

# Group Assets

The Newsletter of the  
Group Psychotherapy  
Foundation

Winter 2006

## The Philosopher Therapist

An Interview with Irvin Yalom, MD, DFAGPA

Fern Cramer-Azima, PhD, DFAGPA, Editor, *Group Assets*

Irvin Yalom, MD, DFAGPA, needs no introduction to AGPA members. Here and abroad, he is known as "Mr. Group Therapy." Interviewing an old friend turned into more of a narrative of the past and present.

This interview was done two days after Dr. Yalom's S.R. Slavson Memorial Lecture, sponsored by the Group Psychotherapy Foundation, at the 2005 AGPA Annual Meeting in New York City, where he spoke on *The Schopenhauer Cure*, his most recent novel. A very large audience was held spellbound by his weaving together autobiographical, theoretical and philosophical themes that dealt with depression, death, and everyday themes of dissatisfaction. We were taken on a journey of entering the group session with Schopenhauer, observing members of the therapy process.



**Cramer-Azima:** Your return to AGPA and the very enthusiastic reception you have received leads me into my first question, namely what role has this organization played in your life?

**Yalom:** I have been coming to AGPA on and off for some 30 years. It launched a network of colleagues to whom I could communicate and discuss my theories and techniques and provided a base for new training programs. I have also appreciated AGPA's *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, which has allowed me to keep abreast of the changes and growth of new group modalities.

**Cramer-Azima:** What do you consider are your most important concepts that you have introduced into our field?

**Yalom:** Definitely the importance of the here-and-now and the importance of group interaction. My emphasis was on the role of the therapist as a commentator of the group process, and the divulgence of his self-reflections.

Next, the importance of the therapeutic factors led to considerable research. Interpretation never played a huge role. Rather my focus was on the interpersonal patterns and interactions of the peer group, and the clarification of the here-and-now and the there-and-then. The patient steps into a safe place and begins to form intensive bonds with the other members and the therapist.

Another practical result of the application was the introduction of briefer group therapy, a move away from the very long-termed groups.

**Cramer-Azima:** What are your thoughts about other newer group modalities?

**Yalom:** CBT is very valuable in the treatment of panic disorders and specified focused behaviors. At the

same time, the limited symptom specificity of these groups may not deal with the underlying interpersonal issues that have led to the disorder and impair the quality of life.

Psychoeducational groups impart valuable information to the patients, their family and the community, but they fall short of dealing with underlying issues or of problem-solving.

As far as changes are concerned, these techniques and others often work against the advancement of psychotherapy groups.

**Cramer-Azima:** What do you mean exactly?

**Yalom:** I believe today there is some resistance to group therapy. In the areas I know, people are doing less groups. Well, there are groups, but less focus on psychotherapy.

In private practice it is difficult to form such groups, and in hospital systems the groups are of short duration and often are a combination of drug and therapy treatments. It seems to me there are less training programs.

**Cramer-Azima:** This is very worrisome. Will the fifth edition of your text discuss some of these issues?

**Yalom:** Yes. With, Melyn Leszcz, MD, FRCPC, who is my Co-Editor, we have updated our view of the practice of group psychotherapy and offer some ideas and directions for new professionals.

**Cramer-Azima:** Of all your publications, which are your favorites?

**Yalom:** Of course, the first text. *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy* launched a new way of thinking about and practicing group therapy.

My second choice would be the book on *Existential Therapy*. My choice among my novels is *When Nietzsche Wept*. It became a very big hit in Europe.

**Cramer Azima:** What is next on your agenda?

**Yalom:** My family and my interest in theater and films. There is some consideration of producing a film of one of my short stories.

**Cramer-Azima:** I can think of a number of them that I think would translate well to the screen.

It was a pleasure to interview Irv Yalom. He was frank and generous in not only answering my questions but also elaborating and clarifying his ideas, in a down-to-earth, precise fashion. He clearly has the gifts of great intellectual acumen and creativity not only in the field of group psychotherapy but also in the areas of philosophy and writing. His novels have had a strong impact on the wider public and have introduced many to the understanding of the mind and insights into the nature of human relationships.

## From the Chair

### We Did It!

Patrica Barth, PhD, CGP, FAGPA

It is still hard to believe, but we actually raised \$1.35 million and reached our first goal of the Capital Campaign! This has enabled us to pay off the mortgage on the headquarters, freeing up \$100,000 that AGPA paid each year in mortgage payments. The monies have also supported our website and communications efforts.

