

THE DENVER PSYCHOANALYTIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>President's Message</i>	1
<i>Institute Director</i>	3
<i>Memorials</i>	5
<i>Coming Events</i>	7
<i>Richard Geist Lecture Reported by Pam Haglund</i>	8
<i>David Stevens Lecture Report by Linda Plant.</i>	10
<i>Interview with Nancy McWilliams</i>	12



Mind matters...

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

- RONNIE M. SHAW, APRN, BC

We opened the year with many wonderful programs and the Site Visit for the Denver Psychoanalytic Institute. Because the Society is so important and integral to the Denver Psychoanalytic Institute we participated in the Site visit with a Coordinating Committee Meeting that was attended by a Site Visit Team.

The Extension Division under the leadership of Margy Stewart is thriving with many interesting courses, and the Friday night lecture Series is in full swing. Several of the faculty have returned to teach again. We also have new teachers who are joining us. We are offering very diverse classes. Faculty, Society members, and community members participate in the classes, leading to a complex and interesting experience. Nancy Bell and Denise Detrick co-chair the Salon Series now underway and very well received.

Fred Mimmack chairs the Film Series that is always well attended and leads to stimulating discussion. We are already hearing film recommendations for next year. Participants have turned out in large numbers even though they travel all the way out to the Anschutz Campus. We have a comfortable auditorium there for viewing and discussion.

We are looking forward to the Nancy McWilliams conference in April which we are co-sponsoring with the Clinical Social Work Society. Joan Heron has been working tirelessly with the Nancy McWilliams Conference Committee: Florie Lehrburger, Pat Higgins, Lorrie Schroffel, Ron Langer, Cindy Brody, and Pam Haglund.

Our Friday Night Lecture Series is in full swing under the Chairmanship of David Stevens. This Series meets at Denver University (Please check the location of each meeting because we occasionally have to change our meeting place). Shoshana Adler, the Chair of our Preschool Outreach Project is working in the community. Linda Plaut is heading up our new reduced-fee psychotherapy referral service. A voice mail has been set up, copies of brochures have been printed, and the committee is beginning to publicize the service. Please contact Linda if you would like to volunteer to provide treatment on a reduced-fee basis.

(Continued from page 1)

Margy Stewart has coordinated with the Denver Center for the Performing Arts our annual psychoanalytic discussion that follows a dramatic production. This year's offering is Shakespeare's *Othello*.

We have recently responded to a longstanding request from our members and the academic community to start a forum that focuses on our overlapping interests. We are in the process of developing the forum in which such an interface can take place. We anticipate more and varied meetings between the psychoanalytic community and scholars in related areas of interest. Watch for a notice about the next meeting that will be sent out to our members. We will watch the movie, *Pan's Labyrinth* in the spring. (Note this is not a meeting of the Film Series.) Since the humanities gatherings would be a "drop-in" group, if you want to attend each event, please rsvp as soon as possible when you see the invitation, so that we can ascertain how many participants we might expect.

Sadly we have lost a few of our colleagues this past year. Our own John Biddinger died recently and he will be missed very much. He was a special teacher and friend to many of us. We hope to have an article celebrating his life and contribution to the field in the next Newsletter. We also lost a colleague in Social Work who so many of us have known for many years, Carol Corkey. Eugene Kinder, a Psychiatrist and member of the Society has died also.

The Denver Psychoanalytic Society has a tradition of reaching out in times of tragedy. With the rest of the world, we have been deeply saddened by the devastation in Haiti and so we are joining the American Psychoanalytic Association in a national effort to respond to the crisis. The Executive Committee and the Coordinating Committee of the Society will start a fund for victims, to Partners in Health (PIP), an organization that the American Psychoanalytic Association has studied and known about for years. Please watch for a letter about this effort soon.

On the national scene, the American Psychoanalytic Association has been very active in education, research, and outreach. The most important part of the winter meeting, however, was the possibility of a meaningful compromise on the Standards for Education. This new compromise will very likely give the Association a long awaited period of peace.

We welcome new members to the Society. Please call our Membership Chair, Barbara Redinger if you are interested in joining us as a new member.

We are going 'green' so **please be sure that we have your e mail address on file.** Use the web site:

www.denverpsychoanalytic.org

to get updates and leave your e mail address for the Society notices if we do not already have it. We have sent hard copy about some of our programs and projects, but we want to move toward a paper less system as much as possible.

Most of our programs are designed to fit into busy schedules so please join us for as much as interests you. Many things are time limited or one-time events. If you would like to work with us on a program or suggest a program, please let us know.



REMINDER —

The Nancy McWilliams Conference
will be held on
April 17, 2010 on the
Anschutz Medical Campus.
If you did not receive a brochure in
the mail, one can be downloaded
from the home page of our website:
www.denverpsychoanalytic.org



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE DENVER INSTITUTE FOR PSYCHOANALYSIS

- Stacey Keller, M.D.

