

*The Power of Two – Revisiting Jay Haley Through the Voice of
Madeleine Richeport-Haley*

By Marilia Baker

In: The M.H. Erickson Foundation *Newsletter*, Vol. 30, No.3 (Winter 2010)

The Milton H. Erickson Foundation is sponsoring its 9th Brief Therapy Conference, December 9-12 in Orlando, Florida. In addition to a stellar Faculty, many of whom studied and apprenticed directly with Jay Haley, there will be seasoned attendees who, likewise, learned from him and his revolutionary innovations. Most importantly, there will also be in attendance a new generation of young therapists from all over the world eager to learn about Brief Therapy, its evolution and its multidimensional applications.

Marilia Baker: What follows is the result of a series of conversations with Madeleine Richeport-Haley, Jay Haley’s wife, colleague extraordinaire, partner in book writing, lecturing, and innovative filmmaking. Throughout my professional career I have had a scientific interest in couples and how they partner—their joint and separate life projects; their collaboration styles; and their power “to make things happen.”¹ It was with this concept in mind, and my belief in the synergistic “power of two” that I interviewed Madeleine Richeport-Haley.

In her article, *Leading Contributors*², Elizabeth Moore Erickson aptly described Madeleine Richeport-Haley, Ph.D., as an outstanding, world-renowned anthropologist, author, academic filmmaker, videographer, scientific lecturer, who also trained with Milton H. Erickson in the 1970s. Dr Richeport has innumerable individual achievements in the U.S., Puerto Rico, Brazil, and other countries, where she was a researcher, professor of anthropology, and a consultant to the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO-Brasilia), the Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization (WHO). For many years she was a participant observer in the trance phenomena of autochthonous practitioners of Afro-Spiritist religions in the Caribbean, of spiritism in Brazil, and with Jay Haley of dance and trance of Balinese children (1995)³.

Richeport-Haley also collaborated with Jay Haley co-authoring books, producing films, and clinical training videos for scholars and clinicians⁴. Her most recent contribution is the widely praised volume, *Jay Haley Revisited* (2010), which she and Jon Carlson edited⁵ (Book review on page ___ of this Issue), and which is a collection of her late husband's *sui-generis* body of work. Each chapter was introduced and commented on by a leading luminary in the field.

Madeleine Richeport-Haley is, and has been, passionately devoted to furthering Jay Haley's historic and unprecedented legacy in the field of brief Strategic Therapy, as well as of his pioneering role in the conceptualization and implementation of family therapy theory and practice. This dedication is firmly anchored, not only in the strength of her love and loyalty to the man and his ideas, but it is also grounded in her own experience and achievements throughout her prolific career. Richeport's internationally acclaimed ethnographic film, *Macumba Trance and Spirit Healing* (1984), shown at the Margaret Mead Film Festival and on PBS, and on television in Puerto Rico, Brazil, and Belgium, is an example of her observational skill, and her profound understanding of Ericksonian world view on the diversity and health of human ways of expression and healing⁶. The unedited footage is available to researchers at the Anthropology Film Archives, Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C.

Her personal and professional partnership with Jay Haley has been felicitous, bountiful, and boundless. Their joint passion for academic filmmaking and videography led to innovations never before implemented in the field of psychotherapy. Dr Richeport continues this work as a Senior Research Fellow at the California School of Professional Psychology, Alliant International University, where Jay Haley worked for the last ten years of his life.

Jay Haley, the Renaissance man

Madeleine Richeport-Haley: "I wrote in the Introduction of *Jay Haley Revisited* that my husband was a Renaissance man. By this I mean he was an individual who excelled in many areas, an ideal pursued by the Renaissance humanism of the 1600s that propounded that humans are, essentially, limitless in their potential. Jay was profoundly knowledgeable and versatile as a writer, playwright, researcher, painter, sculptor, teacher, lecturer,

cultural anthropologist, filmmaker, and most of all he was a revolutionary in the art and craft of therapy.” As stated in the aforementioned Introduction:

