

In Memorium

FRED FORD, MD, 1921-2007

Fred Ford, MD died on July 11 of complications related to Parkinson's Disease at the age of 86. He was a founding member of AFTA and an active participant until, a few years ago, he was unable to get to the Conferences. Together with the late Robert Ravich, MD, he founded and headed the Typology Study Group and Typology Interest Group – long-standing groups with a loyal membership. The groups started with the shared interest these two men had in creating a typology of relationships with the hope that one day there would be a relational axis to the DSM. Fred created the MOR or mapping of rules, which, using videotape, delineated underlying rules that determined families' patterns of interaction and grouped them in types; Bob developed a "Train Game" which couples played toward the end of demonstrating what type of couple they were. However these AFTA groups went way beyond this focus into an exploration of what Fred liked to call 'hyperdimensionality.' This term referred to the kind of transcendent world view which is revealed when systemic thought is taken to its fullest expression. Fred concentrated on attempting to enter into dialogue with others that pointed toward this transcendent reality, breaking the usual boundaries of thought and leading people into areas they had not explored or even imagined.

Fred was born in Ponca City, Oklahoma in 1921. He was graduated from the University of Oklahoma Medical School with a specialty in obgyn. He joined the Army and served as Captain for two years in Korea immediately preceding the Korean War, from 1946-1948. When he returned to the US, he settled in Berkeley and made the decision to change his specialty to psychiatry. This quickly evolved into an interest in family therapy, and he began training at the MRI in Palo Alto under Don Jackson and Virginia Satir. After the death of Don Jackson, he co-taught with Virginia and later with Joan Herrick. There Fred was part of the exploration of communication theory in family therapy in which Jay Haley, Paul Watzlawick and John Weakland were involved. He left the MRI in 1969 and, with Joan Herrick, continued working with these ideas, pioneering the use of videotape in family therapy.

In addition to being a member for many years of the International Family Therapy Association (IFTA), he was a Founding Member of American Family Therapy Academy (AFTA), Fred was a Life Fellow of both the American Psychiatric Association and the American Orthopsychiatric Association.

Fred is survived by his wife Chris, four children, Emily Elizabeth, Jennifer, Patrick and Laurel, and six grandchildren.