Over the last two and a half years the Institute Faculty members have been faced with a multitude of essentially non-analytic challenges: moving our offices, restructuring our governance and board of directors, dealing with the impact of the national economic crisis, and finally, a site visit from the American Psychoanalytic Association. While dealing successfully with all of these tasks, our faculty continued to deliver on our mission, providing psychoanalytic education to three groups of outstanding analytic candidates and two excellent classes of psychotherapy students.

As usual, our faculty members have been active locally and nationally. Denver is well represented on APsaA committees with Dr. Miller on COCAA, Dr. Keller on COI, and Dr. Jensen on PIPE. Dr. Cal Narcisi is wrapping up his term as Co-Chair of BOPS on a positive note, with a degree of consensus regarding issues that have troubled the organization for years. Dr. Shedler's paper on evidence was applauded by APsaA. Dr. Stevens presented his paper on The Trouble with Reality in New Mexico, and at the University of Colorado's Department of Psychiatry Grand Rounds, where a return engagement was requested. We also were well represented in the EPF working parties studying Comparative Clinical Methods, Specificities, and Initializing Psychoanalysis – with Ronnie Shaw, Mark Wolny, Stacey Keller, Pam Haglund, and Jill Miller participating in January meetings.

The academic year was kicked off with the Annual Meeting and Banquet at the University Club in September 2009. As mentioned in our last newsletter, we had realized a need to update our organizational structure to remain in compliance with our status as a non-profit entity. The Faculty met in May to discuss various options for streamlining and updating the structure of our Board of Directors. After over six months of preparation, the Executive and Bylaws Committees proposed a revision of our Bylaws that codified the new Board structure for the Faculty's consideration. Following a discussion of this new structure, the bylaws were fine tuned by the faculty, and received an endorsement in a straw vote from all faculty members present. The revised bylaws were approved in a formal vote in January 2010. Additionally, a mandatory dues payment was established for faculty members. Voluntary contributions continue to be encouraged to either our DIP operating funds or to PEACS, the Fund for Psychoanalytic Education and Community Service.

The Denver Institute for Psychoanalysis has continued its collaboration with the Denver Psychoanalytic Society in the efforts of the Joint Financial Task Force. We have made significant progress in achieving and maintaining a balanced budget, developing our PEACS fund, and clarifying our communication needs. Thanks to Paula Bernstein, Ronnie Shaw, Ben Green and each project manager for their contributions.

The highlight of the fall was the Site Visit by the American Psychoanalytic Association over five days in November. Dr. Richard Ruzumna, and a team of five analysts from across the country came to Denver to review our programs, and share with us

their expertise gained from other institutes across the country. Faculty members graciously gave of their time to host evening meetings in their homes and to attend all of our regular meetings within that five day period. Unfortunately, Denver's weather threw a wrench into the works, as a snowstorm resulted in the site visitors leaving a day early, before the final feedback session. The wrap up was eventually held on February 6, 2010, where the site visitors presented their findings, stimulating a useful discussion among our faculty. The final report will be forthcoming.

Many of our members have expressed concern about the level of conflict within the national organization around the ongoing issues of certification and Training and Supervising Analyst appointment. This year may be a year where that trend is changing. In July, a two track educational standards option was proposed, with any institute being able to elect one of the two tracks. To investigate this, two task forces were established, one charged with exploring what major changes might be incorporated in a second approved educational track that institutes could choose. The second task force was charged with reviewing and updating the current educational standards set by the Board on Professional Standards of the American Psychoanalytic Association. These task forces met independently for months and each prepared a set of recommendations. They convened jointly in NYC in January for a two day retreat with a remarkable outcome-they found an agreement that would allow us to have only one track, thereby saving much confusion, yet answering many of the chronically distressing, seemingly irresolvable problems that have plagued our organization.

The recommendations include a method to allow someone in an ongoing analysis with a non-training analyst to remain in that analysis for their training analysis when accepted as a candidate by means of a waiver process. A second improvement concerns the pathway to certification and training and supervising appointments. The newly recommended certification process maintains national standards and enhances a greater focus on education by expanding certification to a three part process that begins in candidacy with two evaluative colloquia, and culminates in the awarding of certification and TA and/or SA status simultaneously with the completion of a third review process. The last major change is the establishment of different requirements for Training Analyst and Supervising Analyst appointments. Further information on the proposed changes is available from the office. These changes were approved in principle with 53 votes for, 0 against, and 3 abstentions. They are now being formalized into a standards document that will be discussed by our faculty in May and voted on in Washington DC at the June meetings. There was a widespread sigh of relief at the possibility of agreement and cessation of hostilities around these issues. I think it will allow the organization to get back to a focus on education and psychoanalysis.

My hope for us in Denver is that we, too, may focus more of our energy on psychoanalytic education, now that the move, financial crisis, and the site visit are behind us. If the new Educational Standards document is approved in June, our interest in developing educational colloquia, similar to Comprehensive exams, for our candidates may dovetail nicely with the requirements for portions of the certification process moving into the training years. Our hope is that this will be a stimulating and energizing process for faculty and candidates alike.