“Jay Haley was one of the most influential thinkers in psychotherapy, and revolutionized the field through his writings, teachings, research, and supervision for more than half a century. He was a pioneer in family therapy, as both a founder and editor for ten years of *Family Process*, the first journal in Family Therapy. He was the chief architect of the brief strategic approach to therapy. His contribution is published in 21 books translated into 15 languages and more than 100 papers. He pioneered therapy recording, training, and supervision on film and video. His reputation spanned many years from being the most cited author in psychotherapy in the 1970s to being voted the most valuable therapist in California in 2004”.⁷

Salvador Minuchin said, “Jay was forever pushing the envelope, testing the limits of new ideas – explorations that bore his imprint of being clear, over-inclusive, and challenging... He was always available to his students. Even at the end of the day, he could be seen surrounded by young people, like a peripatetic Greek philosopher without a toga”.⁸

A Quiz for Young Therapists

Marilia Baker: Kenneth Hardy, Ph.D., who is presenting at the Brief Therapy Conference, offers a moving commentary in *Jay Haley Revisited* on his experience of Haley’s genius as a teacher and supervisor when he introduces the exquisitely crafted essay, *A Quiz for Young Therapists*.⁹ Throughout an intriguing crescendo of 15 sophisticated, complex, multi-faceted, paradoxical questions and answers, Jay Haley encapsulates his profound knowledge, acute vision, and accurate perception of his epistemology. He produces a formidable, masterful class of what therapy and therapists should, and should not be or do. Says Haley: “Therapists should not give up on problems. There is no such thing as a problem being unresponsive to treatment. It is the therapist’s job to keep at it until it is solved or you grow old and die”! (Haleyisms, Mazza, 2001).¹⁰ From Question & Answer number 1: “Should a Therapist Think of Himself, or Herself, as a Skillful Technician or as a Humanist and Philosopher”? to the last Question & Answer: “Is It True that Therapy in the Past Consisted of Someone Offering an Unformulated Problem to a Therapist Unable to Specify a Goal Who Was Working with an Irrelevant Theory in an Ambiguous Style to Achieve an Immeasurable Outcome?”, Haley is at his

best as a writer, teacher, keen observer, and social critic. He certainly was the quintessential master of his craft.

Madeleine Richeport-Haley: “Jay believed that his most significant contribution to the field was “breaking therapy down to a practice of specific skills—of simple ideas, skills, and techniques. This orientation is quite different from the nondirective ideology the field had when I first got into it” (*circa* 1953). My husband related this perspective to Roxanna Erickson Klein when she interviewed him for the *festschrift* in his honor organized by the Erickson Foundation at the 9th Ericksonian Congress in 1999. Jay wanted to be remembered as “the oldest living teacher of therapy.”¹¹

“My husband had a wonderfully optimistic view that people can change. He was an ethnographer behind the one-way mirror observing what families do, while he practiced changing symptoms through his supervision. He looked for the universals in human communication and one of his last projects was to try to write the rules of relationships. Perhaps somebody will do that some day. He was an innate cultural anthropologist, an ethnologist, who placed the primacy of cultural influences in the multilevel complexity of human communication sixty years ahead of the therapy and counseling field. His therapeutic approach, “stressed directives to produce change rather than social conversation.” His focus was on the problem in the *social context* (*italics added*), not on the *problem individual*. His view was optimistic--that change was possible. He was an early proponent of live supervision in therapist training in order to provide the novice with evidence-based tools for solving life challenges “through an active, thoughtfully planned-out family therapy.”

Cross-fertilization: standing on the shoulder of giants

Marilia Baker: The professional pathways of Madeleine Richeport–Haley and Jay Haley are exquisitely intertwined -- separately then jointly -- initially through professional mentorships. The mentorships developed into solid mutual friendships with remarkable synergy and results. These associations influenced the understanding of the complexities in human communication--of applied anthropology to ethnicity issues in mental health, belief systems, and therapy. In sum, those collaborations influenced the direction of psychotherapy in the second half of the 20th Century. Four outstanding individuals--two professional couples who “made things

happen” come to mind: Elizabeth Moore and Milton H. Erickson, and Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson (Mead and Bateson separated in 1949). Among the most influential people in Madeleine Richeport’s life were Milton and Elizabeth Erickson and Margaret Mead.

