Acceptance Statements for the Eric Berne Memorial Scientific Award

The awards ceremony for the 1980 Eric Berne Memorial Scientific Award was witness to a unique event in our history—a tie for the Award. This resulted in their being co-recipients for the first time: Claude Steiner for the Stroke Economy and Ken Mellor and Eric Sigmund (nee Schiff) for Redefining and Discounting. Following are their statements. Marge Reddington was present on the evening of the banquet to receive the award for Ken and her remarks precede the statement which Ken later prepared for the Journal.

—The Editor

Acceptance Statement from Claude Steiner on Co-Winning the Eric Berne Memorial Scientific Award for The Stroke Economy

A couple of years before I developed the concept of the stroke economy, I wrote *The Fuzzy Tale*. My first memory of the fable is when I handed out dittoed copies to the “Laboratory in Group Dynamics,” class at the Free University, in Berkeley. I organized this class, which several semesters later became the first Radical Psychiatry course, as a way of experimenting with strokes while complying with Eric’s wish, expressed at the 1967 Winter Congress, that we do not have physical contact with our clients in our transactional analysis practice. I don’t know what, in particular, prompted me to write *The Fuzzy Tale* but I have to assume that it was written in a fit of pique over somebody’s jealous behavior. The story got a reasonably mixed reception. When I showed it to Eric he read it without much comment. I put it aside for the time being, but it became the intuitive precursor to the theory of the Stroke Economy.

The period was 1968-69 and I was living a double life between strife-torn Berkeley and my TA activities in San Francisco. The Free Speech Movement, the Anti-War Movement, the People’s Park uprising, riots in the streets and mass tear gassing were taking their toll on Berkeley’s street people. Hogie Wyckoff, myself, and a few others started the RAP Center (Radical Approach to Psychiatry) at the Free Clinic in Berkeley, just one block away from People’s Park. During the same period I was commuting to San Francisco weekly, on Tuesday evenings to the Seminar and on Wednesdays to St. Mary’s Hospital to observe Eric’s work.

The contrast between my two lives was nothing less than extreme. They were kept separate because my activities in Berkeley were politically radical, filled with passion, indignation, and paranoia about the events of the Vietnam War, while the tone in San Francisco was one of moderation, liberal gentility, and avoidance of political issues. Eric’s inclinations were thoroughly apolitical and he tended to respond to any conversation related to injustice or oppression as being an “Ain’t it Awful” pastime. A few in the Seminar were intent on pointing out to Eric the incongruities of his nonpolitical stance and we saw his attitude slowly soften as the facts of the war became more and more evident.

One evening, Eric read a chapter from his most recent project, a textbook for psychiatric residents. There followed a lively debate on the concept of schizophrenia. Some of us took
the position advanced by R.D. Laing in The Politics of Experience that schizophrenia was not a mental illness but rather the result of oppression in the form of invalidation of people's experiences. At the end of the meeting Eric asked, as usual, who might want to present next week. Encouraged by the political nature of the evening's discussion I hinted that I had been thinking about a concept which I might want to present, though I was not sure he would be interested since it was political in character. To my surprise Eric encouraged me to do so and during the next week I put together my notes for a presentation on the Stroke Economy.

The following Tuesday I arrived at the seminar greatly looking forward to exposing Eric to what I considered an excellent political, as well as scientific, presentation on the subject matter of strokes. As I parked across from Eric's house at 165 Collins Street I saw people standing in the doorway, and was immediately struck by an ominous feeling. As I hurried up the steps I saw that the usually cheerful crowd looked grim and scared, and I was informed that Eric had had a heart attack.

Eric never returned to the seminars and I never had the opportunity to share the contents of my paper with him. Unbeknownst to me Eric had planned to publish the Fuzzy Tale in the TA Bulletin just before his illness. The Stroke Economy was published in the second issue of the new TA Journal in a special issue about strokes of which I was the editor.