An emphasis on psychoanalysis was evident in our plans for our Annual Retreat, held at the University Club in February. In addition to our usual curriculum review we explored issues of evaluating analytic competence. The educational portion was devoted to the case formulation, raising our awareness of the value of case formulation and writing in our psychoanalytic education and development. Finally, we tackled the question of how we can enrich our psychoanalytic experience, in areas such as practice building, scholarly research, theoretical diversity and debate, and case discussion and support. This resulted in a lively and stimulating discussion.



IN MEMORIAM
John E. Biddinger, M.D.
11/22/35—10/29/09

John passed away after a long battle with cancer. He graduated from our Institute in 1983 and was appointed to our faculty in 1987. He was an Active Member of our Society as well. He and his wife, Terry, settled in the Denver area in 1969 where they raised two children and enjoyed five grandchildren. John dedicated his career to improving mental health through both his private practice in the Denver area and through his service at the Veterans Administration Hospital for 40 years. He is missed by so many.

* * * * *

IN MEMORIAM
Eugene J. Kinder, M.D.
3/5/1926 - 11/1/2009

Gene's daughter-in-law called to let us know that Gene had passed away on November 1st, 2009. Gene joined our Society in 1999 after moving from Arizona to Boulder, Colorado. He was a member of many professional associations and societies: APsA, IPA, APA (Life Fellow 01/01/91), Chicago Psychoanalytic Society, Wisconsin Psychoanalytic Society, Southern California Society & Institute, Arizona Psychoanalytic Study Group, Arizona NBW Training Faculty, Southwest Psychoanalytic Society. He was President of the Arizona Psychiatric Society in 1988-1989. He was a practicing analyst for many years in Phoenix after graduating from the Chicago Institute. He and his wife, Pat, moved to Boulder to be near their family and four grandsons. Gene attended several of our Friday evening lectures over the past ten years, always with a broad smile and hearty handshake. He will be missed by many here and across the country.

THE DENVER PSYCHOANALYTIC SOCIETY'S ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

We hope you are planning to join the Society for its annual fundraising event with the Denver Center for the Performing Arts on **Saturday, May 1, 2010 at 1:30 P.M.** for the presentation of *William Shakespeare's OTHELLO*, directed by Kent Thompson.

When the Moor, Othello, weds the beautiful Desdemona in 16th century Venice, he does not bargain for the invidious betrayal of his aide Iago. Power plays and poisonous gossip come to a terrible end in this Shakespearian tragedy as Othello is consumed by love, rumor, deception and a fatal desire for revenge.

A DISCUSSION led by faculty members of the Denver Institute for Psychoanalysis will follow the play. Discussants will be Paula Bernstein, Ph.D., Roy Lowenstein, M.D., and Neil Rosen, Psy.D..

A WINE RECEPTION and DINNER at *PRIMA RISTORANTE* follows the discussion.

Although the deadline to register is April 2, 2010, please call the Society Office after the deadline to check on availability of tickets.

(303-724-2666) We hope to see you there.

Choose your level of participation -

\$200.00 for PRODUCERS which includes:

Play & Discussion, Wine Reception and Dinner at *Prima Ristorante*

(If you already have tickets for the play but would like to attend the reception and dinner, the cost is \$150.00 per person)

\$80.00 for DIRECTORS which includes:

Play & Discussion and Wine Reception at *Prima Ristorante*

(If you already have tickets for the play but would like to attend the reception, the cost is \$30.00 per person)

\$50.00 for ACTORS which includes:

Play & Discussion

Be an ANGEL— additional contributions are needed and welcomed!

Your contributions will benefit the outreach programs of the Denver Psychoanalytic Society. Programs include our *Scientific Lecture Series offered free of charge, pro bono consultations with public and private school personnel, our Disaster Response and Education Team working with community resources, continuing education for mental health professionals, special programs for parents, teachers, lawyers and doctors, the Society Newsletter offered free of charge, as well as a low-fee referral service.* Contributions should be made payable to: The Denver Psychoanalytic Society Fund

The Denver Psychoanalytic Society, Mail Stop F478
12469 E. 17th Place, Room 113
Aurora, CO 80045

THE COLLEAGUE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Of the Denver Psychoanalytic Society
Is available to all Society members if a situation arises
they wish to report.

Contact the Committee Chair,
Robinette Bell—303-691-8991

Or one of the committee members:

Tom Avery—720-227-0328
Mary Ellen Caiati—303-860-8640
Esther Lowenstein—303-321-5532

Coming Events....

