EDITOR’S NOTE:

Us, the most transient.

Everyone once, once only. Just once and no more.

– Duino Elegies, Ninth Elegy, Rainer Maria Rilke

How fortunate we are that Arthur Valenstein’s “once, and once only,” so intimately intersected with the life of our institute. In 1975, Dr. Valenstein joined his colleagues, M. Robert Gardner, Edward Daniels, Rolf Arvidson, Frances Bonner, Herbert Goldings, Samuel Silverman, Malvina Stock, and Helen Tartakoff in founding PINE. Over subsequent years, he taught, supervised, analyzed, and mentored many at PINE. In 2000, Dr. Valenstein was awarded the Sigourney Award, honoring his distinguished contributions to the field of psychoanalysis. In 2002, PINE celebrated this honor with a memorable scientific meeting. Val selected three outstanding speakers, Paul Schwaber, Lawrence Friedman, and Linda Mayes; together, they reflected on the history of psychoanalysis, and its future. Later, in 2006 and 2007, Val shared reflections on his own personal journey in psychoanalysis with our community. This Newsletter is dedicated to remembering Val’s lasting contributions to PINE, and to psychoanalysis. In these pages, you will find reflections by Sanford Gifford, Ana-Maria Rizzuto, Alexandra Harrison, Steven Ablon, and Maida Greenberg.

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The remainder of the Newsletter is not entirely unrelated to honoring Val’s memory. Last summer, Maida Greenberg and her son, David, wrote an article for Slate magazine on the subject of twins. This was a topic of great interest to Val. The article emphasizes the role of Dorothy Burlingham in the research on twins; Val’s wife was Burlingham’s daughter. We are fortunate to be able to include a reprint of this article. Further, Maida kindly accepted my invitation to share more about the background of this article, by reflecting on the nature of her longstanding interest in twin development. The course of Maida’s process in researching, and raising, twins, while working with children and families, is evidence of the rich soil that PINE offers us in furthering our own intellectual ideals. Our own “once only’s are nourished by the community that Arthur Valenstein helped to foster at PINE.

My Experience with Arthur F. Valenstein, M.D., Our Val

I was a candidate at BPSI in 1969 when I met Val as a member of the Faculty but I had no direct contact with him. I came to know him at the time of the split from BPSI to create PINE. He was then the BPSI President and had to confront the increasing discomfort among several senior analysts and candidates with the changes taking place in the organization. He publicly and eloquently presented his disagreement and resigned as president. Together with several other senior and younger training analysts he was instrumental in the founding of PINE. He was one of our founding fathers and he brought with him great excitement about the new beginnings of an institute truly dedicated to the practice of psychoanalysis and to an immersion in the understanding of its theoretical and clinical foundations.

I became personally acquainted with Val soon after I joined the PINE Faculty, a year after my graduation from BPSI in 1974. We all participated as an enthusiastic group, full of the ferment of the new leaven, brought out by the psychoanalytic ideals of the founding group and the brand new faculty. Val and Grete L. Bibring, M.D. were the most senior but their graceful welcoming of the brand new generation of young graduates like myself did make us feel that we were all together in this new and exciting adventure.

I came to know Val in a more personal way when he, Grete, and others created a study group that met at her house. Our first study book, Life and Death in Psychoanalysis, by the renowned French author, Jean Laplanche, led us to intense discussions about some of the foundational concepts in psychoanalysis. Val did not make us feel that his considerable knowledge of psychoanalytic theory gave him special authority over our groping efforts to grasp difficult concepts. He had a way of saying things that mixed authority with a light tone and several graphic illustrations, thus making it easier for the group to wrestle with difficult concepts.

From that moment on, Val participated in numerous PINE meetings in which I was also involved. He had a way of doing things that was his characteristic style. If he had something important to say he would say it clearly and, at times, forcefully and would not mince words. If the issues were difficult and confusing he would listen very attentively to everyone’s position and then, at the very end, he would ask to intervene, and offer his own view of the problem and propose his solution. He almost always included humorous remarks as his way of helping us all to take enough distance from the issue involved, so that we could see his point of view. Frequently, he could be very funny and we ended up laughing with him. But he had made his point.

He was very generous with me. When my book, The Birth of the Living God, was published in 1979, Val was instrumental in suggesting that I present it at a PINE conference, probably the first in the country. Later on, at the time of my applying for certification by the American Psychoanalytic Association, I went to him for some months of supervision on one of my private cases. We had much fun together, not only talking about the dynamics of the case but also discussing theoretical and developmental issues concerning the pathology of my patient. Val’s analytic stance was deeply marked by his relationship with Anna Freud’s child studies, his own interest in development, as well as his commitment to psychoanalytic theory. We had a delightful time together during those few months. He was extremely generous, because he would not accept my paying for the supervision. He modestly said that I could pay him by giving him a gourd used by people in Argentina to drink yerba mate. I dutifully fulfilled my modest obligation when I returned from my trip to Argentina after the end of the supervision.

All of us at PINE owe Val much gratitude, because his actions and participation were crucial for the creation of PINE as it is today. If we enjoy being in our PINE today, we must remember that, together with the other founders, he made the existence of our Institution not only possible, but left his imprint in its spirit of collaboration and respectful exchanges among its members. I have written this note as my modest contribution to thank him for all the years of his life and learning that he shared with us.

Ana-Maria Rizzuto, M.D.
Cambridge, April 3, 2012
Val As I Knew Him

Recollections of Arthur F. Valenstein at his memorial service on January 26, 2012, at the Friends’ Meeting House, Cambridge, MA.

Val was my oldest friend. We met in 1946-7, when we were both veterans, recently discharged from the Army, and we had both found jobs at the Veterans’ Outpatient Clinic at 17 Court Street, now a shelter for homeless vets. Morris Adler was the chief and Val was second in command. He also happened to be my clinical supervisor, invariably kind, warm-hearted, and impressively intuitive about our wide variety of patients. I recall my only rebuke, in checking my enthusiasm for visiting a patient of mine who had been put in jail, as unfitting our role as physicians.

Nevertheless we soon became close friends. My wife, Ingrid, and I were invited to the lively evening parties that Val and his wife, Adelaide Ross, gave when they were living on Jersey Street. His cousin Francis Friedman, a physicist at MIT, of the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and especially those we disliked. We spent their summer vacations. Tinkie was not fond of big parties, but we exchanged small suppers and often met at Mrs. Rank’s gala buffets, to which most of Boston’s analysts and their spouses were invited.

