

# IODA

## Opening of Saul A. Silverman Endowment Fund

Sept. 30, 2011

Melbourne, Australia

Thank you Ulla, the IODA Executive Committee, Glenda and the Conference Committee of this great conference old friends and colleagues and new friends and colleagues.

What a pleasure it is for me to be here with you in this magnificent place on the road to learning about ourselves, our cultures, our organizations and the evolution of the human spirit. As you know, it was my honor to be an early part of IODA's development. It was in 1986, that a group of us, so upset with how other OD associations were run that we decided to form one that we hoped embodied the principles of OD within its own structure and process. I knew that when my tenure as President was over, it was critical for the organization's growth and my own to step away – which is why I did.

Tonight I want to talk a little bit about my own evolution, my Dad's, OD and IODA.

All in all, I consider myself a pretty lucky guy. Since I left IODA, I decided to become a specialist in OD. I chose to take the principles of OD and apply them to what I considered one of the most difficult cultures of all to change – the Family. There were many reasons for this including the fact that I worked with my Dad and my own family for 20 years! In our little family business of Family Therapists – which included My Dad, My Mom, My Sister, and one of my Brothers plus about 10 other therapists we experienced the joys and traumas of working together. I also began seeing people who had significant stress and trauma working with family members. After great reflection I knew that “My Calling” was to work with families – who owned and maybe managed businesses on how to have authentically loving families, that supported each member in their own unique

growth path, to deepen trust and love and build their business and wealth as well. It has been quite a deep and profound journey for me and I'm proud to say that I believe I have deeply helped heal a number of families in ways that are sustaining them over generations. My clients have included several family dynasties including Presidents in two countries. One of my deepest roots in this endeavor has always been IODA – so I want to say to you - Thank you, Thank you, Thank You.

I've been a lucky guy in part because I had a pretty unusual Dad. My Dad, Saul, was a member of the first T-Group lead by Ken Benne in the early 1950's. In the USA, OD began with a small group of Professors and Students – spearheaded by Kurt Lewin – and a few of his colleagues – Ken Benne, Leland Bradford and Jack Gibb. They came up with this revolutionary idea (through their students) of listening to feedback about how they interacted in groups. They birthed this movement (in the USA) of facilitating change and in learning how to become an effective change agent – This movement in the USA became known as Human Relations, Group Dynamics and Organization Development.

My Dad was a lawyer at that time – why? Because his Mother made him!!! He was quite an unhappy camper. By chance – he found and attended this seminar – this first T-group – and it changed his life. He gave up his law practice – went back to school and followed his passion of becoming a healer and change agent in a number of roles.

It is now about five years since he passed away. As I reflected on some of the great things he has given to me as well as to many others I wanted to do something so that in a personal way he might be able to touch some of you with his love and encouragement in finding the courage to move forward in our work as change agents in creating a better world. He knew, more than most, that the work of the Change Agent takes courage. He was a warrior in that regard. It is for this reason that I am beginning an Endowment Fund which is designed to give a little financial reward for those who are bringing innovative tools and theory to conflict resolution and healing.

My Dad was both a practitioner (his first love) of being a change agent and an intellectual. He was a person deeply committed to change and evolution through application of OD and related principles towards creation of a deeper, more

existential and more loving life. He was asked by Governor Leroy Collins to be the head of Race Relations for the state of Florida in the early 1960s. Later, in an **educative role** he pioneered work in the development of Family Life Education Program and Change Agent principles for low income urban African Americans. He worked as a Marriage and Family Therapist in New England for over 40 years where he trained over 50 psychotherapists and developed one of the first group private practices in this specialized field.

Later in life he returned to his intellectual roots. He was an avid reader and student and liked nothing better than discussing with anyone his own and others' latest thinking on resolution of conflicts in Iraq, the healing of the American Soul, the resolution of Mideast crisis, even how to fix George W. Bush.

He was an avid believer that change started with one's self and that there was nothing as helpful as good feedback – the kind one gets in a healthy relationship, team or therapy group. He believed that one of the ultimate goals was creation of a spiritually centered civilization which at its base should be compassionate, caring and connected. The creation of a better world should be looked at in terms of one's own capacity and activity towards personal growth, family development, as well as community and global development.

Near the end of his life – my Dad was working hard to clarify his thinking. I want to share with you my best description of these principles in his own words. After this, I am going to give you some of the my own integration of his principles.

In his words – Universal Principles are:

1. Enhancement of my dignity and yours through rational process and dialogue. This principle is the main one – for people with ADD or short attention spans – who can only hold one thought in their mind – he would say – just remember this one and you'll be OK.

But he did have a few others...

2. Man's ethical capacity is something that must be grown and developed.

3. Principle vehicle for growth is rational dialogue which encompasses feedback and openness to looking at one's self.
4. Substantive matters that have been negotiated need efficient implementation and follow-up structures
5. Solution to all substantive problems must be approached from both long-term and short-term perspectives.
6. Right to universal education, particularly psychological knowledge, by all people.
7. Reconcile free market and equitable distribution of resource – this includes Dialogue of free economy and the needs for equitable distribution of world resources and mitigating against the deeply increasing gaps of the haves and the have-nots.