- March 1, 2010 Institute Open House at the Teitelbaum home
- March 5, 2010 Society Lecture: Panel on “*Aging & Psychoanalysis*” 7:30 p.m. in the Lindsay Auditorium in Sturm Hall
- March 9, 2010 Society Salon Program in the home of Nancy Bell with a Presentation by Roy Lowenstein, “*The Wreckage of Psychosis*” (call to RSVP)
- March 19, 2010 Society Film Series: *Five Easy Pieces* with discussion led by Cindy Brody and Mike McGrath 7:00 p.m. in the Bushnell Auditorium, 8th floor of building 500, the former Fitzsimons Army Hospital. Access off E. 19th Avenue across from visitor lots.
- April 2, 2010 Spring Break—no institute classes today
- April 7, 2010 Society Cont. Ed.: “*Peripheral Vision in Psychotherapy, Papers on Therapeutic Perspectives*” begins tonight in Boulder with Neil Rosen and Robert Unger.
- April 9, 2010 Society Cont. Ed.: “*Flow & Blink*” book discussion with Ruth Neubauer, MSW, begins in Denver.
- April 10-11, 2010 Institute Faculty Development Retreat with Dominique Scarfone
- April 17, 2010 The Nancy McWilliams Conference — AMC campus**
- April 23, 2010 Society Film Series: “*Claiming a life: Lyn Cowan, Desire, and the Courageous Heart*” a film by Stephen Witty
- April 29, 2010 5th Thursday - Institute Faculty Meeting, 12:15—1:30 p.m.
- April 30—May 2, 2010 ACP meetings in Baltimore, Maryland
- May 1, 2010 Society Annual Fundraiser with the DCPA: **OTHELLO**
- May 7, 2010 Society Lecture: “*Listening, Dreaming, Sharing: on the use of the analyst’s inner experience*” with Ted Jacobs, M.D. 7:30 p.m. at DU
- May 8, 2010 Society Workshop on Stress 9-11:30 with Jennifer Kennedy, M.D. “*Stress: Neurobiology of Symptoms, Treatment, and Resilience*” at AMC
- May 14, 2010 Society Film Series: *Chinatown* with discussant, Mike Moran, M.D.
- May 25, 2010 **Society Annual Business/Dinner meeting (note Tuesday eve.)**
- June 4, 2010 Last day of classes for the 2009-2010 academic year
- June 9-13, 2010 APsaA meetings in Washington, D.C.

**BE SURE TO CHECK OUR WEBSITE REGULARLY FOR UPDATES,
DOWNLOADABLE FLYERS, AND REGISTRATION INFORMATION:**

www.denverpsychoanalytic.org

“EMPATHIZING WITH OEDIPUS: A CONNECTEDNESS PERSPECTIVE”

(May 1, 2009)

Lecture by Richard Geist, Ed.D.

Reported by Pam Haglund, Psy.D.

Richard Geist, a founding member of the Massachusetts Institute for Psychoanalysis, father of four, and poet, was the final presenter in the Scientific Lecture Series for 2008-09. He tackled the challenging question: How does self psychology, using what he called a “connectedness” perspective, deal with “high level self disorders” or neurotic disturbances? In other words, how does a self psychologist treat problems derived from oedipal conflicts?

Dr. Geist clarified the self psychological perspective regarding the oedipal phase of development. The phase is universal, marked by a “child’s pride in his or her own emerging physical and psychological strength, particularly [in] the recognition of his own affectionate and assertive capacities.” Under ideal circumstances, these characteristics are met with empathic pleasure and delight on the part of parents. The universal phase becomes the problematic “complex” when the child’s proud assertions encounter responses that fail to acknowledge the appropriateness of these “oedipal passions—love, hate, rivalry, competition, jealousy, longing, guilt, disappointment” (Ornstein, P., 1980, p. 184). When parent and child are deeply connected during this phase, a parent recognizes these passions as signals of unfolding developmental processes and welcomes them.

As an illustration of what might be a problematic response to a child’s oedipal passions, Dr. Geist related the familiar story of a colleague’s four year old son who pronounced that he was going to marry his mother when he grew up. The colleague challenged his son by saying, “What about me?” to which the little boy said, “Oh, you’ll be long gone and dead by then.” A self psychologically minded father might have responded by welcoming the boy’s masculine pride by saying, “You’ll make a great father and husband one day!” This every day example shows the self psychological position that welcomes grandiose, sexualized, and aggressive assertions as indications of what is needed to help consolidate a child/person/patient’s sense of self.

In treatment, from Dr. Geist’s self psychological perspective, the curative goal is to build self-structure. In order for self-confidence and cohesiveness to develop, a context of connectedness is required. Connectedness “refers to a consciously or non-consciously felt sense of sharing and participating in another’s subjective emotional life while simultaneously experiencing the other as participating in one’s subjective life. ... When two people feel connected, each person’s responsiveness—including his or her selfobject functions, empathy, and subjectivity—becomes a felt presence in the other’s subjective world” (Geist, 2008, p. 131). According to Geist’s understanding of Kohut and self psychological treatment, “what allows the therapeutic evolution of a healthy self-organization ... is connectedness between an empathically responsive analyst and patient” (Geist, 2008, p. 130).

