

Remembrances "In Memoriam" to Alfreda Sill Galt



Alfreda Sill Galt

November 5, 1910 - August 28, 1998



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Dear Members and Friends of The Lifwynn Foundation,

The Lifwynn Foundation for Social Research has the sad duty to inform you of the death of its president, Alfreda Sill Galt. She died on August 28, 1998, at the age of 87.

Dr. Lloyd Gildea, a faculty member of Queens College of CUNY, who was previously research director of the Foundation, has been elected to the presidency. He and other members will continue to engage in the group and instrumental research and publishing activities to which Mrs. Galt contributed so much for so many years. These activities include the expansion of material in the Foundation's website, the address of which is www.lifwynnfoundation.org.

Enclosed is her obituary and also several remembrances from some of her colleagues who wished to express their individual appreciation of Alfreda, her life, her work, and her remarkable way of being in the world.

The Board of Directors
The Lifwynn Foundation

OBITUARIES

Alfreda Galt, Group Analysis Study Pioneer

Alfreda Sill Galt, the president of the Lifwynn Foundation for Social Research in Westport, died on Aug. 28, 1998, at the Osborne Home in Rye N.Y. The cause of death was heart failure. She was 87 years old. She and her husband, the late William E. Galt, had a long association with the foundation, which investigated the social and biological factors associated with conflict and alienation in society and was a seminal developer of group analysis and other group analytic techniques. She succeeded her husband as secretary of the organization upon his death in 1955 and became president in 1992.

As chairman of the foundation's editorial committee in the late 1950's and early 60's Mrs. Galt had a pivotal role in the publication of several posthumous works by Trigant Burrow, including *Preconscious Foundations of Human Experience*, and *A Search for Man's Sanity*. Dr. Burrow was a student of Carl Jung and founder of group analysis, as well as scientific director of The Lifwynn Foundation. Ms. Galt was the editor of *Trigant Burrow: Toward Social Sanity and Human Survival*, published in 1984. She also contributed articles to *Etc*, *The Humanist*, *Group Process*, *The Journal of Humanistic Psychology* and other periodicals.

She was co-editor of *Lifwynn Correspondence*, the Foundation's periodical devoted to the discussion of social self-inquiry, a contemporary form of group analysis. Ms. Galt was an active member of the Social Self-Inquiry Group, a group analysis workshop, as well as The Dialogue Group inspired by the work of David Bohm. She conducted extensive correspondence with organizations and individuals

interested in social self-inquiry. In the months before her death she was working on a memoir of her experiences with group analysis with the help of her colleagues and her daughter.

Mrs. Galt also served as vice president of Jobson Associates, Inc., a public relations firm, with which she was associated from 1941 to 1980. For many years she was in charge of the information and membership program of The Seeing Eye Inc. She also served as account executive with The Arctic Institute of North America and the American Geographical Society. She was an accredited member of the Public Relations Society of America.

Mrs. Galt began her professional career as an actress, supporting such stars as Spencer Tracy, Fay Bainter, and Sidney Greenstreet in stock and touring companies. She did promotion work in the theatre and with the coming of World War II, fund-raising and publicity for war-related organizations including The Committee to Aid America by Defending the Allies, and the Polish and British War Relief Societies.

Mrs. Galt resided in Westport from 1946 to 1993 when she moved to Southport. She is survived by her three children: George Egleston Galt of Boulder Creek, Calif., John Payson Galt of Charlowe, Vt., and Elizabeth Galt Hirsch of Groenwich, Ct. In addition, ten grandchildren and three great grandchildren survive her.

Alfreda Sill Galt, Group Analysis Study Pioneer 1910-1998

Alfreda Sill Galt, the president of The Lifwynn Foundation for Social Research in Westport, Connecticut, died on August 28 at the Osborne Home in Rye, New York. She was 87 years old. She and her husband, the late William E. Galt, had a long association with the Foundation investigating the social and biological factors associated with humanity's tendency to experience conflict and alienation. This research was undertaken within what was at the time the highly unique context of a group setting, thereby constituting the seminal development of group analysis. She succeeded her husband as secretary of the organization upon his death in 1955 and became president in 1992.

As chairman of the Foundation's editorial committee in the late 1950's and early 60's Mrs. Galt had a pivotal role in the publication of several posthumous works by Trigant Burrow, including *Preconscious Foundations of Human Experience*, and *A Search for Man's Sanity*. Dr. Burrow was a student of Carl Jung and founder of group analysis, as well as scientific director of The Lifwynn Foundation. Ms. Galt was the editor of *Trigant Burrow: Toward Social Sanity and Human Survival* published in 1984. She also contributed articles to *Etc.*, *The Humanist*, *Group Process*, *The Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, *The Humanistic Psychologist* and other periodicals.

