warm-up still used in Beacon at the time and years to come. "Stegreif Theater" was normal in Austria, but not used for political or emotional purposes, that was introduced by Moreno. I had, inspired by the book, visited one of these at the time that Stegreif Theaters still existed in Vienna. So we exchanged those experiences. He signed my book, told me he would follow my progress in Beacon. And then I was free to go and the group wanted to know how it went with me and Moreno.

Soon Zerka decided that it was time for me to be protagonist. That was 46 years ago, but I still can describe most of the session. It was shocking for me to live through an important part of my past in such a short time. I had not noticed before all these Kleenex boxes! What was special was that at crucial moments in scenes Zerka ordered me to speak Dutch (my native language). I learned that if the protagonist is not speaking in his or her native language, there is more hiding, acting. This was of course only possible, because Zerka herself spoke Dutch. She had lived in Amsterdam before the war and still after all those years, her Dutch was rather good.

One morning at breakfast, just out of bed, I was telling something, when I was interrupted. Group members looked at me astonished and told me that I was speaking Dutch to them without knowing it! Back in Amsterdam, I knew that I wanted to go on with the psychodrama training. This was something for me. I wanted to become a psychodramatist. So a few months later I was back again. And again. I became pregnant and was a pregnant protagonist on that stage. In 1974 my daughter Eva was born. A year later I took her with me to Beacon. During the daytime she stayed with "Granny", mother of the secretary Fran. She spoke Italian to Eva, and Eva spoke Dutch to her, and it went very well.

Zerka wanted to have Eva and me on the stage for a "psychodrama" and told us all how J.L. had her and her son Jonathan on that stage, even when he was very young. Psychodrama had to be part of our lives from early on.

Indeed it became part of my life. In 1975 I became a certified Director. Psychodrama changed everything, my relations and my career. Friends from Beacon were part of my life for many years. I visited the conventions in New York. I organized workshops for Zerka in the Netherlands and stayed in touch with her.

In the last years I have withdrawn from professional life. The memories faded. Being invited to write this story for History Keepers made me remember these exciting times.

# History Keeper Memories

Rosalie Minkin



Training with Bob Siroka was an adventure in learning skills. One day he said “we are going to Beacon.” The kid in me, then in my early 30s’, said YES.

So we were off to observe JL and Zerka work side by side. My eyes remained on Zerka as she accompanied J.L. with style and grace. I noticed how her directing style provided protagonists and group members with comfort and pleasantries as she directed a psychodrama.

I then knew that Zerka was my role model.

Years ago I telephoned Zerka and asked her if she ever thought about writing her memoirs? I simply said WHY NOT? We began on the telephone, since I was unable to meet her in person. It was edited by Edward Schreiber and the foreword is by Robert Landy and Marcia Karp. Her memoirs *TO DREAM AGAIN* reflects her challenges and life wisdom.

# A Letter to J. L. Moreno

Bob Siroka



Dear J. L.,

It's been a while since we have seen each other but you are never far from my mind. It has been almost 60 years since we met. Of course, before we met in person I was aware of your reputation. CREATIVE, GENIUS, Megalomaniac, Innovator, Controversial Character. Yes, probably

truth in each one of those descriptors.

For me however, the most striking thing was our instant connection (tele) which continued throughout our 12 year long relationship. Originally as your graduate student at NYU, I was deeply honored to have you ask me to join your faculty at the Moreno Institute, NYC. So many memories of the Moreno Institute, New York. First the lineup of Directors when I joined to conduct open sessions on Wednesday nights:

Directors for Open Sessions, Moreno Institute  
Tuesday, Walter Kalvon  
Wednesday, Bob Siroka  
Thursday, Hannah Weiner  
Friday, J. L. and Zerka Moreno  
Saturday, James Sacks

We had some pretty wild and controversial open sessions. Sometimes 6 people. Sometimes over 100. Visiting academics, international scholars, homeless people off the street, students and mystery bus ride passengers from New Jersey.

For \$3 (later \$4) what great happenings. It was the early 1960's after all. A well-known theater critic, Eric Bentley, said "it was some of the best theater in New York City." We did all manner of experiential interaction that would be impossible today (ethical considerations, HIPPA liability), but I would not have traded it for anything.

You may not remember, but I started my therapeutic career as a music therapist at Manhattan State Hospital and music has been intertwined in our pathway. In 1968 we joined you and Zerka in Vienna at the International Congress of Group Psychotherapy where the University of Vienna Medical School awarded you the "Golden Doctor" (a 50 year honor).

The Vienna City Hall was filled with over 1000 attendees, a 25 piece string orchestra was playing Viennese waltzes.

You had organized for the next week a Congress of Therapeutic Communities to be held in Prague Czechoslovakia. However as we all remember, the Russians had another idea. They moved their army into the Czech Republic to crush the freedom movement.