It is hard to remember specifically how ideas come together in one's head. I know that during the period in which I wrote the Stroke Economy I had become very interested in Wilhelm Reich and had read his Mass Psychology of Fascism. In this book, I became acquainted with Reich's concept of the "sex economy." While Reich wrote about the sex economy he was a Communist, in Germany, during the ascent of Hitler's regime. He helped organize workers, clinics, participated in worker marches and was especially interested in the manner in which fascist ideology took a hold in people's minds. He was puzzled that workers who were thoroughly acquainted with socialism were willing to accept the domination of a national "socialist" fascist government as easily as they seemed to. He postulated that one of the reasons why this was the case was that the people's sexual energy was being strictly regulated; governed, by a sexual economy, with the consequences that they became docile and willing to accept fascist domination.

I had been observing the "hippie" youth culture; the flower-children with their easy sexuality, long hair, colorful clothing, and sun-shiny friendliness and desire to share, live communally and to be loving, and the dominant culture's reaction of anger, hatred and repression. It was one of the major objections to the hippie's culture that they were unwilling to work, dress properly, toe the line, be responsible, serve in the armed forces and do all the things that a "civilized citizen" was expected to do. It was also clear to me that the rebellious young people drew their strength to resist and disobey from the exchange of love and sexuality between them. I began to see the submissive, obedient people who hated the war but weren't willing to take an anti-war stance as being stroke starved and that stroke deficit and political apathy went hand-in-hand just as Reich had theorized in his "sex economy" concept.

Eric has postulated that people play games because, among other reasons, of a biological need for strokes. This was a qualitative statement which never had been examined in a quantitative way. No particular thought had been given to the levels of stroke hunger that people might be affected by. When we thought of helping people to stop playing games we were hoping that pointing out their games might be sufficient to motivate them to stop. It hadn't occurred to anyone that one way to deal with people's tendency to play games might be to diminish their need for strokes. I had been experimenting with the notion of "feeding" people strokes through permission classes, and at the Free University class, but an experience I had at the Seminar provided me with an even better idea.

Customarily, on Tuesday Seminars we would follow the scientific session with a "field trip" or with an interesting "experiment" or activity. One evening we staged a Synanon-like situation in which we all sat in a circle and put each other down. As I remember it we
CLAUDE STEINER

had a lively time insulting each other with a great deal of humor and gallows laughs thrown in. At the end of the evening I suggested that next week we might do the total opposite, that is, say only good things about each other. So we did, and I noticed that we had a noticeably shorter and less lively session. It struck me then that we were having problems giving each other strokes. I also noticed that the few people who were given an occasional stroke had problems in accepting them. From this experience I devised an exercise which I called "Stroke City" and used in Berkeley at the Radical Psychiatry Center in which people self-consciously and systematically set out to give and take strokes and thereby deal with their stroke hunger.

In my work with scripts I had spoken about the injunctions, forced on children by their parents. Without realizing it first, I had drawn the script matrix in such a way as to place the two parents above the child in a one-up position of power. Their position in the diagram represented their capacity to force their oppressive injunctions on the natural tendencies and capacities of the child. One particular set of capacities which these oppressive injunctions were aimed at was the child's ability to stroke. I summarized the injunctions as follows: Don't ask for or accept strokes you want, don't reject strokes you don't want, don't give strokes and don't stroke yourself. These five injunctions variously followed by the whole population had the effect of sharply limiting the overall quantity of strokes exchanged and in severely crippling people's capacities to love. The injunctions were culture-wide and transformed strokes into commodities which were then bought, sold, traded and stolen but hardly ever given freely. I called this system, "The Stroke Economy" and viewed it as an oppressive institution similar to monopoly capitalism which exploited people by creating artificial scarcities and therefore was able to exact high prices for heretofore freely or cheaply available commodities.

At the time we were becoming aware of the oppressiveness of imperialism and the military industrial complex which were imposing the Vietnam War on us. We were also becoming aware of the harmful activities of the psychiatric establishment in combination with the pharmaceutical companies. We saw them as motivated by economic interests and identified their weapons as racism, sexism, ageism and the exploitation of workers. It seemed that the Stroke Economy was an additional weapon in their armory.