Dr. Geist used two clinical examples to amplify his emphasis on a self psychological connectedness perspective. In one, a woman introduced a dream with clear sexual elements directed toward the analyst. This preceded the analyst’s annual vacation. Rather than treat the material as representing a particular way of relating, using sexuality to pull the analyst closer to her, Geist experienced it as a breakdown of a healthy oedipal self in the face of the upcoming separation. To him the (dream) behavior expressed the patient’s need for him to recognize her as a sexual object (a component of the oedipal self). He saw her need for him to admire her as a mirroring selfobject need. In Geist’s view, selfobject needs are not distortions; they are the path to recovery for the patient. As such, he welcomes them as guides to what the patient needs in order to repair a damaged or inadequate sense of self or to consolidate a fully integrated one.

Dr. Geist used his second clinical example to show how self psychology deals with competitiveness and aggression. His patient canceled a regular session in order to attend a lecture on Kohut. When the patient returned to his analysis, he was convinced that Geist was angry with him. Rather than interpret that moment as projective identification or a repetition of feeling competitive with his father, the analyst took the position that “the patient is always right.” Dr.

Geist, believing that something in his behavior supported the patient's conviction that he (Geist) was angry, pursued this line by asking, "What does it feel like to have your therapist so angry with you for pursuing your professional development?" What emerged was that the patient detected impatience in the analyst's voice during the conversation about the need to cancel his session. Dr. Geist recalled that he *had* been in a hurry when he took the call and acknowledged to his patient that, indeed, he heard impatience, but not about the decision to attend the lecture on Kohut.

A further technical point followed in Geist's discussion of these moments with this patient, who himself became angry when he detected the impatience in his analyst's voice. Geist interpreted the anger as a mechanism for the patient to "remobilize" his confidence. Geist assumes that such anger results from humiliation and injured pride. In this case, the patient wished to be considered a "chip off the old block" and to feel included with and protected by the analyst, to have the analyst function as an idealizing selfobject.

A lively discussion followed the paper. Among the many important questions asked and answered, the following statements contribute to understanding Dr. Geist's perspective further:

An infant is not born with a destructive/aggressive drive. The drives represent affective states to be integrated into the entire personality. This point engaged the audience in an energetic discussion about the "niceness" of self psychologists and an assertion that such statements (i.e. an infant is not born with a destructive drive) are overly-simplistic.

Three elements distinguish destructive aggression or narcissistic rage from "normal anger and self-assertion." In the destructive form, first, there is an insatiable desire for revenge; second, the rage is boundless; and third, the rage permits no empathy for the victim.

If the analyst is genuinely angry with a patient, and the patient is asserting this, "the patient is always right." "The patient knows our subjectivity, whether we acknowledge it or not." The wisest course is to acknowledge it, and to own it as something the analyst has not adequately dealt with.

To the question, why so many therapists of diverse orientations claim Winnicott as confirming or supporting their particular theory, Dr. Geist outlined a lineage of therapists from Ferenczi, to Balint, Winnicott, and culminating with Kohut. These analysts were "client-centered" in their ideas rather than "theory-centered."

This lecture and all others in the Scientific Lecture Series are recorded on DVD and can be borrowed from the Institute/Society office (303 724-2666).

Geist, R. (2008). Connectedness, permeable boundaries, and the development of the self: Therapeutic implications. *International Journal of Self Psychology*. Vol. 3: Number 2. Pp. 129-152.

Ornstein, P. (1980). Self Psychology and the concept of health. A. Goldberg, (ed.) *Advances in Self Psychology*. New York. International Universities Press. Pp. 137-159.



“THE TROUBLE WITH REALITY”

(October 23, 2009)

Lecture by David Stevens, Ph.D.

Reported by Linda Plaut, LCSW

“Humankind cannot stand very much reality.” – T. S. Eliot

David Stevens began his presentation on “The Trouble with Reality” by presenting four patients, each of whom had masterfully used far-fetched fantasies to avoid significant aspects of reality. Using what David called a “psychological slight of hand,” these patients behaved as if the stories they made up were true. They held onto their illusions even when the IRS and other representatives of reality confronted them with serious consequences for doing so.

To put his paper in context, David gave an overview of various philosophers’ theories concerning humans’ relationship with reality. He began with Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), who posited a separate externality beyond human ken. Kant maintained that our minds play an active role in creating our sense of “reality,” shaping and limiting what we see.

However, by the time Freud (1856-1939) began to formulate his ideas, the culture was dominated by positivism, which stressed that one should give credence only to those phenomena that can be objectively and verifiably observed. Freud initially tried to work within the positivist framework, but eventually his experiences with patients led him to explore the unconscious.

David reminded us that Freud believed a human’s earliest mental productions were the baby’s hallucinations created when hunger sensations were followed by contact with the mother’s breast. As David described Freud’s theory, “The baby creates and lives out a reality which is really a memory of wishes being gratified.” However, hallucinating doesn’t fill the belly. Our situation, David said, is summed up by “another famous thinker, Groucho Marx,” who observed, *‘I’m not crazy about reality but it’s the only place where you can get a decent meal.’* For Freud the encounter with reality creates the disturbances that lead to the development of mental life. Still, even as adults, we sometimes let our unconscious wishes compromise our grasp of reality.