She was co-editor of *Lifwynn Correspondence*, the Foundation's periodical devoted to the study of social self-inquiry, a contemporary form of group analysis practiced by members of The Lifwynn Foundation. Social self-inquiry involves group research, not group psychotherapy. It is predicated on the assumption that groups are microcosms of humanity and manifest all of humankind's tendencies toward social pathology, as well as its underlying health and fitness. Ms. Galt was an active member of The Social Self-Inquiry Group, as well as The Dialogue Group inspired by the work of David Bohm. She conducted extensive correspondence with organizations interested in social self-inquiry. In the months before her death she was working on a memoir of her experiences with group analysis in the 1920' and 30's with the help of her colleagues and her daughter.

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Mrs. Galt resided in Westport, Connecticut, from 1946 to 1993 when she moved to Southport, Connecticut. She is survived by her three children: George Egleston Galt of Boulder Creek, California, John Payson Galt of Charlotte, Vermont, and Elizabeth Galt Hirsch of Greenwich, Connecticut. In addition, eight grandchildren and one great grandchild survive her.

Memories of Alfreda

Maureen Cotter:

In the three decades that I knew her, Alfreda Galt devoted her life to the work of The Lifwynn Foundation, first as secretary, and since 1992, as president. She was the one who wrote for all of us the eloquent tributes to former officers, members and friends of the organization. It is a departure for us to use individual voices, but now it is we who write our tributes, to express the gratitude and appreciation we feel for Alfreda and her many contributions. I think she would have liked this perspective.

Alfreda was a role model for me: a single mother, a caring daughter, a career woman dividing her time between Manhattan and Westport. From her I learned how to question and broaden my viewpoint. I learned about perseverance and passionate dedication to one's work—and also to challenge the motives which underlie all aspects of our work and social lives.

Finding a wider audience for Burrow's work was Alfreda's major activity. She pursued this through her correspondence, writing her book(s) and articles, and connecting with groups having similar interests. Over the years she collaborated on and supported projects including instrumental studies with Lloyd Gilden, brain studies conducted by Björn Merker, development of Fred Stahly's eye-movement device, Monte Ullman's dream workshop held at Lifwynn Camp, the Foundation-sponsored Conference on the Nature of Addiction with Jack Wikse in 1990 and the presentation made with Juan Campos at the International Association of Group Psychotherapy Congress in Montreal, 1992. It was due to Alfreda's ingenuity and communication skill that the Foundation obtained a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to microfilm the Burrow files, and years later to effect the transfer of the early Foundation files to the Yale Archives.

Throughout the writing and day-to-day organizational activity, however, it was clear that the phyloanalytic perspective was the most important element for Alfreda and her co-workers. This was hard work, investigation of one's own feelings and reactions as representing society-at-large and Alfreda would not hesitate to share her frustration. She became a powerful mentor, helping us to understand and participate in the ongoing social self-inquiry.

Even when her health began to fail, and despite her disabling condition, Alfreda continued to be part of this inquiry and kept on with her writing. Her gallant spirit is an inspiration to us all. She will be greatly missed.

Mary Alice Roche:

Alfreda's remarkable abilities, her beauty, and her intelligence greatly impressed me. But there was something more: she looked at herself and the world around her not only with interest and sympathy, but with real honesty. This unusual characteristic may have come partly from the disciplines with which she was involved, but she truly embodied it.

We became friends some twenty-five years ago when we met in one of Charlotte Selver's Sensory Awareness classes at the New School for Social Research. Alfreda found a certain similarity between Sensory Awareness and work at The Lifwynn Foundation. Eventually she became an advisor of the Sensory Awareness Foundation, and I became a member of The Lifwynn Foundation and its social self-inquiry group (SSI).

The similarity was in a discovery made by Elsa Gindler, originator of Sensory Awareness, and one made by Trigant Burrow, who, with his colleagues, established The Lifwynn Foundation. They both found that direct attention to physical tensions allowed those tensions (along with the emotional thoughts and feelings that had brought them about) to subside and be reabsorbed into the naturally functioning tensional system of the organism as a whole, thus providing a less agitated, more responsive organismic background out of which the individual (and the group of which he or she is a part) could interact more appropriately with others, no matter what the situation.