Val and I attended many meetings of the Boston Psychoanalytic Society together, and shared gossip on the way home about its controversial personalities, those whom we liked and especially those we disliked. We also went to the annual American Psychoanalytic Association meetings in New York, staying at the Harvard Club and sharing cabs to and from the meetings at the Waldorf.

We shared two other interests that Val was passionately attached to: ice-skating on outdoor ponds and all the chamber music we could find in Cambridge or Boston. He was a brilliant ice-skater—much better than I was—and we explored all the local ponds from Spy Pond and Mystic Lake to Walden Pond. He loved the same kind of chamber music that Ingrid and I did: Schubert, Beethoven, Brahms, and an occasional Ravel. Val also enjoyed the tender simplicity of Mendelssohn’s Songs With Words, which he and I had played as children. We often attended concerts here, in the Friends’ Meeting House.

I will greatly miss Val’s companionship, his wisdom, his warm, affectionate style, and above all, his irreverent sense of humor and irrepressible wit. I have many happy memories of our experiences together, but very few to share them with.

(I had planned to read the last stanza of Matthew Arnold’s “Dover Beach,” but decided at the last minute to skip it, as it is too lugubrious.)

Sanford Gifford, M.D.

Val: A Voyage, Words at Play

I first met Val when I began my child psychiatry fellowship at McLean Hospital. He was one of my supervisors for my work with patients on the inpatient unit. I had read some of his articles and found his ideas to be convincing and very helpful. But I wondered how he as an analyst would be able to help me with these oppositional, acting out adolescents. I told him about a 12-year-old boy I was treating who repeatedly escaped from the unit. He would find his way back to his home, which was at least 20 miles away. Many security methods were tried without success. When I explained the situation to Val, and we reviewed his history and treatment, Val helped me see his desperate attachment to his mother and suggested that we bring his mother on the unit. Sure enough, he stopped running away.

Val supervised my third adult analytic patient. After my patient completed his analysis we continued to meet in consultation for about 30 years. He had a humanistic and compelling understanding of the clinical situations I discussed with him. He always presented his ideas in a collegial manner. When I disagreed or failed to follow his ideas, he accepted this with apparent equanimity. Val was compassionate about my struggles, and I always felt he appreciated how taxing analytic work could be. He often reflected about patients he had treated in the

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past and talked about mistakes he felt he had made. He described how he now thought he had been too formal, rigid, or not forthcoming. He always kept up to date revising his ideas and technique. This was very helpful to me in terms of the importance of these specific issues as well as feeling comfortable recognizing and learning from my mistakes.

Val was an outstanding mentor. He was generous and looked for opportunities to expand my development and experience. Val arranged for an invitation for me as a young analyst at the Anna Freud Center in Hampstead England. This was a great experience. I had a chance to work with colleagues from the United States and Europe in interesting clinical contexts. I went to the yearly colloquium for over 25 years. My first year at the Colloquium, Val suggested I go with him for a walk around Hampstead. Wearing his beret, Val led me through narrow cobbledstone passages where he showed me the pubs that were the most authentic and we sampled their specialties. It was during these pub-crawls that I felt that I was indeed realizing my fantasy of becoming an international child and adult analyst. This was one of many ways in which Val was generous and generative.

Val had a high standard for scholarship, study, and learning. For many years, Val met in a study group with Sanford Gifford, Alexandra Harrison, and me to study analyses of twins. We recorded our sessions and arranged to have them typed out and distributed. We studied these transcripts and collaborated on an article, “Special Solutions to the Phallic-Aggressive Conflicts in Male Twins,” for The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child. Our meetings were stimulating and we often invited interesting guests to join us.

Walking with Val

I do not remember the first time I met Val, but I asked him to be the supervisor of my second analytic control case. I chose to ask him to be my supervisor because of the way he used language. Val’s use of language was erudite, colorful, humorous, and playful. I loved to listen to him talk, because he made what he was talking about come alive. He was a challenging supervisor for me in this regard, because his voice was not my voice; in fact, I had not yet found my analytic voice. Yet, his passion for psychoanalysis and for the symbolism of the language and imagery of psychoanalysis, was apparent in conversation with Val. Val also loved ideas. He loved to discuss and debate ideas. When I began to explore alternative intellectual perspectives on therapeutic change, such as open systems theory, Val was eager to join me in this exploration. To our discussions, he brought his understanding of mathematics and physics, and his knowledge of the psychoanalytic classics such as Robert Waelder’s prescient papers.

Val knew the importance of a warm, enjoyable collegial atmosphere and that this was an essential relational part of the learning experience. During our consultations over the years, Val would serve strong espresso in old-fashioned glass coffee cups. I would pour the milk and sugar and pass the cookies. I often felt like we were at a coffee shop in Vienna a century earlier. Unfortunately, as the years passed and people became more weight conscious, we eliminated the cookies.

Val was always interested in learning new things in all areas of knowledge as well as in psychoanalysis. He studied the new theories of therapeutic action and a decade ago he gave the introductory remarks at the Hampstead Colloquium about changes in views of sexuality in analysis. Val had the kind of mind that was curious about everything and remembered everything. He took an interest in other aspects of my life, such as my family and my writing poetry. He met some of the family when he visited us on the Martha’s Vineyard and he stopped by on holidays. He had an amazing memory for these times and the people involved. He read my latest book of poetry, which is about being a doctor, and offered to write a précis for the book cover. His comment again showed a wonderful perceptiveness and use of language. Val was able to adapt and be flexible in many new situations. At one point, although he was quite reluctant because of the tumult he imagined, my daughter joined me and visited him in his office with her large white greyhound and a very active one-and-a-half-year-old. Despite his earlier skepticism he enjoyed it immensely.

Val loved words and he put them to good use in his clinical work, in his friendships, and for his own enjoyment as well as his many seminal contributions to scientific literature. In the last few years, as he became sick, he continued to enjoy the pleasure of playing with words, telling stories and having a good laugh. Even at the end, an interesting phrase or particular view of something would strike him. Val would see its humorous aspect and laugh in a free and enthusiastic way.

Val was a terrific teacher in terms of content but even more in terms of his openness to learning, generosity, and generativity. I treasure our friendship and his steady, compassionate, and caring companionship.