The anthropologists Mead and Bateson, a highly productive field partnership for 14 years, had spent approximately three years in Bali (roughly from 1936 to 1939), photographing and filming Balinese life and religious rituals, as participant observers. They produced a phenomenal, unprecedented amount of visual records—photographs and films--especially of ritual trance of Balinese temple dancers.

Eventually these led to Elizabeth and Milton Erickson, first at Eloise, Michigan in 1939, and subsequently in Phoenix, Arizona. At the recommendation of Abraham Maslow, Mead approached Erickson to understand and distinguish depth of trance from somnambulistic states in the religious rituals of Bali temple dancers¹². Erickson’s prolific collaboration with Bateson and his Palo Alto team, throughout the 50s and 60s, as well as the longstanding friendship that lasted throughout several decades with Mead, cross-fertilized Haley’s lifework and Richeport-Haley’s field investigations on religious trance phenomena and human communication. The Haleys spent hours watching Bateson and Mead’s 1930s films in the Library of Congress and returned to Bali where they produced three films (1995a, 1995b, and 2002). Jay Haley and Madeleine Richeport-Haley maintained a close-knit, intimate, mutually supportive friendship with the Erickson family for nearly 40 years and with Elizabeth Moore Erickson until her death in December 2008.

Jay Haley authored two books with Madeleine Richeport-Haley: *The Art of Strategic Therapy* (2003) each chapter accompanied by a DVD of a case, and *Directive Family Therapy* (2007). Both treatises provide indispensable directives for training and supervision, as well as therapeutic techniques for problem-solving challenges in living throughout the family life-cycle¹³. Of interest is to revisit Haley’s accurate observation of his mentor’s hitherto uncommon, unorthodox approaches to psychotherapy in the 1950s and 1960s - from intrapsychic causation to interpersonal relations, to psychosocial causation, and through the stages of the family life-cycle. Accordingly, “symptoms appear when there is a dislocation or interruption in the unfolding life cycle of a family or other natural group. The symptom is a signal that a family has difficulty in getting past a stage in the life

cycle”.... “While focusing sharply on symptoms Erickson’s therapeutic strategy has as its larger goal the resolution of the problems of the family to get the life cycle moving again.”¹⁴

Haley and Richeport-Haley wrote and produced 25 films and videos (endnotes iii, iv, and vi), including *Milton H. Erickson: Explorer in Hypnosis and Therapy* in 1993. This is a “must see” classic on this creative mind and giant innovator.

Cross-fertilization: Erickson’s contributions to anthropology and Madeleine Richeport-Haley’s contribution to multiculturalism in psychotherapy

Madeleine Richeport-Haley: “I began my studies with Milton H. Erickson in the 1970’s. My studies led me to be a participant observer of spiritist trance ceremonies in New York and Puerto Rico, as well as of Macumba and spiritism in Brazil. I benefited from Erickson’s world view and commentary about the relationship between ritual and clinical trances in my fieldwork and from his personal introduction to medical doctors in many countries who were knowledgeable about ritual trance. Trance states are of interest to hypnotherapists as well as anthropologists because they occur universally and can be reproduced in hypnosis. They occur in individuals (the so called “every-day trance”) and in groups, mostly through religious rituals (other mass trance phenomena usually occur during times of socio-political stress)”.

“Milton H. Erickson was deeply aware of the universality of trance phenomena and their varied manifestations. He also was conscious of the importance of assessing and utilizing a patient’s culture and beliefs in psychotherapy. I wrote in 1985, “Erickson viewed trance as a normal phenomenon, an extension of everyday behavior. He worked with clients as individuals through careful observation of them, and in this respect he acted like an anthropologist recording and processing naturally occurring behavior from which he developed therapeutic interventions. Most behavior is culturally conditioned, and the knowledge recorded by anthropologists provided materials for Erickson’s understanding of patients from different ethnic groups, for the universality of unconscious processes, for his illustrations and metaphors, and for his own world view.”¹⁵

"When multiple personality disorder was proliferating as a diagnosis, Jay and I were interested in the interface between multiple personality, hypnosis, and spiritist mediumship. Jay began to apply Erickson's approach to multiple personality cases that he was supervising at the time. Erickson's approach did not necessarily view the cases as psychopathological but as potential resources (Richeport, 1992, 1994)¹⁶, and Jay added bringing in family members into the sessions. Then he had a case that had been diagnosed as multiple personality and posed cultural confusions of spirit possession which combined multiple research interests. Jay supervised this case in a practical way rather than overemphasizing the belief systems (2003)¹⁷. We also had interesting discussions with Elizabeth Erickson on this material because she was helpful about Milton's cases that were unpublished."

