

## **Dedication: Robert S. Spitzer, J.D., M.D. (1926-2015)**

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# SATIR INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

## Dedication

Robert S. Spitzer, J.D., M.D. (1926-2015)

We dedicate this current issue of the journal to Bob Spitzer, M.D., progressive psychiatrist, owner and publisher of Science and Behavior Books, Inc., community developer and personal and professional supporter of Virginia Satir and her work. Bob and his wife, Becky were strong supporters of Virginia throughout much of her professional career. Bob's wife, Becky, was a strong supporter as Virginia's "girlfriend." They often did fun "girly" things together such as getting their hair done, manicure and pedicures, shopping and talking about personal matters. Pure friendship was a rare experience for Virginia Satir. Becky continues to support Satir's work.

Virginia Satir met Bob Spitzer for the first time at the Mental Research Institute (MRI) in Palo Alto, California, a center for early work in the behavioral sciences. As Bob (2005, personal communication) told me, he became Virginia's boss "on paper," and we laughed about that since Satir had a reputation of rarely being able to stifle her instinct to take over any situation when she had a clear sense of how to move change forward. Bob expressed his belief that during their time at MRI, he may have been a ground for Satir who at that time was going through a divorce and, at the same time, it was a period of Satir's heightened and expansive creativity. They probably grounded each other.

While at MRI, Bob also did quite a bit of teaching with Satir and participated in some early grants. Bob expressed that he felt like a fish out of water at MRI having been steeped in psychoanalytic training. But MRI was a place where new thought was emerging, where experimentation was the norm and funding was available for research. What an exciting place, MRI, and an exciting time in history for social scientists. Bob (2005, interview) admitted that he was initially appalled with Satir's approach since her therapy and training did not mesh with anything that he had been trained to do in the field of psychoanalysis. However, he quickly clarified, "I had the enthusiasm of a convert in no time at all."

Knowing that the institute's work experimenting with family therapy, or for that matter tampering with any part of the analytic models prominent at the time, would make it difficult to be accepted at mainstream publishing houses, Don Jackson, M.D., a key player at the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto, California where the early roots of family therapy took hold, started a small publishing company, Science and Behavior Books, Inc. He came up with the idea of producing quality, paperback, professional books, especially intended for students who could not afford expensive textbooks. A number of people connected with MRI at the time agreed to contribute seed money and became partners in this publishing enterprise. When Don Jackson died, Bob Spitzer bought out Jackson and the other people who had invested in the company, except for Virginia Satir. At that point in history, family therapy was an unwanted visitor on the psychotherapy scene and, Satir ushered in an entirely new approach that was positively focused, resource based, experiential and included a spiritual component. Her work was unwanted and unwelcomed by the establishment who criticized her and demeaned her ideas and methods. Bob Spitzer bought the small publishing company and the seminal works of Virginia Satir were published.

Science and Behavior Books, Inc. became the company where Satir and other colleagues would publish their work. As far as I know, Satir never published traditional textbooks or any other professional books through larger, more conventional publishers.

Science and Behavior Books was her choice (except for the two early publications by a small company, Celestial Arts, *Making Contact* (1976) and *Your Many Faces* (1978).

Bob's publishing company played a vital role informing professionals and the public about her contributions. Her book, *Peoplemaking*, was always a big seller. Bob was committed to Satir's dream that her ideas reach everyone, including the taxi driver. In preserving the record of her work in print and in film, Bob helped to preserve her legacy.

When visiting Bob to interview him for a DVD, an oral history of Virginia Satir, that I was producing, Bob took me on a tour of the land he had set aside in the Santa Cruz mountains many years prior where he had established an intentional community that was home for artists and writers since the 1960s. He told me that Gregory Bateson had lived on the land for a time creating important works and that Neurolinguistic Programming had been created there. I was standing on land where key thinkers in the therapy movement from that period had been forming and beginning to articulate their ideas. How exiting. I also learned from Bob's obituary that this land had also been the center of the "home birth" movement in Northern California. Bob and Becky were at the heart of it all.

Bob and his wife, Becky, were very active in Avanta and International Learning and Resource Network, two of the major networks Virginia Satir created. I remember clearly Bob and Becky warmly welcoming me (as they did with every person who entered Avanta) to my first Avanta meeting back in 1981.

Over the years, I discovered that Bob seemed to always be involved in some way with the use of video to record Virginia's work as well. Many of these early videotapes, no doubt, are in private collections, but hopefully, most have been sent or will be donated to one of the Satir archives before too long. Bob was determined to preserve a record of Satir's work and to carry her work forward. I remember one year, he offered that Science and Behavior Books, Inc. would publish Satir's book when she finished. He did publish her book (I believe the book was *The Satir Model* by Satir, Banmen, Gerber and Gomori, 1991). Among other roles, Bob helped people make their dreams come true. What a beautiful, compassionate and loving soul he was. Those who knew Bob miss him dearly. I know I do.

Lovingly, Jesse Carlock, Editor, *Satir International Journal*