Steven Ablon, M.D.
In addition to the meetings of our twin study group, my favorite talks with Val were on our walks. The first of these walks occurred the morning that his beloved wife, Tinky, died. I was running along the river, and I encountered Val. It struck me, because I not infrequently had met Val and Tinky walking together along the river. I asked him how he was, and he told me that Tinky had just died. I asked him if I could walk with him, and we began what became a weekly walk, every Sunday morning, that lasted for many, many years. We had wonderful talks during these walks. We talked about psychoanalytic theory and history. The talks about history were particularly wonderful, because he knew all the “first generation psychoanalysts” in Cambridge. He knew where they lived—pointed out their houses—and he told me all the spicy gossip about them, which, of course, I loved to hear. How I wish I had recorded these conversations.

I had two dogs at the time, and it was hard for me to walk along the river and leave them at home, since they loved those walks so much. However, when Val and I walked, he would be quite critical of the unruly dogs we would encounter on the sidewalks, and I was hesitant to even ask him if I could take my dog along. One day, I decided to risk it. I chose my older dog, a reserved and poised standard poodle, named Sirius. Val did not object, but I did not anticipate the bond that would grow between them. Val—not exactly the most tolerant and flexible of men—would continue to criticize the other dogs, but he loved “Siri.” Siri, for his part, loved Val. When Siri and I would walk down Brattle Street to meet Val, we would see a small, stooped figure in a black beret, crossing the Lowell Street crosswalk, and Siri would tense at the leash. He would begin to strain a little as we walked towards Val, and then when we had just reached him, Siri would stop abruptly, sit, and wait. When Val greeted him, Siri would lean forward and press his cheek gently against Val’s leg. It was a friendship of two elegant beings.

After Val began to fail, he retained his sense of humor. I would visit him, and even though his speech would sometimes be incoherent, he would often crack a joke. The Val I knew was always recognizable. As I drive down Brattle Street these days, a feeling of sadness comes over me as I pass Lowell Street. Val is no longer there, Siri is also gone, but I catch myself looking for a stooped figure in a black beret crossing the street at the crosswalk, with his walking stick, and I imagine a stately black dog, watching for him.

Alexandra M. Harrison, M.D.

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**Tribute to Arthur F. Valenstein**

Several years ago when I was President of PSNE, I asked Dr. Arthur Valenstein to meet with members of our Institute and Society to talk about his reflections on psychoanalysis at this stage in his career.

He first put me off, saying, “I will think about it.” However, seeing my look of disappointment, he added, “...at another time.” Some time elapsed. I met with him again, fully prepared for the negative response, “I prefer not,” and was surprised that he agreed to meet with Society members for two meetings. Val had written a paper entitled, “A Journey on the Train of Psychoanalysis” and gave it to me to read. I did so. I found it a wonderful and compelling overview of his views of psychoanalysis. I filed it away. Since Val’s death, I have been going through my files, stashed in various places, trying to retrieve that paper (and only recently did so).

The first meeting was held at my home on November 4, 2006. It was well attended—in fact, we were quite crowded. Although Val had his prepared text, within a few minutes of speaking he deviated from it considerably. He sat in the corner of the living room in a high back chair and seemed to be having a most enjoyable time presenting his personal experiences to the group. The audience enjoyed his keen sense of humor, the pleasure he experienced with his own word play, his irreverence, his skepticism, his ramblings, and the personal anecdotes and intellectual content that he presented.

What I recall from the evening was several personal anecdotes that were familiar to me from other presentations that Val had given at scientific meetings in the past. He talked about how much he enjoyed living in Cambridge these many years. He would derive much pleasure while taking his daily walk to Harvard Square and seeing the bright faces of young men and women. He would make eye contact and exchange smiles with the students walking in his direction. He would always add that he especially enjoyed the young women who smiled back at him. He admitted with a chuckle, “That would really make my day.”

I recall that Val began his talk with the apocryphal tale of Einstein asking the ticket master at the Paddington Station in London, “Does Oxford stop here?” Serving as a segue to the fact that Val has been traveling on the train of psychoanalysis for many years, he commented that the different stations along the journey have offered him different ideas about psychoanalysis, making it difficult to arrive at a consensus in defining psychoanalysis. In an effort to be

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inclusive of so many theories, Val suggested that there is the danger that one can lose the essence of what psychoanalysis is about.

Val shared his personal history, how he came to study psychoanalysis and the evolution of his thinking. He became interested in affect theory—the importance of affect and experience in the psychoanalytic process and therapeutic outcome. In reviewing various theoretical approaches which he entertained along the way, Val commented that “clinical theory and practice of analysis continues to oscillate within heuristic bounds and that it is important not to become caught up at one extreme or the other.”

There were many wonderful vignettes presented in the paper, highlighting his attempt to hold on to the essence of what psychoanalysis is and to convey “the unique kind of science that psychoanalysis is,” that it is both a humanistic and a scientific endeavor.

During the second meeting, held at the home of Dr. Axel Hoffer in 2007, Axel presented an analytic case and Val served as the discussant. Here Val once again conveyed the complexity of integrating so many different theoretical perspectives into a cohesive understanding. He quoted the father of Charles Ives, who said to his musically talented children, “It doesn’t matter where you go in developing your abilities and talents, but I want you to know where you came from,” implying that as analysts we need to remain well versed in the basic tenets of psychoanalysis. A lively discussion ensued as to how faculty thought and used theory to understand Axel Hoffer’s patient.

However, I came across the audio-tape of a paper with the same title, “A Journey on the Train of Psychoanalysis” that Val gave to the New York Psychoanalytic Institute on April 20, 1998. He was awarded the Mary S. Sigourney Trust Prize in the Year 2000 for this contribution. The ideas in the paper were similar to the presentation Val gave at the PSNE meetings, drawn from the same paper that had been hidden in my files.

I have been listening to the tape over and over again. There is a bit-tersweet pleasure in hearing Val’s voice, and a yearning to hold on to the complexity of his ideas, his playfulness, his vitality, his humor, and to commit them to memory. Val had a remarkable mind, and he continued to delight in learning. He continued to grow and change through a lifetime. He was a man of letters, a humanist as well as a scientist. I remember him saying and I also read, that he felt that he had “one foot in hard science and one foot in the humanities, and one has to be agile enough to balance on one foot as well as the other and hopefully they can come together.” Val’s mind was agile and his ideas moved quickly, just as his life may have moved too quickly to its end for so many of us.