David described three kinds of reality found in Freud’s writings. The first is “thrownness” (as with a piece of clay) – a term from Heidegger, referring to the essential givens of one’s life, such as one’s sex, the time period in which one lives, the place where one lives, and the financial and other circumstances of one’s early life. David commented that people are defined to a greater degree than they like to acknowledge by these givens of their lives.

The second is “psychic reality” – what a person makes of his or her “thrownness,” or, in other words, how a person plays the hand he or she has been dealt.

The third is external reality – much of it bigger than we can comprehend. This externality is often experienced by individuals as deeply threatening to their narcissism and grandiosity.

David then discussed Wilfred Bion's view that reality can be very overwhelming, especially for psychotics. Some people are so unable to tolerate reality's impingement that they try to circumvent it by doing things like destroying a telephone that has delivered bad news.

David stated that Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) returned us to the general concepts of Kant and led us into a post-modern age. Heidegger and subsequent philosophers tell us that we cannot grasp the ultimate nature of reality, but that everything we conceive is shaped and limited by our mental apparatus.

Next David described Melanie Klein's theories of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. In the first, the infant psychotically imagines the breast as under his command, appearing in accordance with his desires. If all goes well, the child moves to the depressive position, in which the reality of the mother's otherness is taken into account. With this second stage comes a realization that our psychic reality may be faulty or incomplete, and that external reality is not under our control. David pointed out that Thomas Ogden has written that we need both positions, along with an ability to move flexibly and constructively between them.

Mentioning Winnicott, David said that a good-enough holding environment is crucial in allowing us to tolerate reality. Furthermore, Winnicott's ideas about transitional experiences, such as those that come when we're enthralled by music or poetry, suggest healthy ways of blurring the boundary between the world as we wish it and the world as it is. Such experiences allow us a temporary and refreshing escape from the pressures of reality.

David stated, "The basic trouble with reality is that it *is*." David commented that each of us must figure out how to tolerate a multitude of harsh realities – especially that we live on a very small dot in the enormity of the universe and that we will die.

He said that Freud had noted how major scientific and intellectual developments had severely injured humans' grandiosity. First, Copernicus destroyed the belief that the earth was the center of the cosmos. Second, Darwin overthrew the belief that humans were created in God's image. Then Freud himself told us we aren't even masters of our own thoughts.

Returning to the patients he had described at the beginning of his presentation, David theorized that their bizarre and tenaciously-held beliefs were attempts to make the external world conform to their wishes. He also suggested that addictions and obsessive behaviors are, at least in part, efforts to escape reality.

While it is clear that some people, like those in his case studies, go to extremes in denying reality, David nonetheless concluded that we all need a certain amount of illusion to maintain our emotional health and the ability to function.

A stimulating discussion followed. Several people suggested that if one has been given a basic sense of being loved, one can face the world as it is. Others stressed the importance of parents' teaching restorative skills, so that children learn to recover and go on after a harsh blow. Several people observed that some parents are too tuned-in to their offspring, and that children need experiences of optimal frustration to prepare for reality.

At the end of the discussion, David spoke of the role therapy can play in helping patients move beyond their faulty grasp of reality. He quoted Bion's belief that "it takes two people to think the unthinkable thought." He said his presentation is a work in progress, and he welcomes feedback. His talk was a thought-provoking way to start off this year's lecture series.



Nancy McWilliams Interview, December 6, 2009

Florie Lehrburger, LCSW
Co-Chair, Nancy McWilliams Conference Committee

The title of the Denver conference is: [New Empathy for Old Diagnoses: Clinical Conversations with Nancy McWilliams](#). The title evolved as the Conference Committee conjured up images of sitting informally with Dr. McWilliams, engaged in illuminating discussions about a host of clinical topics. Her clear, practical, down-to-earth writing style seems conducive to such conversation. With that in mind, an interview seems like a natural link to the conference.

In order to introduce herself to the Denver community, Dr. McWilliams provided the following interview. It was conducted by Letizia Dal Santo (Vicenza, Italy) in September 2008. Dr. McWilliams responded to the original questions in email. The interviewer's questions and Dr. Williams' responses have been condensed for publication in the newsletter:

LDS –

First of all I want to thank you for agreeing to this interview. You are prominent and sought after as a therapist, author, teacher and speaker. You link the technical and theoretical aspects of your books with events from your professional and personal life. What motivated you to become a psychotherapist? What elements of your education and personal life influenced that choice? What did you initially expect as a therapist? How did psychoanalysis become important to you?

NM –

Until I was in my late teens, I didn't know what a therapist was; no one in the communities where I grew up talked about going to a therapist or being interested in psychoanalysis. But several things converged for me. First, my basic temperament is naturally sympathetic, emotionally sensitive, and curious. In today's terms, I was a securely attached child who was drawn to interesting and unfamiliar others.