Shock-spontaneity-creativity. Over the next 2 days the Vienna Academy of Medicine moved the Prague meeting to Baden, Austria (including translations into 4 simultaneous languages). We all pitched in. In addition to my scheduled presentation, I chaired 3 other panels to fill in for people who could not get there. We cheered

as many of our colleagues behind the iron curtain who braved the Russian closing to show up at the Congress.

## **1971 The International Congress of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama in Amsterdam Holland**

You were not in the best shape physically and we were all concerned about you. You were to give the keynote speech "Goethe and Psychodrama". The large auditorium was filled with attendees. The Municipality of Amsterdam concert band marched on the stage and opened the event with rousing marches and anthems. You gingerly took the stage and held on to the podium. You, of course, had no script or notes. You paused, too long? We thought you lost it. Surprise! You gave a long eloquent exposition of Goethe and Psychodrama. (You paused often but were elegant and coherent). These public moments you shared with many. The two of us however shared some private moments that I am most grateful for. Back to the Moreno Institute, NYC. Friday nights you would give a talk or intro and handed directing to Zerka. You would retreat to your private office. I was extremely grateful the times you invited me to join you in your office while the sessions were in progress. We discussed many things. I felt our tele connection and made every effort to be present and take in what we discussed.

Back to 1968. The chaotic time in the world. Martin Luther King's assassination, Bobby Kennedy. We too had a rough spot in our relationship as well. You offered me the opportunity to become the Director of the Moreno Institute, NYC and we would be business partners. With much trepidation I declined your offer. I wanted to create my own institute. Fearful that this would end our relationship, I was greatly relieved that after the initial shock, though I felt you were disappointed, you respected my decision. The Institute for Sociotherapy, 1968-1991 and the Sociometric Institute 1991-present were born. Your ideas in creativity live on. I dedicated my professional life to carry on my own version of your work in Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy. I trained many people in your methods (with my own variations). With my incredible partner, Jacquie for over 40 years, we trained many people in Europe, Turkey and Israel.

P.S. Since 1968 I have always had a theater of psychodrama in New York City. To this point I have had 14 different theaters till now. I still do. Your and Zerka's photos are on our walls. We are creating films which can instruct and elaborate on our work. I continue my friendship with Jonathan Moreno. Now in my 80th year I am still a student of Sociometry, Psychodrama and Group Psychotherapy.

Thank you for what you have given to the world and which you have given to me personally. Your ideas help me to try to understand the way the world works. I am deeply grateful.

In closing,  
Love  
Bob



# Memories

## Jacque Siroka



We all have a personal journey leading us to our first encounter with psychodrama. Remember yours? Mine was in Lima, Peru in 1968. I was in between knowing/not knowing what the next step in my life would be. Shortly after I arrived in Peru I met Dr. Delilah Platera, an Argentinian psychodramatist working in Peru for the Peruvian govern-

ment. She asked me if I would work with her as an auxiliary. Dr. Platera's designated goals were to build skills, esteem and spontaneity for people wanting to enter middle class jobs such as salesmen. With my limited understanding of Spanish I experienced the transformation of participants. I witnessed group members enter quiet, shut down, isolated and leave the training enlivened with new skills and perceptions of themselves that would change their personal and economic life. This was magical as well as powerful. In my auxiliary training with Dr. Platera I experienced the power of sociometry. Choosing a middle age Peruvian man to be my mother, I felt in an instant the unfinished business I carried. I realized I was searching for something in my life I could trust, believe and have a career in. I knew I had found what I was looking for and was willing to commit myself wholeheartedly.

I returned to finish my college degree from American University. Afterwards in 1973 I applied to St. Elisabeths, a federally funded teaching and training hospital. Jim Ennis, one of the original people who trained and studied with J. L. Moreno established the Psychodrama program. St. Elisabeths was at the forefront of the field in psychiatry. Psychodrama joined other residencies in dance, art, nursing and psychology programs. It was a teaching and training hospital of the highest caliber. The structure of the program was a 40 hour work week for which we received a stipend. Our days combined learning, practicing on the wards, leading groups, personal work and supervision. We formed a family and community in the basement of Hitchcock Hall. We studied and practiced the methodology of psychodrama, sociometry and group psychotherapy. We were immersed and had the opportunity to see all aspects of life through this lens. The experience taught me many things. It primarily fostered a world view and how to enter the world of another. Mostly it taught me the importance of being present. Authenticity was the only way of reaching this population. I recall Jim Ennis giving me a piece of advice before my first trip to a ward to conduct a group. He said, if you are present to others, they may join you. I hardly felt ready or competent enough to run a group on my own, but it was time and I had to trust my spontaneity. When on the ward, I saw the drabness, I felt the isolation. I remembered Jim's words and tuned into the moment and how alone I felt and uttered, it's lonely and drab in here. That was the beginning of group members looking up and participating. Supervision was an important part of our learning.