Maida Greenberg, Ed.D.


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Dorothy Burlingham’s Twins: Remembering the seminal psychological study.
Reprint from Slate Magazine

By David Greenberg and Maida Greenberg

For a long time, it was common for society to treat twins, especially identical twins, not as two separate people but as a single unit. Literature, from Shakespeare’s Comedy of Errors to Thornton Wilder’s Bridge of San Luis Rey, imagined twins as seamlessly interchangeable or as possessing a mysterious preternatural bond. Many people, of course, still treat twins this way. Outsiders delight in their uncanny physical similarities—from the Twinsburg, Ohio, festival that encourages participants to dress alike to the countless movies and TV shows that have fun with twins’ resemblances. Think Marge Simpson’s indistinguishable sisters, Patty and Selma.

But if laypeople still frequently perceive twins as carbon copies, psychologists no longer do. How-to manuals for raising twins stress the need to treat them as individuals, starting with not giving them rhyming names and not dressing them in matching outfits. These are basic steps, but important ones, and they have not been always widely followed. Indeed, any twin who has been spared such embarrassments probably owes a debt to a psycho-
Though little-known outside psychoanalytic circles, Burlingham authored the seminal *Twins: A Study of Three Pairs of Identical Twins*. At the time of its appearance in 1952, “the amount of material available on twinship that can be of practical help to parents of these double-featurettes,” reported the *New York Times*, unable to resist the urge to cuteness, was “remarkably skimpy.” *Twins* was immediately hailed by the British psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott as “probably the most comprehensive work of its kind in existence.”

Born in 1890, Burlingham was the daughter of Charles Tiffany, the famed jeweler. After a divorce, she moved with her children to Vienna, underwent psychoanalysis with Sigmund Freud, and worked with his daughter Anna to establish a day care with psychoanalytically informed lectures and seminars for teachers. Then in 1938 the Nazis annexed Austria, and she traveled with the Freuds to England. During the Blitz she and Anna Freud set up the Hampstead Nurseries in a comparatively safe neighborhood in North London, where children stayed during the war, separated from but visited occasionally by their mothers. Freud and Burlingham observed the children in their care and collaborated on two influential works, *Young Children in Wartime* and *Infants Without Families*.

A little while later Burlingham followed up with *Twins*. Over several years, she tracked the development of three sets of identical twins at Hampstead: Bill and Bert, Jessie and Bessie, and Mary and Madge. She carefully documented their growth—including important moments in their relationships with one another—in spare, lucid, unobtrusive, and highly descriptive writing, as well as in detailed color-coded charts in the back of the book.

Looked at one way, *Twins* is an exercise in debunking. Burlingham starts by discussing the widespread societal fascination with twins, which she suggested may stem from a fantasy that people develop when they’re young and learning to cope with their separateness from their parents. People think it would be wonderful to have someone “just like” themselves—a perfect soul mate capable of deep, intuitive, empathetic understanding. But the truth is more prosaic. “In the fantasy,” Burlingham wrote, “the relationship to the twin is imagined as an untroubled and unchanging one.” In reality, twins struggle with their partners and often balk at being pigeonholed. When at nearly 4 years old Mary told Madge, “Madge, you’re a twin,” Madge replied: “No I’m not, I’m Madge.”

Although Burlingham stressed twins’ need for independence, her picture was anything but simple. She saw, too, that this need coexisted with a fear of separation, and she observed how the tension between those conflicting feelings surfaced at various stages of early life. When very young, each twin expressed (as all children do) a basic wish for self-gratification—for the mother’s attention, or a particular toy, or a dessert. In the case of twins, this wish for gratification inevitably came at the expense of the other twin, since they had to compete with each other for maternal affection—and just about everything else. Slowly, however, this basic wish transformed into a desire to share, and by the age of 2, the twins felt it important to have the same thing at the same time. And yet this desire didn’t erase the earlier competitiveness. A struggle remained, only now focused on the wish to have equal amounts, not more or less—so that Jessie would not have her cocoa with her nurse until she was assured that Bessie was having cocoa, too. “Sharing,” Burlingham noted, “is the continuation of their former competition.”

The portrait of twins’ relationships wasn’t all bleak. Burlingham also saw that functioning as a unit can be beneficial. When, at 2½ years, Bessie showed proficiency at making plasticine ducks, Jessie, rather than trying to learn the skill herself, was happy to ask Bessie to make “me ducky too.” Similarly, when one of the pair was challenged by another child or reproached by an adult, the second twin put aside her rivalry to defend her sister. The protected twin, for her part, was glad to let the other temporarily assume a superior role in the relationship. At such times, feelings of unity overrode feelings of rivalry.

Overall, however, Burlingham saw that it was necessary for a twin to carve out some sense of individual identity. Bessie and Jessie at times supported each other and at other times criticized each other persistently. Each seemed to seek her partner’s approval as a single child asks for praise from a parent; they also seemed to separate more easily from each other when they were happy and enjoying what they were doing. Bert and Bill, by contrast, were so invested in each other, so engaged in copying each other, that they didn’t develop appropriate social skills or a sense of separateness. Years later, psychologists described their fusion as a severe maladaptation.

Despite its subtlety of observation, *Twins* did not go without criticism. Clearly, children brought up in a group setting at the Hampstead Nurseries—away from their parents all or most of the time—weren’t being raised under typical circumstances. Their mothers’ prolonged absences may have distorted the twin relationship. Burlingham’s work also focused only on the early years of childhood, paying little attention to

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the stages of development after the child begins elementary school. And then there was the problem that, like other studies that rely on close observation, Burlingham’s small sample size left her open to the charge that her conclusions could not be generally applied.

Nonetheless, her work encouraged others to observe twin development, giving rise to a host of new studies. We now understand better the particular challenges that twins face at critical junctures in their developmental trajectory—and parents, psychologists, and teachers, knowing more about how to treat twins, can better help them enjoy the pleasures of twinship as well.

Burlingham herself offered only two pages of practical advice for parents. It amounted to a plea against extremes: Parents shouldn’t break up their twins completely, she said, but they shouldn’t let them relate primarily to each other, either. Instead she called for “a normal development of the tie to parents.” That advice may seem unremarkable coming from a Freudian psychoanalyst, but any twin who remembers being gussied up in matching sailor suits and put on display probably yearns to have been treated “normally” a little more often.