Second, my mother was psychologically oriented and astute. She had a master's degree from a psychoanalytically influenced graduate program at Columbia Teacher's College that had prepared her for work with deaf children, with whom she was famously patient. When I would go to her with troubling experiences, she would first sympathize and then engage me in a conversation about the psychology of what had happened. My mother had a big heart and was drawn to people with problems. She died of cancer when I was nine. This loss was a powerful lesson in the capriciousness of life. I drew the conclusion that the more loving we can make it while we are here, the better.

Third, my father was difficult in ways that drew me to questions about individual differences and psychopathology. He was a man of integrity and a good judge of character. Although he was a good father in most ways he was prone to unpredictable rage reactions. And when someone disappointed him, he would dismiss the person from his life permanently. He was a moralist who could see things only one way, with no shades of gray. I was in my twenties before I realized that my father's quirks probably resulted from his having had *encephalitis lethargica* in the sleeping sickness epidemic of the second decade of the twentieth century.

I was studying psychology by the time I figured this out, and had been puzzling over my father's personality: His tendency to project all bad outside himself seemed paranoid, but he didn't have other paranoid qualities; his inability to see other viewpoints seemed narcissistic, but he was generous and loving; his need for order seemed obsessive, but he lacked the obsessive person's fear of affect. When I read Goldstein's descriptions of brain-damaged children, I had an "aha!" reaction.

With the appearance of Oliver Sacks' book on individuals who had survived the sleeping sickness, it became even clearer to me that brain damage from his childhood illness accounted for my father's rages, need for order, and inability to appreciate emotional nuance. These revelations strongly influenced my belief that getting the right assessment of a person's core psychological issues is the key to empathy and effective help.

The people who became my strongest influences after my mother's death – most notably a lesbian couple who oversaw the Girl Scout camp I was attending in 1955 when my mother died — had an explicit value system that emphasized compassion, respect for individual differences, and hard work — all psychotherapeutic ideals. Once they assigned Reik's *Listening with the Third Ear* to their newly hired counselors.

My deep-seated egalitarianism comes partly from summers at camp. It was an environment that included people of diverse ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, appearance, physical capacity, and economic circumstances. Such communities can erase ordinary social hierarchies of wealth, beauty, and status; one is judged instead by more intrinsic standards: Are you sensitive to others? Are you a good leader and follower? Do you find creative solutions to problems? Can you find ways to make work fun?

At college I knew I was interested in psychology, but I was not interested in the rat-running experiments that dominated the American psychology curricula of the time. I majored in Government because the political science professors, especially the political theorists, were talking about people and why they do what they do. In my third year in college, my faculty advisor, handing me a copy of *Civilization and Its Discontents*, suggested that I do my Honors thesis on the political theory of Freud. The book entranced me.

During that year, my stepmother became ill with terminal cancer. My advisor extended himself to make it possible for me to fly to visit her in a New York hospital before she died, and I fell in love with him. We married at the beginning of my senior year (and lived happily together for forty years, until his death in the spring of 2005). After my graduation, we moved to the New York area.

I wanted to leave my husband's field, where I thought I would always be seen as his appendage. I was reading Theodor Reik's work and becoming excited at the idea of becoming a therapist. Wanting to meet someone who had been close to Freud, I wrote to Reik and asked if he would give me some career advice. He graciously agreed, interviewed me, and told me to go into analysis. I took his advice, thinking that I was doing so for strictly professional reasons.

Of course, a twenty-two-year-old woman who has lost two mothers, whose father frightens her, and who has a considerably older former teacher for a husband has some issues to deal with! Although I entered my analysis thinking it would be good intellectual preparation for a career in psychotherapy, I found that it was profoundly therapeutic — largely due to the personal qualities of the man to whom I was referred. If I had not undergone analysis, I think that I would have been subject to recurrent depressions, that my marriage would not have succeeded, and that I would not have had the children who soon lit up my world. So it was the transformation of my own life by psychoanalysis that ultimately shaped my passion for this work.

FL –

Thank you, Nancy, for sharing such deeply personal information. I would like to ask a few additional questions:

When we initially discussed the idea for a Denver conference, you mentioned your preference to address audiences that are diverse in their theoretical orientation, levels of training and experience. Is it ever challenging to include various theories and heterogeneous audiences in your attempts to be integrative?

NM -

Actually, I haven't felt all that much tension. Many therapists seem to share my naturally integrative and synthetic orientation. My experience has generally been that theorists of different schools are pleased that I approach their work from the perspective of finding its value and applicability rather than from the perspective of critiquing it. Sometimes in my career I have felt like a bit of an outsider to whatever group is framing itself as the dominant one in psychoanalysis, but I think there are also ways that I like being a little bit on the margins.

FL -

You elaborate on a variety of character styles in your book, [Psychoanalytic Diagnoses: Understanding Personality Structure in the Clinical Process](#). What inspired you to write so fully about the paranoid and schizoid experiences, the focus of the papers you will be presenting in Denver?