#### In MY Words – My integration

#### **Fearlessness in Finding a Way to Face the Special Pain in Your Life.**

When he sat with you the first feeling you got was that he was incredibly interested in your story. His goal was to be with you in trying to find a way to the root of whatever you were dealing with. It was in this arena that he brought enormous love, strength and fearlessness. In his way he would say “Do not fear the depth of your sadness, your anger, your rage or your fear. Face it – I will face it with you – no matter what. And your facing it in this way will make you stronger, more compassionate, more open to the hurt in others and more able to love.”

**Being Alone and Separated from Others is No Answer** – Over and over again he would meet with people who basically would say – if I just get away from this person (who’s driving me crazy) I and probably they will be fine. Absolute and total bullshit! Is your goal to live on some mountain by yourself? This is never a solution. A Great Deal of Dad’s Work and Passion, really part of his brilliance, was on maintaining connectedness not running away. More than anything he was looking at the breakdown of love and the subsequent withdrawal of two human beings who loved each other. My dad and I had endless discussions on this topic from the intimate, to the organizational, to the global level.

As a change agent myself – I studied with many others besides My Dad. But in this area connectedness – My Dad brought a strength and tenacity that far surpassed almost everyone I knew. Dad would say the great goal is Interdependence or Connection and building a kind of relationship and Peace that not only accepted individuality - it Promoted It. In Dad’s Model – Love was about embracing the unique and personal growth challenges of the other.

**Connectedness and Love requires self-insight and a commitment to personal growth.** This perhaps is his third principle. “The concept of pursuing love over time without challenging one’s self towards one’s own growth needs is just crap”, he would say. Pursue Your Own Personal and Professional Growth and Learning – this was somewhat revolutionary in the 60s and 70s – later it became more common. When people came in complaining (usually legitimately about their significant other) he would find a way to say – “And what are your personal learning issues, and how

well are you pursuing them?” And when the other mumbled back something like “I dunno” or “The problem is my wife, my job, mother or whomever” he would stop – he would look at you and say “You mean – you don’t know what your growth issues are? We must begin here – this is your life...”

**The Goal is Fusion or Use Your Head and Your Heart** – Dad was an enormous believer in western rational thought and finding a way to integrate this with the power of your emotions. To split off your intellect from your spirit from your emotions from your body is all about disease. In crunch time when you are with another – the goal is to bring the best of your mind, your heart, your spirit and your body together in your communication and in your attempt at solving the problem at hand. When you do this – he would say you are centered.

**Follow Your Passion** – My Dad certainly did. This is part of what made him so compelling and charismatic. His passions shifted over time. Most recently his passion was about Political Theology. How can we solve the world’s problems? How can we address the issues in Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Mideast therapeutically and compassionately? If you spoke to him he would probably ask you your opinion on how to address these issues. After listening he would offer the latest analysis he had read, the critique of that analysis by at least two major critics, an analysis of the critics by a third analyst, his critique of each analyst and his own current best thinking to solving this problem. In his analysis he often also quoted religious experts, literary geniuses, Journalists, Psychologists, political social scientists while complaining that he was losing his memory!

**He was passionate because he believed that you and I (and him) really could change the world.** We could change it in ourselves – how we lived daily, we could change it in how we related to those whom we love, in our organizations, in our families, in our countries and in the world. Our lives become meaningful and passionate through our involvement. And this of course is part of IODA’s Mission. In my work with IODA, he has always been here.

**Our Passions Must be Tied to How We Live Our Lives** –Living a life of Meaning meant finding what is it in your life that gives you meaning and pursuing it. Authentic community and deep learning supports this. This is what IODA has always been about.

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It is with great pride that I begin this Endowment Fund. And, by the way, any of you who are so moved – I encourage you to contribute to the capital of this fund so that the awards become even more meaningful. I have already received several additional contributions besides my own to the capital of this fund

**Saul A. Silverman Award**  
**for**  
**Enhancement of Dignity and Rational Dialogue:**  
**Application of Interdisciplinary OD Science and Practice**  
**Towards**  
**Personal, Organizational, and/or Global Development**

These principles described above should be used as a guide in the selection of awardees of this endowment. The Saul A. Silverman Award will be given to a person annually as recognition and motivation for bringing and applying new theory and tools towards global evolution and the resolution of conflict (interpersonal to global) from a rational, ethical and dialogical perspective. Individuals who bring innovative practical theory and tools that further the above principles will be recognized and encouraged to further pursue development and application of knowledge towards personal, interpersonal, community, national and global development.

Thank you for your kind attention and time. I hope that in this moment you have been touched a little bit by my Dad's spirit, who has always been a part of the IODA spirit and that you and IODA embody it as a way to move forward in your own ability as a change agent to heal, to love, and to create this world into a more spiritually centered, compassionate one.

Salute!