Further Thoughts on Researching Twins

Maida Greenberg kindly accepted my invitation to share something of the back story behind the writing of this Slate article. As you will see, the story emerged from a long-standing personal and professional interest in the psychological dynamics of twins.

Can you tell me how the project of writing an article with your son, David, came about?

I want to thank you, Sarah, for inviting me to expand on this article. The subject of twin development is dear to my heart. David is an Associate Professor of History and Media Studies and Journalism, and writes a column on history for Slate Magazine. Knowing that David was an identical twin, one of the editors of Slate asked if he would be interested in writing an article about twins. When David called and asked me if I would like to co-author it, I was delighted.

The timing of this invitation fit for me. Although I have given many presentations of my clinical work, for reasons of confidentiality I had not submitted my clinical cases for publication. Now, I had an opportunity to inform a larger audience about the challenges that exist for twins in developing their individuality while also maintaining a close relationship with one other. I also could provide information to parents of twins, to help them deal with the issues that they experience in trying to meet the individual needs of each child. It was a chance to introduce psychoanalytic thinking to the larger community, which would be good press for psychoanalysis.

Can you tell us how you arrived at this interest in twins?

My interest in twins began when I learned that I was pregnant with twins during my eighth month of pregnancy. My husband, my daughter, Judith, and I, had just returned from a lovely vacation at Martha’s Vineyard. I was exercising and eating healthily, but I was mystified by how large I had grown. I saw a covering obstetrician on a late Friday afternoon. He commented on my weight gain, listened to the heartbeat of the fetus with a stethoscope, and told me that he heard two heartbeats. I was stunned. I remember saying to him with great certainty, “There are no twins in my family.” He answered in Yiddish, “Gornesh!” “That means nothing!” He explained that there is a genetic basis for having fraternal twins, but not for identical twins, which arise in a unique constitutional condition. I left his office in shock, trying to absorb this information.

When I returned home, my husband asked how my visit to the doctor had gone. Speechless, I held up two fingers. “Only two more weeks?” he asked in puzzlement. “No!” I stammered, “Two babies!” The obstetrician had requested that my husband and I return to his office on Monday morning; he planned to bring in a new machine—a sonogram—so that we could hear the heartbeats clearly. We returned to his office, and indeed, we did hear two distinct heartbeats!

The three weeks until our sons were born were intense. We shared our news with family and friends. We talked about our fantasies of caring for two babies who resemble each other, and are going through the same developmental stages at the same time, while also caring for our daughter who would need to adjust not only to one baby, but to two.

I started my research immediately. Dorothy Burlingham’s book, Twins: A Study of Three Pairs of Identical Twins, was gripping. Twins and Super-Twins was also helpful. Scheinfeld, a geneticist, provides scientific information about twins, describes the attitudes that existed in different cultures throughout history towards twins, and offers practical information to mothers on how to care for them.
I was joyous that all went smoothly with my labor and delivery. I was an active participant and was thrilled to hold each son when he was born. I was pleased that my daughter would maintain a special position in the family as our only daughter. I knew that our lives had taken on a dramatic change that would prove to be an intense and powerful journey.

I tried to keep a journal. I had a fleeting fantasy that I, like the pioneers in psychoanalysis, could provide rich clinical data regarding my observations that would contribute to the field. Although I did take notes of some of these precious moments, I realized that I wanted to respect the privacy of my three children, that I did not want them to be “objects of study.” On a realistic level, my primary concern was to be a “good enough mom,” and hoped that I could meet the needs of my daughter and my sons. That in itself was all consuming.

What was it like to be studying twin development while also living the experience of raising twin boys and a daughter?

As most mothers and fathers can attest, caring for infants and young children is an intense, interesting, and gratifying experience, but it is acknowledged that giving birth to a new baby is considered a “normal developmental crisis.” A young toddler and two infants to care for was an even greater crisis, both pleasurable and exhausting. My husband, Robert, an academic, had a schedule that enabled him to spend quality time with his children, so we both were very involved in their care. We had the good fortune of finding a wonderful woman who had cared for babies her entire adult life, and always wanted to take care of twins. Her availability enabled me time to interact with each baby in a more relaxed and playful manner.

So, during those early years I was not formally studying twin development. My husband and I were both involved in caring for our children; we spent time not only interacting with them, but we endlessly discussed the challenges that we encountered in our daily living. We think of those years with joy and some nostalgia. We realized, even then, that we could not have had the pleasure and joy without the hard work that was involved. In retrospect, my motivation to read the literature on twin development during that time was an attempt to bolster my confidence that I was a “good enough” mother in meeting each child’s needs.

What stands out for you during those early years?

I found those early years to be so exciting. I enjoyed interacting with each baby, watching them interact with each other, and observing how others responded to them. For example, when I took my sons and daughter to the playground, I observed that strangers gravitated to my sons, and asked little about my daughter. I often identified with my daughter. I thought of ways to intervene to remedy this situation. I would introduce my daughter to these interlopers and try to facilitate a conversation that included her. I sometimes verbalized aloud, “So many people stop us and ask us questions when we were going to the playground!” Sometimes Judith remained quiet, and at other times she would engage with the stranger saying very animatedly, “I have two baby brothers, David and Jonathan.” The strangers, in turn, would direct their responses to her.

I observed that the children in David and Jonathan’s nursery school were often confused when they saw David and Jonathan together. Even though I color coded my boys, that is, dressed David in red clothes and Jonathan in blue, the two boys with whom they played often called David, “the other Jonathan” or Jonathan, “the other David.” My sons retaliated by calling these two boys “the other Jimmy,” or “the other Stephen.” I wondered what it means for toddlers and young children to see two children who look alike. How does one help a toddler to understand this confusion, this cognitive dissonance? Conversely, what is the experience for a twin to be called by his brother’s name? A teacher in their three-year-old nursery school class had difficulty telling my sons apart and recommended that they should be separated when they were four. I wondered if there were suggestions that I could offer her so that she could note differences between my sons and relate to them as individuals. It also raised the question as to when is it developmentally appropriate for twins to be separated in school.

Did wonders such as these inspire your doctoral dissertation? Can you tell me more about that?

