



Pam Levin, RN, with 1984 Eric Berne Memorial Scientific Award plaque.

## 1984 Eric Berne Memorial Scientific Award Acceptance Speech

Pamela Levin

Thank you very much for awarding me this high honor. As I accept it I am deeply touched by the high esteem in which you hold my work and me, personally. Several hundred of you have come up to me over the course of this week-long conference in Villars to share with me your gratitude for my contribution to developmental theory. Hundreds more of you have written me letters, telling me of the changes that you have made in your lives using this material: that you are healing yourselves, creating loving relationships, learning how to raise your children and working out issues which have been plaguing you for a long time. I am inspired and gratified by each response to me and also by the knowledge that this work is being used around the world, in languages I do not speak, by people I have never met, and in ways I have yet to discover.

The road has been long since a friend first handed me *Games People Play* and insisted I read it. Since she had never insisted on anything before, I took her seriously and read it. Later that year, when I needed a job, another friend said, "What would you do if you could do anything?"

"Oh, I'd love to work with the man who wrote *Games People Play*. I love the way he thinks and I believe he's on to something."

She replied, "I'll introduce you to him."

"Sure you will," I thought.

She did, and I began attending the San Francisco Social Psychiatry Seminars.

It has now been eighteen years since that timid nurse, who was afraid to introduce herself to Eric Berne, started in transactional analysis. My motivation for getting involved in it was two-fold: first, I had been working in psychiatric settings and was interested on a professional level; secondly, on a personal level, I was fascinated with the idea of life scripts and wanted to be first in line to get mine "fixed." I was placing my bet that the TA people were on to something and I wanted to be a part of it.

With Eric Berne's encouragement and with added support from Muriel James, Pat Crossman, Maggie Northcott and my sponsor, Joe Concannon, I became the first nurse to be awarded Clinical and then Teaching Membership in the ITAA. About that time, another TA member, Jacqui Schiff, came to the day treatment center where I worked to do a workshop and train the staff in regressive techniques. I applied what I had learned in the work setting and also in working on personal issues which were affecting my life. I learned a great deal about what kids need because regressing provided me with a unique opportunity to learn about childhood from grown-ups who could visit those younger places in themselves, grow up, and then talk about what they needed, what had gone wrong, and what had gone right.

I realized that traumas affected people according to the stage of development they were in at the time the traumas took place. In other words, a particular trauma could occur at different ages in different people resulting in different decisions and different effects. While I was excited and pleased about the results people were getting, I still felt that something was missing.

Sensing that I would not discover this missing piece by staying in private practice in a large metropolitan area, I moved to the country where the remoteness and sparse population were in sharp contrast to the life I had known. In the country, my life and the lives of the few people around me were lived according to the patterns of nature, the sunrise and sunset, the changes of season, the repeating patterns of growth.

Like most people, I had previously thought that the stages of growth and development ended around eighteen years of age, and that only one stage followed: "Adulthood"—a place where we arrived and took up residence. I had further thought that if I simply took care of the needs and issues left over from my childhood, I would no longer need what I had needed before. I had not thought about what adults need or that as adults we might continue to need anything. In the country, however, observing myself and those around me and the patterns of nature, I began to see that the stages of growth begin in childhood, but are repeated throughout our lives.

Using this model, I returned to private practice to find that I could predict how old people were according to the issues they were dealing with and the symptoms they were manifesting. Conversely, knowing their age, I could predict the kinds of processes they were currently involved in. What is more, people responded in their adult stages to the same messages they needed to hear as children, according to the stages of their own growth. Realizing the significance of these messages, Jean Clarke, an adult educator, began to use them to train parents to "make it right" for children the first time around.

Looking back on these eighteen years, I see that my own life has validated my theory. The length of time since I entered TA, symbolically, as an infant, has been that of one complete childhood, culminating in my acceptance of this award today. My development has included articles in the *Transactional Analysis Journal*, the Developmental Script Questionnaire, the Think Structure, and the Cycle of Development. There are also books: *Becoming the Way We Are*, self-published in 1974, has been bought by a west coast publisher who plans to market it in the check-out counters of supermarkets. *Cycles of Power* is now being prepared for publication in French by InterEditions, Paris; German, Spanish, Swedish and English editions are in the process of being published. Jean Clarke's *Self Esteem, A Family Affair*, published by Winston Press, is a best-seller. Her book and her organization have been of key importance in spreading the knowledge of healthy development. She has also provided me with essential support in the writing of *Cycles of Power*, which is based on this research.

Affirmation Enterprises was founded to spread the knowledge of the developmental affirmations through the manufacture and distribution of charts, posters, and symbols containing the supportive messages for each developmental stage. These messages, translated also into French and

Spanish, have made their way around the world into the lives of thousands of people. A German company will be bringing them out in wooden books. A company in Ohio will be manufacturing them in large, soft blocks, and yet another company will be putting them into fortune cookies! This knowledge is already presented in schools, colleges and universities, as well as in therapy sessions around the world. It is also used in hospitals to provide the healthy stroking diet essential to the healing of physical diseases. In some places newborn babies take in, "I'm glad you're here" along with their first breath. Old people use the affirmations to finish their separation tasks as they complete life's journey. I am both touched and amazed at what we have already accomplished.

Standing before you now, I turn to look at the next eighteen years and wonder what they will bring. Although I cannot predict the future, I do have a dream, a vision, for what I want to see happen.

I want us to live in a world where it is part of our cultural body of knowledge that we all experience the same stages of development, share the same repeating pattern of growth throughout our lives, and are united through the giving and receiving of the support we need. I imagine a world in which, where ever we go, it is always "OK to be here," to exist, to have needs, to explore, to separate and be independent, to create our own values, and to be grown-ups who continue to have needs, get those needs met, and be successful.

I want to live in a world where, as children, we get what we need the first time around, a world in which parents have the support they need, and a world in which resources are shared cooperatively and no one goes hungry.

Most of all, I want to live in a world in which I know there will be a tomorrow, where we are free from the threat of global warfare and nuclear suicide.

The link between the child-rearing practices of yesterday and the nightmares of the present generation are real and direct. Separated from their mothers immediately after birth, placed in plastic hospital cribs surrounded by glass windows and sterile equipment, monitored, poked, schedule-fed, and denied the loving touch and contact they crave for survival, those children decided that their needs were not OK, that if things got bad enough, they could always die. In transactional analysis, we call this a suicide decision and refer to it as a suicide electrode deeply implanted in the core layers of being. When entire generations are raised on these techniques, it is little wonder that their collective consciousness has produced the threat of global suicide in the form of the nuclear bomb.

Many of us involved in TA have uncovered our early suicide decisions and turned them around. We have decided individually that we want to live. We have experienced the power and promise of TA in our personal and professional lives and have created an organization and an international network of healers with effective tools.

I have come of age in this organization, just as the organization itself has come of age. The TA movement is entering a new planetary phase. We now know what works in our schools, hospitals, consulting rooms, and organizations. As I accept this award, I renew my commitment to take this knowledge to the streets, around the world, and to use it for cultural transformation so that, no matter where we live, no matter what our age, race, creed, sex or social status, we find a world in which it is truly safe for us to be here. My intention is to do this work through this organization, through legislative changes, through the training of educators, by providing support systems for parents, through publishing, media and all means which contribute to the collective creation of a culture which affirms all life on this planet.

As I say this I am fully aware of how impossible this vision appears. Nonetheless, I am unwilling to let that stop me. Eighteen years ago, my receiving this award today would have looked equally impossible, and yet it is now a reality.

As I accept this honor from you, I also invite you to share with me the accomplishment of the rest of this great challenge.