Maurice J. Zemlick (1924–2013)

Maurice J. Zemlick, a pioneer and innovator in the treatment and training of psychologists, died at his home in San Diego, California, on March 1, 2013, following a stroke. He will be remembered as a master clinician who was strongly committed to excellence, competence, and accountability in the training of psychologists. Maury was instrumental in the growth and development of psychology as a profession and particularly in the professional school movement. He was also committed to providing quality professional services to the community. As a mentor, Maury was known for his personal and professional integrity.

Maury was born on March 8, 1924, in St. Louis, Missouri, where he was raised. He received a bachelor’s degree (1947) and a doctoral degree (1952) from Washington University in St. Louis. The title of his dissertation was “Maternal Attitudes of Rejection and Acceptance in Pregnancy,” from which he developed the ZAR Pregnancy Attitude Scale, a questionnaire designed to measure the subjective attitude of women concerning pregnancy and motherhood. His doctoral mentor was Robert I. Watson.

Maury enlisted in the Navy in 1942 and was commissioned a lieutenant junior grade. In 1944, he was stationed on the battleship USS Colorado as chemical warfare and gunnery officer; in 1945, he was present at the signing of the Japanese surrender. After his discharge from the service and a brief period in private practice in St. Louis, he moved to San Diego with his wife and four children. Maury worked as chief clinical psychologist at the Naval Training Center for two years and then started his own private practice, which focused on individual psychotherapy, psychological evaluations, and couples therapy.

Maury was one of the founders of the California School of Professional Psychology (CSPP), the first autonomous clinical psychology PhD program in the United States, and founding dean of the CSPP in San Diego. He had a strong, unwavering commitment to what many view as CSPP’s creative, innovative philosophy, which was characterized by the following elements: (a) Clinical training was required throughout the program beginning in the first year. (b) An “ivory tower” environment was avoided by limiting faculty members to teaching half time so they could practice what they taught. (c) There was no tenure, and faculty members were required to continually demonstrate competence. (d) Students were required to participate in their own therapy throughout the entire program, at least one year of which had to be in individual psychotherapy.

A strong advocate for California’s innovative licensing laws, Maury was among the first psychologists licensed in the State of California. He was known for his career-long involvement in the advancement of psychology, which included volunteer service on the San Diego County Mental Health Advisory Board, on California’s Board of Psychology, and on the Board of Professional Affairs of the American Psychological Association (APA). Among the other positions he held were president of the California Psychological Association (CPA) in 1971, treasurer of CPA in 1967, and member of APA’s Council of Representatives in 1973–1974, 1978–1980, and 1983–1986.

Maury was the recipient of many awards and honors. He was a fellow of APA Divisions 12, 29, 31, 41, 42, and 44; of the Academy of San Diego Psychologists; and of the American Orthopsychiatry Association. He received CPA’s Silver Psi (Outstanding Professional Service Award), among the highest honors bestowed by CPA. He also received the San Diego Psychological Association’s Distinguished Contribution to Psychology Award. Maury was among the very few California psychologists to receive such high honors from local, state, and national psychological associations.

In 1986, Maury was installed in the National Academies of Practice at a ceremony in Washington, DC, attended by numerous national dignitaries, including Senator Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii), who described Maury’s “outstanding contributions to the field of psychology” and acknowledged Maury as “one of only 10 health care providers in the United States to be awarded such an honor that year.”

Proud of his Russian/Jewish background, Maury described himself as a Ukrainian Jew, a “descendent of a unique and troubled culture.” Maury and his wife Lu visited the Ukraine in 2005 and, in his words, “personally experienced the horror of the Nazi’s brutal, destructive invasion in 1941.” He had wanted to experience his family’s origins in Russia but was disappointed to find that “the war destroyed most of the early landmarks.”

After a visit to Russia in 1998, Maury found another way to connect to his heritage, as a consultant to Golden House, an adult day center in San Diego serving Russian immigrants. In an attempt to develop a personal relationship with his new clients who spoke Russian, Maury took language lessons and, ultimately, was able to communicate with minimal use of an interpreter. Maury said that reducing the language barrier helped “bridge the cultural gap, and developed mutual trust and respect with his new clients.”

Maury’s hobbies included jogging, swimming, writing, psychopharmacology, pinochle, gardening, and sculpture. He began painting at the age of 75, and for the next 10 years many of his impressive oil paintings were displayed and sold at art exhibits. Maury was a family man who was proud of his children and especially honored that one of his children became a psychologist. As dean of CSPP, he bestowed the PhD degree on his daughter Sherry, who graduated in 1977. Now in private practice, she is the founder of the Center for Transpersonal Therapy in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Maurice J. Zemlick is survived by Lu, his wife of 66 years, five children, three grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

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