NM -

I find myself fascinated by whatever patients I am currently working with, and I have had some very interesting people in recent years with paranoid and schizoid dynamics. Early in my training I had to learn how differently schizoid people experience closeness (impingement) from how I experience it (comfort). One of my supervisors was a self-described schizoid man with a knack for capturing patients' individualities, and his explication of the schizoid experience affected me deeply and greatly improved my clinical work. It was perhaps the first step in my growing capacity to mentalize a subjectivity that was very different from my own.

(continued on next page)

On a more personal level, I am simply attracted to schizoid people. My own dynamics are more depressive and hysterical, and I think there is a powerful magnetism between hysterical women and schizoid men, based on both their similarities (e.g., emotional sensitivity) and their differences (they envy each other's respective strengths). My husband had schizoid tendencies, as do several of my closest friends. One of the things about people with schizoid psychologies that attracts me is their bedrock emotional honesty. In addition, I think they are misunderstood, and I find myself easily in sympathy with misunderstood minorities.

FL

Nancy, it is a unique opportunity to learn about a keynote speaker's personal and professional life so directly. The rich details and insights you have shared will add a meaningful dimension to your presentation for all of us. Our mental health community is looking forward to your Denver debut.



Reminder: The conference will be held on Saturday, April 17, 2010 on the Anschutz Medical Campus. If you did not receive a brochure in the mail, one can be downloaded from our website: www.denverpsychoanalytic.org

THE PEACS FUND

THE FUND FOR PSYCHOANALYTIC EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Serving the Rocky Mountain Region

The activities of the Denver Institute for Psychoanalysis and the Denver Psychoanalytic Society are partially supported by an Endowment Fund that was created out of bequests left to the Denver Institute for Psychoanalysis and the Denver Psychoanalytic Society. The Endowment has grown over the years, but so have our expenses. In order to meet the growing administrative costs of our programs for training in psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy, continuing education, community education, and pro bono services, the Denver Institute for Psychoanalysis and the Denver Psychoanalytic Society have launched a joint initiative to prevent the Endowment from being eroded and, even more importantly, to promote its growth. Growing the Endowment will ensure that the Institute and Society will be able to perform their missions far into the future.

Donating to PEACS helps preserve a precious legacy. We are able to provide top quality education in psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy, serving adults, adolescents and children. We provide free lectures and low-cost courses to our mental health colleagues and the community at large; consultations to individuals and institutions that may care for you or your loved ones; low-cost psychoanalysis through our Clinic; consultation to preschools, schools and community programs; disaster response training and services.

We are recognized throughout the country as a pre-eminent center for education in psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy, serving Colorado for 40 years. Soon psychoanalytic ideas will be accessible throughout the Rocky Mountain region. Please help us ensure that excellent psychoanalytic education will be ours far into the future, informing all the services we provide for our communities. **(See next page to make your donation.)**



IMPORTANT NOTICE

If you would like to be notified of upcoming events, please email the Institute/Society office to **add or notify us of changes in your email address** so we can keep our e-list current.

Send to
lin.borden@ucdenver.edu

IF YOU HAVE NO COMPUTER ACCESS AND WOULD LIKE A HARD COPY OF THIS NEWSLETTER AND OTHER NOTICES, PLEASE CONTACT THE SOCIETY OFFICE SO WE CAN TRY TO ACCOMMODATE.

(303) 724-2666

For those with computers, please continue to visit our website regularly for the most up-to-date calendar information, flyers, member contact information, application forms, event registration information, and links to other organizations.

www.denverpsychoanalytic.org



I want to make my donation to the PEACS Fund.

Enclosed is my check payable to the Denver Institute for Psychoanalysis, PEACS Fund for

___\$50 ___\$75 ___\$100 ___\$250 ___\$500

___Other \$_____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State ___ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

This gift is a tribute: ___ in Memory of
___ in Honor of

Name _____

Send tribute notification to:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State ___ Zip _____

___ I would like this donation to be anonymous

___ Send me information about including PEACS in my will.

Please mail to -

The Denver Institute for Psychoanalysis
Mail Stop F478
12469 E. 17th Place
Aurora, CO 80045

For more information, please call 303-724-2666 or visit
www.denverpsychoanalytic.org

Thank you.

MIND MATTERS
Denver Psychoanalytic Society
Mail Stop F478
12469 E. 17th Place
Aurora, CO 80045



Mind matters...

THE DENVER PSYCHOANALYTIC SOCIETY OFFICERS

Ronnie M. Shaw, APRN, BC, President
Rex H. McGehee, M.D., President Elect
Ben Green, M.D.—Treasurer
Patricia Bernstein, Psy.D.—Secretary

NEWSLETTER STAFF

Editor

Roy Lowenstein, M.D.

Managing Editor

Lin Borden

PLEASE SEND ALL FUTURE MANUSCRIPTS TO:

Roy Lowenstein, M.D.
303-333-2111

FOR NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION CONTACT:

The Society Office
303-724-2666