

# Art Therapy Online: ATOL

## **IN MEMORIAM:**

**Dee Spring, Ph.D, ATR-BC • Sept 22nd 1934 – June 7th 2010.**

**Bobbi Stoll. Los Angeles, USA.**

With the death of Dee Spring, PhD, MFT, ATR-BC on June 7, 2010 at age 75, the art therapy profession and art therapists around the world lost a major contributor, researcher and pioneer in our field.

Dr Spring was widely known by the many hats she wore as a psychologist-art psychotherapist in private practice; artist; clinical and art therapy supervisor; author of articles, chapters, two books on art therapy and editor of one that compared art therapy practices in the US and UK; specialist in the use of art therapy in treatment of individuals with PTSD resulting from sexual abuse or, as she called it, “intimate trauma”; international lecturer; qualified expert witness in several U.S. states; guest faculty at many universities; consultant and presenter of online courses; professional trainer; member and past Treasurer of the American Art Therapy Association and past President of the California Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation and recipient of awards from both organizations for clinical and educational achievements, contributions, and innovations related to research and use of visual art in trauma treatment; and professional inspiration to many. She was one of only three American members of the “Art and Psychiatry Section” of the World Psychiatric Association (2007).

In the 1970’s, she designed, implemented and directed the first federally funded rape crisis center in the world to utilize visual art in crisis intervention and treatment for victims of sexual assault. Almost 40 years in her career as

a therapist was focused on victims of “intimate trauma” and abuse. She became a renowned expert in treating traumatized individuals and was particularly knowledgeable about treatment of Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID).

She authored [\*Shattered Images: The Phenomenological Language of Sexual Trauma\*](#) (1992) based on her doctoral dissertation and *Image and Mirage: Art Therapy with Dissociative Clients* (2001). She set the bar for many art therapists – both those she supervised, those she trained and for others who regard her publications as important scientifically-based statements on the efficacy of art therapy in treatment.

With her multi-faceted knowledge of therapy in general and art therapy specifically, she edited her most recent book, *Art in Treatment: A Transatlantic Dialogue* (2007). In the Foreword, **Hans-Otto Thomashoff** claimed that “The intercultural approach of this book unites its different origins to bring art therapy from its sometimes esoteric borders into its practical and scientifically based center, where its efficacy becomes provable, and its use justifiable even to the finance based health system we have to face these days” (P. xi).

Dr. Alexander Kopytin, Editor of the *Russian Art Therapy Journal*, reviewed the book in the September 20, 2007 issue and acknowledged, “She is one of the leading researchers of diagnostic and therapeutic capabilities of art therapy with regard to...graphic indicators of sexual abuse and PTSD...in the U.S.” Her clinical work was recognized by the American Art Therapy Association when she received their 1994 Clinician Award.

She was grandfathered in to receive the Counselor license in Ohio in 1984 but since it was not recognized in California where she practiced, she elected to return to school for her PhD and was subsequently licensed in California as a

Marriage, Family Therapist. She was active in the (AATA). As Treasurer on the Board of Directors during a time of extreme financial stress (1986-1988),

she kept very close tabs on expenditures and turned deficit spending into year-end profit. She was referred to as “a ‘tigress’ of detail”. She was appointed Chair of the Finance Committee in 1989 and continued her fiscal watch by developing income-producing Regional Symposia on cutting edge issues in therapy.

Dee was a personal friend and colleague and became my opponent on the 1991 ballot for President-Elect of the American Art Therapy Association. This did nothing to disturb our close friendship. We continued for many years to engage in monthly hour-long+ telephone sessions. She lived only 50 miles from me and although she did not drive to Los Angeles, I often had occasion to drive to or through Ventura where she lived and each time would meet her for lunch or a drink and another lengthy chat.

When I was asked and agreed to deliver the keynote address at an Art Therapy Conference in Taipei, Taiwan, I was also asked to secure additional presenters on their topics of interest. I enlisted Dr. Spring to speak on her work with PTSD and she was highly regarded by Taiwanese therapists.

Over the years she became disenchanted with the AATA and directed her attention elsewhere. She developed and provided challenging online curricula to assist healthcare professionals to raise their levels of expertise while fulfilling their continuing education requirements. Her online courses are still offered on NetCE (Counseling and Therapy: Critical Issues) and CME Resource (Domestic Violence on California Medical Education). It is difficult for me to see her online course offerings still available knowing they are presented posthumously.

A very private person, outspoken and honest to a fault, with a great sense of humor and dry wit, I join many other friends and admirers who miss her talent and intellect. As a researcher, her voice will be silenced but her contributions to the profession of art therapy and treatment of PTSD and DID will echo for years to come.

Dr. Spring is survived by two sons and their wives, 4 grandchildren, a great grandson, a brother and his wife and a niece. Her only daughter died less than 6 months earlier. To express condolences or honour her memory, her loving sons, David and Jay, set-up a web site at: <http://drdeespring.blogspot.com/> where memories and condolences can be posted.

One star in Art Therapy's Constellation is dimmed but Dee's brilliance lingers in the minds her works have stimulated.

You left an un-fillable void, Dee, and are greatly missed.

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