As we become more aware of power and its abuses it seems that oppressive systems proliferate in our awareness. The oil companies are out to completely dominate our sources of energy. The lumber companies, in cahoots with the U.S. Forest Service conspire to destroy our forests and convert them into one species, tree farms. The food processing industry insists in introducing dangerous chemicals into our food. All these are self-serving, self-perpetuating institutions, which will respond with a various degree of violence to any attempts to challenge or modify their power abuses.

I had observed that the punishment that was being applied to those who were not following the rules in the 60's was quite severe: beatings, kidnapping, drugging, and jailing sometimes involving incredibly long drug-related sentences. I especially had observed how the psychiatric establishment conspired with teachers, police and parents in trying to suppress and control the behavior of children who were following their own ideas on dress, hair length, stroking, drug use, and patriotism. I became aware of how all the oppressive institutions worked hand in hand to thwart people's autonomy and I saw the Stroke Economy as contributing to people's passivity in accepting their loss of freedom.

The paper itself asserted that people on the whole are stroke starved, that they are stroke starved because they are following the rules of the Stroke Economy which is a system of rules and rule-enforcement imposed on us, which we eventually accept in ourselves and help impose on others. The paper further asserted that people who are stroke starved are willing, just like people who are hungry, to do all sorts of things which they wouldn't otherwise do in order to obtain the much needed strokes. People are willing to work hard at bad jobs and they are willing to accept harmful relationships but most importantly people expend most of their energy in stroke procurement. Without the strictures of the Stroke Economy
strokes would be freely available at no particular cost to us, so that we would not be willing to go far out of our way to obtain strokes and therefore would not be willing to follow rules that we do not appreciate, listen to people that we don’t believe in, or work hard for people that exploit us in order to obtain money to buy goods which do not benefit us but only give us the illusion that we are loved.

Finally the paper identified stroke deficit as the major cause of depression among middle Americans (who have their other basic needs reasonably well satisfied) and prescribed the procurement of strokes as its only effective remedy.

Political analysis, that is, to say, the analysis of power, power abuse and oppression has not been a popular line of investigation in transactional analysis. There are some who still believe that it is a form of “Ain’t it Awful,” but a keen awareness of the ramifications of power and power abuse and the resulting oppression gives me the vision to understand our potential for liberation. How can we know what freedom would be like if we don’t even know the dimensions of our enslavement? How can we glimpse a world in which love is fully experienced and given by most people when we don’t know what causes our incapacities? People who are aware of being impotent in their loving powers assume that it is due exclusively to a fault of their own. How can they overcome their problems when they don’t know what causes them?

Neither Eric Berne nor myself were in the 60’s famous for our capacities to be loving. I, for myself, have struggled long and hard in my personal life to undo the crippling effects that the Stroke Economy has had on me. I am able to report that, in the judgment of many people around me, I’ve had substantial success in my goal. In the transactional analysis organization, as a subculture, the rules of the stroke economy do not hold as much sway as they do in the general population and as a consequence we know ourselves and are known by others to be a friendly, loving group of people.

The struggle against the scarcity of strokes is a long and widespread one but it is worth fighting. In the years ahead, in which scarcity of energy and other real shortages promises to be a major concern for all of us it would be good indeed if we could at least dispense with the entirely unnecessary, artificially created scarcities which we impose on ourselves and each other and which so burden us and drain our energies. The scarcity of strokes is only one such artificial shortage. We are operating on the basis of an “Intelligence Economy” that oppresses our capacities to think (therefore we feel we are stupid), a “Beauty Economy” which reduces beauty to a few superficial dimensions (therefore we think we are ugly) and in general an “OK”’ness Economy which causes us to think we are not OK when in fact we are all smart, beautiful, and OK.

I thank you for this award and wish that everyone here will someday have the pleasure of receiving a similar super stroke.

REFERENCES
Reich, W. The mass psychology of fascism. The Albion Press, 1933.