When my children were in school, I was ready to become more involved in my graduate studies. Len Solomon, Ph.D., my mentor in the clinical psychology department at Boston University, encouraged me to pursue a review of the literature regarding twin development. My review was comprehensive. I enjoyed reading the mythology, folklore, and literature regarding twinship in an effort to demonstrate how certain psychological elements found in mythology and literature resembled elements found in present-day research in the fields of psychoanalytic and ego developmental psychology concerning twin development. I reviewed the research that evolved from experimental and observational efforts, from psychoanalytic case studies, and from studies of psychopathology regarding twins and their implications for personality development of twins. I tried to highlight the particular problems regarding ego development in twins that were discussed in the literature to demonstrate the possible effects that may be present for twin partners along a developmental continuum from birth to adulthood.

I was impressed that almost every article started the same way,

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claiming that interest in twins as a unique human phenomenon has been widespread at all times as is evidenced in the records of history, mythology, literature, and psychology. In reading about the mythology and folklore, Ortmeier writes, “the reason for the persistent appearance of twins in the evolving record of man was the ‘unexplained mystery surrounding their special unity’” (1970). The mythology and folklore expressed two kinds of ambivalence regarding multiple-birth. One is the ambivalence towards the birth itself and its implications regarding beliefs about inception and paternity as well as social and economic consequences of multiple-birth. The other ambivalence is expressed in representing the twin relationship as close and intimate, yet rivalrous and full of hate.

One can trace the tradition of psychological differentiation and individuation from the Biblical tales themselves. Themes of good and bad, sibling rivalry, individuation and differentiation are repeated in the Bible. Greek mythology, on the other hand gives expression to themes of harmony and devotion among twins. Union and fusion are emphasized and the notion of a common soul is stressed. Both traditions share the mythology that twin birth is a result of divine intervention that is therefore a miracle.

Observational and Psychoanalytic Case Studies

As David and I wrote in our Slate article, Burlingham observed three sets of identical twins in the Hamptead nurseries, a residential setting in England during the war years. From observations, she noted that the twins were involved in an “inter-identification” process. In the earliest stages of development, the twins showed a growing attachment to the mothering figure, clearly noticing the mothering figure at four months of age. The twins began focusing attention on the twin partner at approximately eight months of age. The first signs of competition for the mother’s attention were noted at ten months of age. This was intensified around motor achievement. Burlingham also discussed the concept of “emotional contagion” at this time. She meant that when one twin was initially upset it was not too long before the other twin would experience the upset himself. In some cases of stress, the twins would turn to each other and act as a unit.

Burlingham suggested that the issues of competition and resolution follow an interesting developmental progression. Each twin first expressed a wish for gratification just for himself, which was slowly replaced by the wish to share. By approximately two years of age, it became important for the twins to have the same thing at the same time. They also started copying and imitating each other. In addition, twins developed feelings of altruism that were a defensive reaction formation to insure themselves of equality.

Burlingham (1952) writes,

The equal sharing does not help the twins to overcome their earlier competitive feelings but was only a continuation of the competition and struggle in different form. The struggle was centered around the desire to have equal amounts, not more or less. All the energy went into maintaining that balance. This often produces an over-strong bond between the two children to each other with an accompanying weakness of the relationship to the parent (p. 62).

Other observations were gleaned from her research. The expression of aggression may be problematic for twins. Many factors, however, operate to check its open expression including the need of one twin for the other, the fear that in hurting his twin, the co-twin is hurting himself. She also noted that twins were willing to recognize a superior skill in a co-twin because to some extent they felt that they shared their pooled resources. Burlingham claimed that the twins are a complement of each other, making use of the talents and characteristics of the other that they find missing in themselves.

Other observational studies showed how parental behavior contributed to twins’ inter-identification. Plank (1958) described how mothers tended to dress their children alike, treated them the same, and gave them twin names. Leonard (1961) commented that a variety of factors contributed to a “folie-a-deux” between the twin partners.

The psychoanalytic case method contributed a great deal to the understanding of the complex dynamics that are involved in a twin relationship. A consensus from eleven of the case studies is that twins had particular difficulties in ego development, superego-development, and object relationships (Hiff, 1980). Joseph and Tabor (1971) suggested that a “complementarity” develops between the twin partners that leads to a “fusion of object and self representation” and a loss of ego boundaries. He called this “the twinning effects.” Ortmeier (1970) noted that if the similarity between partners is intense, a “we-self” unit develops between the twins. This “we-self” system enhances a sense of well-being and security at the expense of recognizing the individual “self” of each twin. Orr (1941) referred to this inter-identification as a “joint ego.”

Other research has been devoted to specific factors affecting twins’ proclivity to neurosis, psychosis, homosexuality, criminality, narcissism, and aggression, etc. Others focused on language development, recognizing that it often was an indicator of other aspects of interpersonal relationship and the socialization process.

In summary, the literature suggests that because twins must go through the same developmental processes at the same time with each other, this may promote dysfunction for the twins at certain stages of de-
Finally, the advantages of the twinship have not been addressed. In the society at large, twins are often regarded as a source of pride and achievement, giving parents an added sense of their own worth. Twins enjoy popularity in school among their peers and teachers. The twinship may also offer the twins a special closeness and empathic understanding regarding another person’s feelings, point of view, and perspective, which may be transferable to other relationships. In essence, the twinship might foster the capacity for role taking, empathy, and social intimacy within each partner and an added understanding in developing meaningful, social, and interpersonal relationships.

After completing this literature review, I took a clinical internship in Child Psychiatry at Tufts New England Medical Center. There, I met Kathe Hift Stern, also an intern, and an identical twin. We shared our interests in twin development. She was helpful to me in sharing her experiences of being an identical twin and informing me of the research that she had done. We came to appreciate all that has been said by Burlingham and others; that twin development complicates the typical relationship that twin children have with their mothers during the formative years; that twins do need to share the nurturing figure; and that the mother does have the double task of relating to two infants at the same time, perhaps complicating each twin’s developing a sense of self. If the twins resemble each other, the mother’s task of relating to each infant as a separate individual can inhibit natural spontaneity on her part. And if the twins are perceived as different, a certain polarization for the two infants may occur which will also influence their relationship. The caring for “two babies” may draw excessively on the mother’s time, energies and resources, negatively influencing the quality of the mother’s relationship to her infants. The mother may treat the children as a unit, feeding or putting them to sleep at the same time, and this too will enhance their closeness to one another.

