

# **AN ODE TO ICASSI: GROWTH Diversity, Social Interest, Community Feelings and my Personal Odyssey**

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At a time when countries, including our own, are experiencing shock waves of violence, there is ICASSI - a light, a beacon to show another way. It is an antidote to the world's confusion, chaos and terror - from coast to coast, sea to sea, from around the world and beyond.

HOW? By bringing together people of like-minded philosophy coming from cultures that elsewhere are unable to exist in the same places in peace.

WHY? Because, as Adler wrote, unless people learn how to live together and cooperate to stop wars and violence, mankind will cease to exist. And Adlerian values as practiced at ICASSI are an excellent model and antidote for this.

WHAT? A place to grow philosophically and personally through practices of cooperation and mutual respect with people from all over the world - who might be adversarial in their own country.

WHO? Individuals and families, both professional and lay people from all over the world, from all walks of life, connecting in an atmosphere of cooperation, mutual respect and encouragement, developing bonds that strengthen each year with the hugs of reconnecting and deepening friendships.

WHEN? Every summer for one or two weeks of living together and interacting daily in many situations, in addition to learning and studying and growing together, including: eating together; dancing and playing cooperative games together; sharing ideas, talents and customs in going on trips; and working, planning and creating together and much more.

WHERE? In many countries throughout the world: eg., Germany, Holland, Canada, Hungary, Romania, Israel, the UK, U.S., Ireland, Switzerland, Austria, Greece, Japan, Malta, Czech Republic, Slovakia and more.

## **MY PERSONAL ODYSSEY OF ATTENDING ICASSI THROUGHOUT MANY YEARS**

My personal experience of building bridges and healing is integrally connected to ICASSI, which, when I started going, was simply called The International Summer Institute. My earliest

memory is on the first day of my attendance at the Alfred Adler Institute in New York, when I found a very small ad on the bulletin board, explaining that a summer institute would be held on the island of Crete and students were being encouraged to attend. Not having fixed plans, I decided to go, and I registered. By the summer of '68, I had had about nine months of twice a week classes and felt fairly knowledgeable about Adlerian principles and practices.

That summer, I found to my delight that I was rooming in a hotel in town with Edna Nash. A great beginning! (I didn't realize it then, but my friendship with Edna would continue for many years.) All the other participants were at the Academy - beautifully located on cliffs, but very warm. We had air conditioning in our hotel room and I was happy to be there. However, when at the end of the meeting on that first night at the Academy it was discovered that we weren't staying there, a few people tried to create space for us; to no avail. Where is your social interest asked one of the participants and implied it was missing. I was confused. I had learned about social interest ( Gemeinschaftsgefuehl ) in my Adlerian books and classes, but I didn't get it - in practice, that is. I then began to realize that the Summer Institute would give me the understanding of the practical use of the theory I was learning.

Dreikurs headed up the institute and Bill and Mim Pew, Achi Yotam, Judi Elul and Juliet Cavadas and her Greek chorus were all teaching, not to mention the Canadians and Americans who were really gifted in teaching as well, thanks to Rudolf Dreikurs' inspiring work all over the globe. I would have liked to study with Dreikurs, but moving to Chicago was not an option. So I got very good training at the Alfred Adler Institute in New York, complemented by my ongoing participation in the Summer Institute. In the summer of 1971/1972, I was staying in Oregon and given permission to finish up my Institute training by being a non-matriculating student in Eugene, Oregon working with Ray Lowe. I also was observing the deft way that Family Meetings were being handled. That summer, much to my good fortune, there was a Mini Summer School Program at Mt. Hood in Oregon. It was there that I had a wonderful experience with Chris (Oscar Christianson) of whom Alexandra Adler stated that "he reminds me more than anyone else of the way my father worked." And how lucky I felt to be in his workshop. I came back to New York and raved about the International Summer Institute to my teacher, mentor and therapist, Leo Gold. I guess I convinced him and either that summer or pretty soon afterwards, he became a regular devotee and inspired students for many years at ICASSI.