Marge Reddington’s Acceptance Speech for Ken Mellor —
Eric Berne Memorial Scientific Award

It is an honor for me to accept this award on behalf of Ken Mellor. One of my first encounters with Ken was at Cathexis where he presented the Redefining material and a huge light bulb went on. All of a sudden things that never made sense before made sense. Those of you who use the material I’m sure agree that this is one of the most valuable tools to increase Transactional skills and communications skills. When I talked to Ken I asked
him what it was he wanted me to communicate to you. The first thing that he said was that he appreciated the time that he spent in this country, he appreciated the opportunity that he had to learn and to integrate his learning, and he was particularly grateful to Jackie Schiff and Margaret Mary Hooper. He continued to say that he had a tremendous sense of excitement in developing the material and in working with Eric on the article. He was very excited about being the recipient of this award. He wanted to be sure that you all understood that he was happy and honored to receive this from you and the ITAA.

Acceptance Statement from Ken Mellor on Co-Winning the Eric Berne Memorial Scientific Award for Redefining and Discounting

Dear John:

Thank you for the opportunity of being involved in the awarding of the Eric Berne Memorial Scientific Award through the Journal. Your offer has enabled me to participate after the event when time, money and the distance between Australia and the USA prevented my participation at the time.

It was both a surprise and an honor to me when I was awarded jointly the Eric Berne Memorial Scientific Award with Eric Sigmund (Schiff) for the material we developed on Discounting and Redefining. I am glad to have the opportunity to share some of the background to the development of this material.

Before outlining this development, however, I wish to give my congratulations to Claude Steiner for winning his second Award, this time for his work on Stroke Economy. I have used his material since first reading it in the early Seventies and have found it extremely valuable, just as I have found much of his other work.

Eric and I wrote our two articles in late 1974 and early 1975. This was in the midst of my twenty month stay in the USA, where I worked and trained primarily at Cathexis Institute. Prior to the writing, I had had a kaleidoscopic period, with significant new experiences and challenges following each other in continuous succession, day after day.

My learning curve was vertical for the first fourteen months. The material I learned was more useful and “right” than any to which I had been exposed previously. The people with whom I was working and training, inside and outside Cathexis, were more committed to helping others in a real way than any others I had then met. Added to all this, I had never experienced such generosity, nor so many positive strokes, both conditional and unconditional. The extent of what was offered to me within the Cathexis network seemed to me to be boundless at the time. It was not, of course, but Jacqui Schiff’s generosity and investment in fostering people’s potential can be gauged by her unstinting availability to me throughout the early months of my stay, her arrangements to enable me to train at almost all of the then operating TA Institutes in order to ensure I had a general exposure to as much as possible of the valuable work available within TA before returning to Australia, and her adoption of me as a colleague whom she took with her on many interstate trips—over 35,000 miles of them—during which, as her apprentice, I learned more than I could ever have learned through formal training in more structured programs.

I still remember those heady days, filled with excitement as the power of TA theory used well in practice unfolded before me. My appetite for it was insatiable. I took in, masticated, swallowed and digested as much as I could from the very beginning. It was to be some years before I would begin to eliminate what was not useful to me. Even so, I was aware from the beginning that there was room for more development, that there were gaps in the theory I was being presented.

It was to fill some of these gaps that I developed the material on discounting. The position being taught in 1973 was the one outlined in the article “Passivity” in the first TAJ

Transactional Analysis Journal
(Schiff and Schiff, 1971). Discounting was understood in terms of discounting the problem, discounting its significance, discounting its solvability or discounting a person’s ability to solve it. This meant, however, that some factors in the work seemed to need to be distorted in order to fit in with the theory. For example, it seemed to me that it was useful to say that discounting the solvability of a problem was an aspect of discounting problems, but what it was somewhat forced to say that discounting solutions as such was also an aspect of discounting problems, because this followed from the other.

I had worked helping overseas immigrants to Australia settle in the country for the three years prior to my arrival in the USA. This was another very exciting time because I was working with people with special difficulties which were not being dealt with adequately, and I was given the opportunity to work effectively. During this time, I developed a theory to help me understand their difficulties and to help guide my work in helping people deal with them (Mellor, 1980). Basically to do with tasks, the material helped me figure out why people could or could not deal with what confronted them. It also led me to understand both that the solutions to problems were tasks and that the range of tasks someone could perform at a particular time was that person’s range of options at that time. Discounting of options became the obvious gap-filler for what I had noted about problem solutions.