It also puts us in a better position to sell the condominium, when the time is right and if we choose to do so. The property has gained much in value since its purchase and will possibly double in value in the near future if plans to make the live/work versus just commercial occupancy succeed.

So, let's reflect back onto how this all began. In a GPF Board meeting, we were faced with the huge deficit AGPA was experiencing. Membership was down, investment income was down and we, frankly, weren't sure that AGPA could continue to exist. Both the AGPA and GPF Boards were feeling an incredible amount of pressure.

Anne Alonso, PhD, CGP, DFAGPA, in her usual generous way, threw down the gauntlet. She said that she would make a \$50,000 donation if we would match it. We were, of course, extremely grateful. We also were determined to have a strategy to accomplish this, so as not to approach it unwisely. We agreed to hire development council and soon Deborah Stern came on board to help us think this through. It became clear that we needed endowment money. This had been the dream of Al Riester, Past Chair of the GPF Board. Hence, the Capital Campaign was born.

Over the years we held regional meetings across the country where we could sit personally with members to explain the need. People were very excited and responsive. We had 100% participation from all three boards. The Founder's Circle (donations of \$10,000 or more) began to grow. In the late spring of 2005 we reached our initial goal, and just this October, we were able to pay the mortgage in full.

This could not have been accomplished without all of you and for that we are deeply grateful. The list of those who donated is included in this newsletter.

I cannot thank Marsha Block, CAE, CFRE, enough as well. Marsha kept us on task, which I'm sure was not an easy job since fund raising is not exactly what we are trained to do nor what we like to do! But she knew just how to get us motivated and, much to our surprise, we did it! Now we are reveling in the excitement.

There is more work to be done, of course, as we begin to think about the second part of the goal, which is to endow the Annual Meeting. However, this is the much more exciting part as that is the essence of who we are. We will be able with this endowment to offer more scholarships, not increase the Annual Meeting fees, hopefully to offer distance learning, and possibly even a degree in group psychotherapy.

So, once again, thank you, thank you, thank you. I look forward to seeing you all at the Annual Meeting in San Francisco where we can celebrate in person.

# Fulfilling The Promise: Founders Circle

## Leaders

(\$100,000+)

Anne and Ramon Alonso

## Strategists (50,000+)

Patricia and Merle Barth

Hayward Industries

Ruth Hochberg and Phyllis Hochberg Siegel/  
The Capital Group Companies Charitable  
Foundation (matching corporate gift)

## Advocates

(\$25,000+)

Harold S. Bernard

John and Nicole Dintenfass

Barbara Squire Ilfeld & Fred Ilfeld

Frederic L.R. Jackman

Robert H. Klein

National Registry of Certified Group Psychotherapists

Louis R. Ormont

Albert Riestler Memorial Fund

Perry Roth Memorial Fund

## Sustainers

(\$10,000+)

Fern Cramer Azima & Family/Friends

Marsha Block & Leonard Walter

David & Judith Brook

Trish Cleary & Diana Kunkel

Phyllis Cohen & Walter Goldstein

Connie Concannon & John Rochios

Robert and Lenore Davis

Barbara and Al Dazzo

John and Mary Dluhy

David Hawkins & James Boyles

Lucy Holmes

Earl Hopper

Jeff Hudson & Bob Blodgett

Priscilla Kauff

The Kealy Family Foundation

Elizabeth Knight

Lisa Mahon & Phil Flores

Maconda Brown O'Connor

Jeanne & Matt Pasternak

John Price Endowment Fund

Esther & Walter Stone

Barbara & Don Turner

Carol Vaughan & Gar Willis

Robert & Sara Jane White

Elliot Zeisel & Mary Sussillo & Family

Group Psychotherapy Foundation

1334

Pay to the order of **American Group Psychotherapy Association** \$

**1,350,000.<sup>00</sup>**

**One million, three hundred fifty thousand and no/100** Dollars

Memo Payment of mortgage, in full

Support of website development

Support of public relations efforts

*Patricia Barth*

*Marsha Block*

## Guides

(\$1,000+)