My first supervisor was Dale Buchanan who supported me as I learned the method, worked through my issues and felt my emotions. I learned to trust the method.

The training at St. Elisabeths Hospital began with a 200 hour series. The new interns were joined by mental health practitioners from the area to learn the basics of the method. Jim Ennis, the Director of the program, invited leading trainers to conduct training with the group. Bob Siroka was the first consultant. I recall meeting Bob in this moment, his presence so relaxed and present. I am remembering the skillful way he warmed up the group, creating an atmosphere that beckoned us to join and be present. I remember feeling like a flower opening. This experience confirmed again on a deeper level that I would risk learning about myself by surrendering to the method.

I remember thinking at the time that Bob Siroka was the most beautiful, profound and kind human being I had ever encountered. It never occurred to me that we would end up beloved partners.

The ASGPP conventions were well attended with over 1,000 participants from many disciplines. The dances were legendary with energy released from the workshops and the therapists' band made for quite an event.

In 1975 the field of psychodrama, sociometry and group psychotherapy responded to the need to professionalize. This was motivated by external and internal events. Before this time the Moreno Institute and St. Elisabeths were the only places that offered certification. In 1975 a Board of Examiners was incorporated. This was a group of elders: Zerk Moreno, Robert Siroka, James Ennis, Don Clarkson and Dean Elefthery formed for the purpose of professionalizing, creating standards and criteria for certification. There was a period of grand parenting for those who had been practicing. The credentialing was established. In the early 1980s the establishment of a group of trainers named The Federation of Trainers. The purpose of this group was to gather and discuss issues of training.

In 2007 when I turned 65, I had a felt sense that something was missing. That I completed my goals. I sat with what's next? I stayed with the question until I found the path. I attended an Omega workshop with leaders from Buddhist psychology, mindfulness and compassion. The focus was on opening to being intimate with your internal life. This brought light to the problem I was trying to solve. I wanted a way to be intimate with seeing the internal life as I had done with psychodrama. I completed a 2 year teacher training with Tara Brock. I returned to my roots in D.C. for the training. The curriculum included studies and training in insight and mindfulness meditation and compassion practices. I immersed myself in training and practice and am now dedicated to finding the weave between these two powerful paths.

Today I am a clinical director of the Sociometric Institute and have a private practice in New York. For those of you interested I have a website: [integraltherapy.net](http://integraltherapy.net). I co-lead with Jaye Moyer a group called Time In which meets once a month.

# History Keeper Memories

Rebecca Walters



I began my psychodrama training in the summer of 1976 at Lesley College's Summer Colloquium at Philips Academy in Andover, MA. I was 24. I was the protagonist in a "dance o drama" combining dance therapy with psychodrama. It was directed in tandem by Peter Rowan, TEP, who, along with Joe Powers, TEP, ran the psychodrama core of the Expressive Therapy Program and Norma Caner, R-DMT, who ran the dance therapy program at Lesley. That fall I began training with Joe Powers and Peter Rowan at what was then Lesley College and is now Lesley University in Cambridge, MA. Peter and Joe also ran the New England Psychodrama Institute and we met there for one of our two weekly psychodrama classes.

At some point that fall they brought Zerka up to Cambridge to offer an open session. I remember standing in the back of the theater with Peter and saying to him. "That is what I want to do when I grow up."

As part of our training Peter and Joe would both tell stories about their days at the Moreno Institute, bringing Dr Moreno and Zerka alive in their tales. I met Zerka for the first time when she was in the role of step grandmother to Peter Pitzele's son who was a student in my husband's kindergarten class. I would run into her at local malls and cultural events in the Hudson Valley. Her grandchildren were the same age as my daughters and we had much to talk about. But not psychodrama.

I joined Jonathan Fox's psychodrama group in 1984. It was in this training group that I met Judy Swallow for the first time. Zerka guest taught one evening. I remember her telling the protagonist to "shit or get off the pot!" I was quite intrigued and a bit shocked, I must confess!

After Beacon closed Zerka taught a series of training workshops at Boughton Place, the new home of the Moreno Stage. I was busy raising a family and did not attend, so I really never got to train with her again except for one day of a longer workshop. She spent a great deal of time that day telling us wonderful stories about Moreno.

Hudson Valley Psychodrama Institute was founded by Judy Swallow and myself at 1989. About ten years later, with Zerka's support, HVPI began a series of master classes called the Moreno Seminars. Several master trainers who had trained at Beacon were invited to run three day workshops for certified psychodramatists and very advanced students. Jeanne Berger contacted me one day and said Zerka was wondering if she could be invited to offer a Moreno Seminar. YES!

It was her last training on the stage. She sat on a chair by the edge of the stage, no longer able to come up onto the top level. It made no difference to her directing and it was a supremely satisfying experience for the attendees. I got to be one of the protagonists. It was life changing for me in my role as mother.