It was our notion that these twinning concepts described by Burlingham and others were an excellent starting point to explore aspects of the twin relationship from a developmental perspective along the developmental continuum. I felt that there was a need for research that attempts to operationalize the aforementioned concepts, subjecting them to empirical study along the developmental trajectory. These should be studies that will draw on a normal population, with a more representative sample of twins along the developmental continuum.

Kathe Hift and I were interested in learning more about the pre-adolescent and adolescent stage of twin development to determine whether twinship itself has its own unique developmental structure and process. We also wondered whether there might be certain points along the developmental continuum of twins where the twinship is advantageous and other critical points where the relationship appears more maladaptive, dysfunctional, and limited. I decided to examine some of the social dimensions of the twin relationship by applying these concepts to a sample of pre-adolescent and adolescent youngsters in order to obtain greater understanding regarding the nature of the twin relationship and the individual separation process at this stage of development.

**Doctoral Dissertation: Twins: Fusion, Friendship and Individuation**

My research investigation set out to examine the nature of the twin relationship from the perspective of each partner and the capacity of each twin to conceptualize and understand social relationships. It explored the relationship between the intensity of the twinning relationship and the ability of each twin to understand the conceptualization process involved.

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in forming friendships. The population comprised thirty sets of male and female twins with an equal number of different sub-sets of monozygotic (MZ) and dizygotic (DZ) twins ranging in ages from eleven to eighteen years of age.

The study focused on perceptions of twins themselves as they described their thoughts, feelings, and ideas about their twin-ships. Responses to a clinical interview revealed each twin’s capacity to perceive himself as psychologically individuated and differentiated from the twin partner.

The results suggest that a twin relationship does not in itself imply impaired social development. Rather, the most important implication of the study seems to be the confirmation that the process of separation and individuation for twins follows its own developmental course, which can be integrated in a general framework that accounts for the development of twins and single children alike.

Reading the transcripts of the interviews that I had with each youngster provided me with a deeper understanding of the twin’s wish to separate from his partner at this stage of development and at the same time maintain a friendship with his twin partner.

When did you get involved in your other research? I think you had written about this in a PINE newsletter years ago.

Twins Primary Prevention with Mothers and Their Twins: An Educational Program and Research Study

In 1991, the Parent Child Center was founded in Brookline, under the directorship of Shera Samaraweera, M.D., who was committed to supporting the ongoing growth of the parenting relationship; its mission was to enhance the cognitive, motor, social, and emotional development of young children. One component of this Parent Child Center was the development of a program for mothers of twins and one set of triplets. This program provided mothers with a supportive environment to discuss the challenges they encountered in caring for two babies at the same time. Our work was informed by the psychoanalytic, developmental theory and the recent current research on infant and twin development. Its objectives were to increase parenting skills for mothers through provision of knowledge of infant and twin development, to provide discussion groups where parent issues could be explored with a specialist and other mothers, to conduct research to fill a void in our understanding of the special needs and interests of twins, and to share knowledge with other professionals working with the twin population.

Concerns of Mothers of Twins

Although most of the mothers of twins expressed a sense of pleasure and pride in being a mother of twins, they also experienced considerable stress in caring for their babies. We noted, however, that the mothers found it easier to discuss their concerns than did mothers of single children. Their “special” situations made additional support seem necessary and welcome.

They reviewed the complication of pregnancy, labor, and delivery. Many of the mothers came with complicated medical histories, infertility, reduction of number of fetuses, and often difficult and lengthy labors and deliveries. All expressed worries regarding the prenatal health of their babies and a great sense of relief when the babies were born healthy. Topics discussed included their feelings of responsibility for caring for their twins when they were discharged from the hospital, the fantasies of what they imagined their twins to be, and the perceptions regarding the babies that they actually delivered; the emotional and financial impact of twins on their family life; how to combine professional aspirations and other personal interests with motherhood. Most of these mothers had little opportunity to talk about these feelings.

Mothers were concerned with forming an attachment to each twin, and took pride in identifying and distinguishing each infant from the other. Even with infants of different sexes we noted a labeling of each twin by comparison with the other. The emotional demand of feeding two babies when both were hungry at the same time caused the mothers to feel overwhelmed. Many mothers were sleep deprived, physically isolated, and felt emotionally alone with the complexities of their feelings during these first few months at home. The logistics of taking two infants out into the world was difficult, causing many mothers to stay home. Several mothers expressed guilt regarding the impact that the twins had on their older siblings.

With locomotion, issues of safety and limit setting were prevalent. Keeping an eye on two active babies crawling in different directions was a demanding task. Mothers reported confusion over their infants’ distress signals; at times they were not sure when crying was a genuine or a contagious response to the other twin’s distress; they reported rivalry as each twin struggled to establish a “special” role with the mothers. With toddlerhood, issues of exploration and rivalry seemed to intensify. Control and autonomy were of concern. Mothers often felt “ganged” up on by their twins as they attempted to dress, feed, and toilet train their children.

Interventions Employed

Most parents were anxious about their parenting abilities and needed encouragement and support regarding their concerns. We tried to help mothers find a better way to deal with problems they were encountering before they reached major proportions. We assessed the problem areas in the child’s development as soon as possible and discussed our concern.
with the parents. If needed, referrals were made to helping professionals so that appropriate treatment could be obtained.

Development of a Research Study

On the basis of our clinical experience of observations of the twins and the mothers at the Parent Child Center we found empirical support for the proposition that being a mother of twins creates greater stress for the mother than being a mother of a single child, and the demands for optimal maternal responsiveness are more difficult to fulfill. We wondered if twinship had its own unique development and what junctures along the developmental continuum are critical points of struggle and change. So we decided to conduct a longitudinal study beginning with two sets of twins.

Recent Infant Research

We realized that knowledge of infant development had undergone a dramatic change in the past two decades. The notion of the infants having been “psychologically born” emerging from a state of “un-differentiation” or “symbiosis” had been challenged by Stern (1985) and others. In light of more recent studies concepts of early twin–twin fusion and confusion were called into question. We became aware of the relative void in the recent infant research literature detailing the specific developmental issues for twins during these early years of life.