After arriving at this, another important gap emerged which was to do with awareness. Both the experience of having a problem and the notion of what options we may have at a particular time are partly dependent upon our awareness of ourselves and the world around us, and partly on the way we process that awareness. In the terms in which I was then thinking, awareness was the result of stimulation; so the obvious thing to be aware of was the set of stimuli necessary for the creation of a problem or the development of an option. Without this awareness, a person could not experience a problem or be aware of an option. Quite clearly then, discounting either problems or options, or aspects of them, was related to discounting stimuli or aspects of them.

I was very excited about the way all of this fitted together. It all looked very neat when set out in different ways. The article “Discounting” was my presentation to one of these settings as well as of the way we were using the material at Cathexis at that stage. A point of importance to note is that the use of the “new” discounting material did not lead to many changes in the way we were working with people at the Institute. It did lead to greater clarity. But in developing the material, what I had done was conceptualize thinking and activities which were already being undertaken.

The development of the Redefining material followed a very different course. This material resulted from Eric’s awareness that there were several people within the Cathexis program with whom we were having special difficulties. He had noticed that he and others kept becoming embroiled in exchanges with these people in which we became lost or in which we lost sight of our initial goal, even when we had been initially very clear. It was in the process of solving this problem that the material we presented in the article was born.

Eric took the initiative. He began by reviewing with a number of us a videotape of several of the exchanges with which he was concerned. Some of the dynamics were obvious immediately and I became very excited about the potential in what I was witnessing, and in the possibility of doing something with Eric to work out ways of dealing with what was happening. He readily agreed to my involvement and a very creative process was set in motion.

As I recall it, a clear pattern emerged in the way developments flowed from our work. Eric used his perceptive brilliance in identifying the crucial issues. It was he, for example, who recognized how the people we were watching changed the subject when the going got rough, or when they saw themselves under threat. He also arrived at the six redefining roles in a not uncommon flash of insight lasting about half an hour, during which he managed to summarize many pages of material with mind boggling simplicity. By contrast, my major contribution can be likened to that of an engineer who, having been shown the general
outline of the machine, worked out the more detailed parts in what was happening. From my point of view, this was a very rewarding way of working.

From identifying the types of transactions used—tangential and blocking—we went on to work out the dynamics behind what was evident, the notion of symbiosis "between contaminations," the material on overt and covert game positions which operate simultaneously, and the protective function all of this performed. The last step came with Eric's brilliant identification and naming of the six redefining roles: caretaker, angry wrongdoer, woeful wrongdoer, hardworker, woeful righteous, and angry righteous.

While all of these developments were taking place, we were working on ways of dealing with redefinitions and expanding our understanding of who did it and why. We obtained remarkably rapid results and a considerably deepened understanding of the consequences and significance of a great many of the other techniques and theories we had been using. And the people in the program who had been blocked began to change. After some months we were ready to commit the material to paper.

The writing and the ultimate publication of the material in the TAJ and elsewhere (Schiff, et. al., 1975) brought this series of creative and exciting developments to a close. I had learned much: especially the way theory and its application can be derived from what is effective in what people are doing—the Discounting material; and the way new theory can be developed and its use refined in response to difficulties that are being met in practice, but not dealt with adequately—the Redefining material.

I feel very gratified that others have found and are finding this material valuable. I hope they continue to do so and that they do not let their thinking stop where our writing finished. I, for example, have continued to develop my thinking and have consolidated my understanding of some areas of the work with many new ideas which extend the old (e.g., the script level of communication), while I have revised my understanding of other areas and no longer accept as true what I then thought (e.g., the meaning of "internal as opposed to external reality").

I am almost ready to put some of these developments into writing. I hope they will be as useful as the material for which Eric and I have received the Award.

REFERENCES

Acceptance Statement from Eric Sigmund (nee Schiff) on Co-Winning the Eric Berne Memorial Scientific Award for Redefining and Discounting

I am quite pleased and honored to receive this award from the ITAA and the recognition this gives our work. For me, the theory is an extension of the intent that all the people in TA have; which is looking toward helping people realize their potentiality. In the tradition of Eric Berne, our mentor, I wish to express a feeling of particular gratitude and indebtedness to the clients who taught me so much about this material by their work.

With great appreciation I wish to thank all of you.