Atlanta GPS

Richard Beck

Bruce Bernstein

Gail Brown

Michael Brook

Bonnie Buchele

Suzanne Cohen

Elaine Jean Cooper

Eleanor Counselman

David Cramer & Avi Kreichman

Sara Emerson & Bic Stevens

Nanine Ewing

Suzanne Feehan

Toby Chuah Feinson

Jacqueline Fish

Joel Frost & Tom Magaraci

Jack Fuchs

Don Fuhrmann

Lena Furgeri

Jerome Gans

Les Greene

Douglas & Carol Greve

Michael Hegener

Barry Helfmann

Len & June Horwitz

Houston GPS

Jeannine Jacques

Samuel James

Gloria Batkin Kahn

Cele Keeper

Jeffrey Kleinberg

Eleanor Komet

Marti Kranzberg & Teresa Gardner

Beatrice Liebenberg

Etta Martin

Mid-Atlantic GPS

Mary Nicholas & Gene Eliasoph

J. Dustin Nichols

Northeastern SGP

Oasis Center

Michael Ostrower

Kenneth Porter

Nolan Penn

A. Rae Price

Darryl Pure

Kathy T. Rider

George Max Saiger

Sharan Schwartzberg

Stephanie Simonton

Sherrie Smith

Gil & Janet Spielberg

James Sterling

Melvin Stern

Tom & Catherine Stone

Barney Straus

Hillel Swiller

Josephine & Albert Tervalon

Nina Thomas

Karen Travis

Kathy Ulman

Bert Weinblatt

Genie Solka Weitzman

Wright Williams

Marian Yeager

## Supporters

(Under \$1,000)

Mark Abramson

David Altfeld

Mike Andronico

Arizona GPS

Cindy Miller Aron

Kathleen Ault

Hassan Azim

Berkeley Group Therapy Education  
Foundation

Blanche Bienvenu

Rafe Blaugrund

Penny Blum

Brad Bloom

Virginia Brabender

Sara Brandel

Nina Brown

Gary Burlingame

Giovanna Cantarella

Sharon Cheeseman

Richard Cheney

Arnold Cohen

Colorado GPS

Paul Cox

Greg Crosby

Carol Dallinga

Leonard Davidman

Patti Mosteller Davis

Warren Deane

Catherine & Thomas Deering

Nicholas Dexter

Patricia Doherty

Hylene & Richard Dublin

Eastern GPS

Felicia Einhorn

Susan Farrow

Barbara Feld

Jerry & Lois Feldman

Doris Fick-Mellecker

Aaron Fink

Cheryl Finnis (in memory of Nancy  
Edwards)

Naomi Freireich

Susan Gantt

Ramon Ganzarain

Jeanne Gavrin

Elliot Geller

Michal Ginach

Elinor Dunn Grayer

Anne & Robert Grew

Natan HarPaz

Daniel Harrop

Irene Harwood

Sherry Hatcher

David Hescheles

Lucinda Hotchkiss

Idaho GPS

Illinois GPS

Susanne Jensen

David Kahn

Nick Kanas

Janice Kettler

Karis Klassen

Joseph Kobos

Steven Krugman

Judith & Gerald Kuipers

Capi Landreneau

Emily Lape

Lane Leckman

Miguel Leibovich

Dorothy LePere

Molyn Leszcz

Ronnie Levine

Carole Lewis

Robert Lipgar

Louisiana GPS

Andrea Lowe

Tom & Alaire Lowry

Beryce MacLennan

Bernard Makowsky

Sue Marriott

Miller Realty Associates

Missouri GPS

William Patrick Moore

Jan Morris

Dayne Narretta

New Jersey GPS

Hindy Nobler

Anne Oakley

John O'Hearne

Oregon GPS

Philadelphia GPS

William Powles

Andrea Pully

Jerry Rosenband

Ethel Rosenfeld

Seymour Rubinfeld (in honor of  
Arthur Kosseff)

Sonja Saltman

San Antonio GPS

Saul Scheidlinger

Judith Schoenholtz-Read

Naomi Schwartz

Shannon Scott

Sharon Beck Shaw

Jev Sikes (in honor of Charlotte  
Sikes Howard)

Mark Sorensen

Neil Spivack

Stephen & Janet Stander

Ginger Sullivan

Robert Unger

Robert Weber

Donald Wexler

## Group Assets

**Fern Cramer-Azima, PhD, DFIGPA, Editor**

**Group Psychotherapy Foundation**

**25 East 21st Street, 6th floor, New York, NY 10010**

**phone: 212-477-2677; toll-free: 877-668-AGPA (2472)**