Marilia Baker: After spending six years as researcher and participant observer in the religious rituals of Spiritism in Puerto Rico in collaboration with Hilton Lopez, MD and others and six years in Brazil in collaboration, among other projects, with David Akstein, MD, creator of Terpsichore Trance Therapy, Richeport-Haley has spent the past 20 years collaborating and innovating with Jay Haley. Her anthropological lenses, multicultural experiences, and worldview significantly influenced her husband's own work and, consequently, those of his students worldwide. The "power of two" in action has come to fruition in unexpected and expected ways.

I thank Dr. Richeport-Haley for her enthusiasm, encouragement, and cooperation throughout our interviewing process. For video material see <http://www.haley-therapies.com>.

¹ Baker, M. (2004) *A Tribute to Elizabeth Moore Erickson. Colleague Extraordinaire, Wife, Mother and Companion*. Mexico City. Alom Editores.

² The MHE Foundation Newsletter, Vol. 19, n. 3 Fall 1999, p. 10.

³ This video combines 1990s footage with the 1936s history-making ethnographic field work by Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson in Bali. It illustrates transgenerational transmission of trance skills through dance.

⁴ For an encompassing Bibliography and Filmography of Jay Haley see: Zeig, J. (Ed.) (2001) *Changing Directives. The Strategic Therapy of Jay Haley*. Phoenix: The Milton H. Erickson Foundation Press.

-
- ⁵ Richeport-Haley, M. & Carlson, J. (eds.) (2010) *Jay Haley Revisited*. New York: Routledge.
- ⁶ These and other films and videos are available through www.haley-therapies.com and email: prizefilm@aol.com
- ⁷ Idem, *Jay Haley Revisited*; pp. xxvi.
- ⁸ Salvador Minuchin. *Jay Haley: My Teacher*. The MHE Foundation Newsletter, Vol. 27, n. 2, Summer 2007; p. 4.
- ⁹ Idem, *Jay Haley Revisited*; pp. 173-187.
- ¹⁰ Judith Mazza (2001) "Haleyisms" *in* *Changing Directives. The Strategic Therapy of Jay Haley*. Phoenix, AZ: The Milton H. E. Foundation Press; p. 253.
- ¹¹ Roxanna Erickson Klein (2001) "Foreword" *in*: *Changing Directives. The Strategic Therapy of Jay Haley*. Phoenix, AZ: The MHE Foundation Press; p. xi.
- ¹² Jeffrey Zeig & Brent Geary (Eds.) (2000) *The Letters of Milton H. Erickson*. Phoenix, AZ: Zeig, Tucker & Theisen; pp. 1- 87.
- ¹³ See Jay Haley (1973) *Uncommon Therapy. The Psychiatric Techniques of Milton H. Erickson, MD*. New York: W.W. Norton for an appreciation of how the process of *cross-fertilization* informed and influenced Jay Haley's vision and life work.
- ¹⁴ Idem, *Uncommon Therapy*; pp. 42.
- ¹⁵ Madeleine Richeport (1985) "The Importance of Anthropology in Psychotherapy: World View of Milton H. Erickson, MD" *in* J. Zeig (Ed.) *Ericksonian Psychotherapy. Vol. I: Structures*. Brunner/Mazel: New York; pp. 537-552
- ¹⁶ Richeport-Haley, M. (1992) The interface between multiple personality, spirit mediumship, and hypnosis. *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis*, 34 (3), 168-177.
- ¹⁷ J. Haley & M. Richeport-Haley (2003). *The Art of Strategic Therapy*. New York: Brunner-Routledge, pp. 135-155.