



NYSEPH NEWSLETTER

The New York Milton H. Erickson Society for Psychotherapy and Hypnosis
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EDITOR'S NOTE

"Develop your own technique; be your own natural self", Milton Erickson said. Kay Thompson and Michelle Ritterman, each in her unique way have done just that - and gone far beyond. Being with Dr. Erickson made it possible for people to discover parts of themselves they didn't know they had - or, as Satir puts it, "to become more fully human." What we say about others is a reflection of ourselves and part of ourselves is in what we see. Ritterman says of Thompson: "Kay Thompson is really the most like Milton of any of his students, but not a copy of him. She knows what he knew and works like he did, only it's her version. It's her own thing."

Both women have gone far beyond the usual range of professional standards. Those of us who know Kay Thompson know what a fighter she is. Only one example is her seven-year battle on behalf of the Penna State Dental Association against the Goliath of Blue Cross and Blue Shield.

Michelle Ritterman, the author of *Using Hypnosis in Family Therapy*, sees the family as a hypnotic unit and works on

the level of the family unconscious. She has expanded her horizons and perceives the family as being affected by a broad range of social, cultural, and political inductions that are often unrecognized. Her interviews with torture victims in South America, Denmark and Africa (which she will discuss in Interview Part II in our next issue) have brought a sobering depth to our understandings. Her parameters of the family have expanded; she sees the world as a family.

Erickson's effect on people was to bring them into full connection with their lives. His words spoken in the little office under the far-ranging shadows of Squaw Peak reverberate and resonate into action. In effect, Ritterman and Thompson in addition to being brilliant hypnotherapists put their money where their mouth is.

What we learn from each other in our mutual journeys goes far beyond technique or professional skills. We learn from each others' willingness to be our own natural selves.

That is why we have invited Thompson and Ritterman to come to teach what Erickson was about.

Jane Parsons-Fein C.S.W.

INTERVIEW WITH MICHELLE RITTERMAN, Ph.D.

Michelle Ritterman received her Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Temple University and completed her training at the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic. She began studying with Erickson in 1975 and has published numerous articles on the use of Ericksonian hypnotherapy techniques in family therapy. Dr. Ritterman authored *Using Hypnosis in Family Therapy*, the first comprehensive integration of Erickson hypnosis and family therapy, and she has also written on problems of forced exiles and victims of torture.

JP: How did you become interested in hypnosis?

MR: I wanted to be a poetess and I think I've always communicated with people about their problems on an unconscious level, via a kind of poetic communication that is analogous to

Erickson's story-telling. When I was a student at The Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic I was with Jay Haley and Sal Minuchin when Herb Lustig showed the video of Erickson working with Monde. Before that I had thought hypnosis was controlling other people. Erickson was doing quite the opposite and I wanted to learn from him.

JP: That's interesting: Virginia Satir stayed away from him because she had heard that if you shook his hand you went

into trance. She didn't yet know that she herself was a master hypnotist and had been in trance many times.

MR: Well, I didn't find Erickson to be interested in dominating people. Maybe he'd played with that when he was younger, but in my opinion he was a master at getting you to be fully yourself. Continues on page 2

KAY THOMPSON, D.D.S
"The Therapeutic Uses of Language"
March 14-15
MICHELLE RITTERMAN, Ph.D.
"Using Hypnosis in Family Therapy:
Breaking the Spell of Dysfunctional Rapport"
May 16-17

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