Given the absence of recent infant research literature of studies detailing specific developmental issues for twins, especially in the first two years of life, we became interested in early twin relatedness. Are twins from the beginning aware of self-twin differences? Does each twin develop primarily in relation to her own internal capacities and to the maternal relationship of which she is a part? Does the twin partner as “other” exist in her environment from the beginning, or is it possible that twin-twin confusion and the twinning effects are a later consequence of lack of optimal responsiveness in the maternal infant dyad? Do we see an evolution of twin-twin imitation and identification along a developmental continuum? Does a “we-self” exist between twins or is it a concept first embraced by parents and then assigned to twins, thus dictating to a greater or lesser degree the form of the twin-twin relationships? Are there points in twin development where twinship is advantageous and functional for one or both of twins? Are there junctures where the relationship is maladaptive and limited?

We developed a pilot project for the study of twin development. A central part of this study was to observe how twins together relate to their mother and to each other. We followed two sets of twins through weekly observations at the Parent Child Center and videotaped monthly home visits. We noted each infant’s behavior alone, with his twin, with mother, with a stranger, and with peers. During the home visits we observed the infants in spontaneous play with mother, twins with ourselves in the room; the infants’ responses to their mirror images, and the infants’ capacities to separate from and reunite with their mother in the homes setting. We were interested not only in the separation and reunion reactions per se, but in the twins’ use of each other during this particular stress.

Our naturalistic observations of the two sets of infant twins and their mothers from 6 to 15 months validated the hypotheses that for twins, the mother—not the twin partner—is the primary person of interest and support. We found an incremental progression in each twin’s developing attachment to his twin partner. We suggested that each twin moves with greater or lesser success from a position of non-awareness to awareness of and aversion to the twin partner, and then pleasure in his own competence, to interest/pleasure in his twin. By 13 months, the twins appear to seek each other out for reasons of safety, interest, and as partners in defiance of parental prohibitions. Each mother’s comfort with rivalry and aggression seems to influence the degree and mode of expression of these feelings and behaviors.

From these two sets of twins and our broader sample at the Parent Child Center, we saw that the mother’s personality impacts upon and interweaves with the needs of her twins. We presented these findings at the Vulnerable Child Workshop at the American Psychoanalytic Association in the spring of 1994 (Greenberg, Wilson, and Samaraweera, 1999).

What was it like to now share your dissertation research and your professional knowledge with your adult son in writing this article?

It was an enjoyable experience. I found his interest in the Burlingham study gratifying. David knew that I had written my dissertation on twins and that I was involved in working at the Parent Child Center with mothers of twins. But it did provide us with another opportunity to discuss twinship from his perspective and from mine.

What was it like to write an article on an analytic topic for a general audience?

I enjoyed doing it. There were many responses and comments to the article that were sent to me, and although I read them I was not very good in responding to them. That is a skill that I might be willing to learn. I am comfortable giving workshops, teaching to small and large groups, but I am reluctant to write and/or give advice to parents, teachers on the web site. I need to explore this more.

Is there more to say about your inclination to share Dorothy Burlingham’s story? Is there a special connection for you?

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Dorothy Burlingham’s contributions remain invaluable. I support the notion that knowledge of the twin relationship still offers a wonderful opportunity and model to understand and appreciate the process of individualization and separation. However, this model not only applies to twins as they attempt to develop a sense of their own personal identities and still appreciate and value their twinship, but it also applies for others such as siblings, couples, mother-daughter, father-son, and various other sub-sets of partners in relation to developing one’s own potencies and still be able to share and mutually give and take in important meaningful relationships.

Given that this newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Arthur Valenstein, I would like to add that Dr. Valenstein was most helpful to me in sharing his knowledge of twin development and providing me with access to an original copy of Dorothy Burlingham’s book, *Twins: A Study of Three Pairs of Identical Twins.*

**REFERENCES**


Hift, K. (1980) *An Experimental Study of the Twinning Reaction and Ego Development:* A dissertation presented to the Faculty of Adelphi University, Garden City, NY.


1 A complete bibliography of Dr. Greenberg’s research on this topic is available through the PINE office.

**NEWS AND NOTES**

Rodrigo Barahona, PsyD. presented an analysis of the film *Imperdonable* at the Belmont World Film Festival at the Studio Cinema in Belmont, Massachusetts, on April 16, 2012.

Nancy Chodorow, Ph.D. presented “Towards an American Independent Tradition” at the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute members’ seminar in November of 2011. She was a presenter at the conference titled “Masculinity, Complex” in New York in October of 2011. The paper she presented was entitled “From the Glory of Hera to the Wrath of Achilles: Narratives of Second-Wave Masculinity and Beyond.” In September of 2011, she was the discussant for a paper “The Missing Tombstone: Reflections on Mourning and Creativity” presented by Anna Ornstein, M.D. at Psychiatry Grand Rounds at Cambridge Health Alliance.

Howard B. Levine, M.D. was appointed to the Education Section editorial committee of the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis.*

Alfred Margulies, M.D. was appointed to the Editorial Board of the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* in 2012. As a Consultant to the Learning Consortium in Columbia, South Carolina the weekend of April 20-21, 2012, Dr. Margulies gave various talks.
and conducted seminars. On April 28, 2012, he was the moderator at the Writing Workshop at the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute; the panelists were Richard Gottlieb, Dan Jacobs, and Ana-Maria Rizzuto. Dr. Margulies will be the discussant for Jonathan Lear’s paper titled “A Case for Irony” at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association in June of 2012.

Martin Miller, M.D. taught Clinical Child Analysis with Fred Meisel, M.D. during February, March, and April of 2012. This is part of the Child Analysis curriculum in the training program jointly offered by BPSI and PINE. Students from MIP, PINE, and BPSI attended the seminar.

Jacqueline Olds, M.D. conducted a Longwood seminar on “The Science of Emotion” with Richard Schwartz, M.D.

Kenneth I. Reich, Ed.D. was appointed co-chair of the International Relations Committee, Div. 39 of the American Psychological Association. He presented a workshop entitled “The Four Horsemen of Change: Therapeutic Action in Couple Therapy” in Jerusalem, Israel, and at Grand Rounds at the Boston Institute for Psychoanalysis.

Evelyne A. Schwaber, M.D. was Visiting Lecturer and Faculty at Pittsburgh Psychoanalytic Center, March 16-18, 2012.

Stephanie Smith, LICSW was elected President-elect of The Association for Child Psychoanalysis during the annual ACP meetings, Santa Fe, New Mexico, in May, 2012.

Authors