I continued my summer experiences and added to it, translating into German, when needed, in the various courses. Each year, when I returned to work in my day job as a Guidance Counselor, I was able to use my newfound skills to great advantage. I developed warm relationships, which were renewed each summer. After my interactions with Bill Pew, what seemed like a short while later, he encouraged me to offer a course. I certainly didn't feel ready to do that and so, embarrassed to continue going without giving back, for many years I travelled instead, during my summer vacations, to far off places, taking my Adlerian training and philosophy with me. One day I felt ready to return to ICASSI (as it had been renamed). But to my surprise, it had grown a lot and though I had created what, to my mind was a rich course using my Gestalt background as a vehicle to connect with Adlerian therapy, my skills were not needed, since

many new faculty members had been added to the staff and were becoming well known. While I was disappointed, having put a lot of thought, effort and work into planning my course, I felt that I was not going to let myself be deterred from attending ICASSI since the courses were so rich and helpful in both my personal and professional growth. And I continued contributing through translating in classes whenever needed. Each time I went back to ICASSI, I started spending more time with Germans and developing more connections, during which time we discussed our backgrounds and feelings. Of course, ICASSI was the perfect place to do that. One day, having given several Special Interest groups, I was encouraged to do one about my German Jewish background. I doubted that anyone would really be interested, but more to the point, I was nervous that no one would show up and I wasn't sure I was ready either. When I voiced my doubts to a few people, they encouraged me and also encouraged a number of people to come. WOW! It was such a high, to see that people cared!

That presentation was another important step. After that, I would give yearly Special Interest groups: "Rescuing History to Build Bridges for Understanding and Dialogue." My goal was, through sharing my personal history with photos and creating an atmosphere of mutual respect, to encourage others to do the same. I spoke both English and German in my presentations. Starting out with the Germans, they later included Adlerians from the U.S., Ireland, Israel, Holland, England, Canada, Switzerland, Hungary and elsewhere. The bonds strengthened as each year new people joined and others came again.

Usually after or before ICASSI, I would speak to students and adults in the neighboring areas: in a high school in Maryville, TN; in Brisach; in Zurich and in Essen, the town in which I was born, many times; and in Heidelberg, from where my mother's family had come, several years as well. I have formed lifelong friendships from my friends from Essen, Heidelberg and Breisach, which are renewed when we meet again either in New York or Germany. In New York, I have spoken in many places including my alma mater, Hunter High School, and to audiences from young children in Kindergarten - 2nd grade to adults in their 70s. I have also spoken at Psychoanalytic conferences, synagogues and community centers and schools. Each time, I bring in my Adlerian background in my introduction.

In total, I have been coming to ICASSI for over 20 summers. What wonderful opportunities, both personal and professional, have developed for me during those summers of time spent with my friends from Germany and other countries, both here in New York and where they lived, abroad. These are represented by many things. The large card, with a rainbow spanning the ocean, wishing me well, when I landed in the hospital instead of Switzerland in 2011. Hala Buck's cross-cultural art therapy class in which my earliest memory of leaving Germany changed from one of loss to one of gain! The many wonderful bonds and friendships that have lasted long after the summers at ICASSI; having my ICASSI friends come to Essen, my birthplace in Germany when I was honored by receiving 'Stolpersteine' stumbling blocks of gilded stone, set into the pavement in front of the house where we had lived, in memory of my family and to honor me for my many contributions in the schools, at which I had been presenting during the course of 15 years.

Last year I received from NASAP, much to my surprise and delight, a Lifetime Achievement Award for my many contributions over the years to NASAP and Individual Psychology; my leadership of the Alfred Adler Institute of NY and for my work in "Rescuing History to Build Bridges for Understanding and Dialogue." Well, after getting this Lifetime Achievement Award I had the feeling that I was finished with having to do anything more. That must have been my private logic because, in truth, there was and is more ahead! Adlerian Psychology is a psychology of movement, overcoming, and growth, which are my goals, as well. In 2017, I intend to be in Indianapolis, IN for ICASSI and Minneapolis, MN for the (International) IAIP. And then, who knows? I do know this: I have two big passions, Alfred Adler and Building Bridges, and at ICASSI they are integrated and fulfilled.

Finally, I certainly realize that none of this could have happened without the brilliance and dedication of Dreikurs and the devoted, continued and committed dedication of Eva over all these years! Thank you! And finally, I would be remiss if didn't also thank John and all my wonderful teachers and mentors who have been supporting me for many years on this amazing journey!