In Sensory Awareness Gindler's discovery became the basis for a practice of awareness of our overall way of being, a way of understanding our physical/mental attitude and behavior toward ourselves and others, and through this awareness, allowing needed change. Burrow's discovery was also basic to a practice of detached observation and reporting of sensations. But SSI includes observation and reporting not only of the sensations, but also of the concomitant thoughts and emotional reactions as they arise during what are often opinion-laden, ego-threatening discussions of theories and carrying out of tasks. In SSI each participant is considered a representative of humanity, while the group is considered a microcosm of society. Thus, SSI meetings are an attempt to study the general social neurosis: the idea that I am separate from you—that I can be independent of the rest of humankind—and the self-image resulting from that idea. The mental/physical influence of this idea on oneself/the other/the group is to be openly acknowledged as the first step in an attempt to learn how to mediate its subversive influence.

Such work demands honesty, a sometimes-painful honesty. It means a strict examination of oneself—to see and experience in ourselves, and then report clearly the actions, reactions and projections that cause conflict among humans—and keep us from recognizing and feeling our oneness. Alfreda's attention to inner/outer attitude and behavior in both individual and group was a pivotal part of our social self-inquiry meetings. Her ability and willingness to give herself to this research inspired us all. But it was not limited to those meetings; it was part of her daily life. The question was always there for her: "Am I acting in response to the needs of an imaginary image of myself (what Burrow called the "I'-persona"), or am I responding to the needs of the actual task at hand?"

For Alfreda, this kind of courageous honesty was fundamental to her life. She had a deep love for her family, her mentors, and her friends, and I would say that her clear vision—and sense—of us all, including herself, as representative members of a society struggling against a pervasive neurosis only enhanced her genuine caring and respect for us, and the whole human family. May we all continue to be inspired by her honesty and her caring.

Steve Rosen:

As I begin to draft this statement about the death of Alfreda Galt, I sense the impatience in myself to get the job done, the goal-directedness that seems to accompany every task I undertake. I believe Alfreda would have been interested to hear this self-observation. I make this observation with the intention of honoring the spirit of social self-inquiry to which Alfreda had dedicated her life.

What a life. The last half-century of it was passionately devoted to addressing the strife and turmoil of our benighted species—what Burrow, her mentor, called the “social neurosis.” Almost to her dying breath, Alfreda was still trying. Having already made numerous significant contributions to the literature on Burrow, she was engaged in one more effort, a book that was to recount her life and work with The Lifwynn Foundation, and elucidate the process of social self-inquiry. She had gotten halfway through the volume on her own, then reached the point where her infirmities did not permit her to continue. Still undaunted, she accepted our offer of assistance. Lloyd Gilden, Mary Alice Roche and I were each assigned a different chapter of the unfinished volume. On separate occasions, we called Alfreda in her room at the Osborne Home, and, working from an outline of what was to appear in our respective chapters, we “interviewed” her about the material to be fleshed out. Elizabeth, Alfreda’s daughter, played a central role in the process. She not only arranged for the “interviews” to be taped but did her own rather intensive work with Alfreda on the actual book material. The whole process was a labor of love in which I felt privileged to take part.

Lloyd Gilden:

My earliest recollection of Alfreda harks back to 1950, when, as a student at the University of Michigan, I first visited the Lifwynn Foundation, then located on South Morningside Drive in Westport, Connecticut. I was invited to stay for lunch, at which were present Alfreda, William Galt, Clarence Shields, Hans Syz, Charles Thompson, Alfreda’s mother (“Mrs. Sill”) and Amy Guggenheimer. Dr. Burrow had died shortly before, but his presence was very prominent at the table.

From the outset, Alfreda made me feel both welcomed and challenged. She was friendly, frank, treated me as a peer, and very clear about the objectives of the work of the Foundation, particularly, the practice of challenging many of the social rituals we use to gloss over some of

our underlying insecurities. I found myself in a truly unique setting in which intellectual and laboratory research were blended with—as Alfreda describes it in her book—“real-life relationships . . . colleagues, parents and children, husbands and wives.” From that day to the present, I have been drawn to the work of The Foundation and enthusiastically pursue the principles to which Alfreda dedicated her life.

In my opinion the most significant of these principles is that humans possess the ability to achieve calm and wholeness, reflecting our experience, as infants, of unity with our mother.

This preconscious experience of unity persists into adulthood and is inherent in human development. In some people the trend predominates. This, I believe was the case with Alfreda; so I think it is fitting to use the words of Dr. Burrow to describe a person with such qualities. She had “a native simplicity; . . . a steadfast love of truth; a deep sense of sympathy, helpfulness, and human fellowship . . . [she was] sensitive, inspirational, intuitive, and creative. . .” Furthermore, Alfreda was a great humanitarian who saw “to the core of life, who . . . sensed the world’s need, and who, because of [her] vision . . . stood ready to devote herself to the needs of humanity.”

In fact, Alfreda grasped the logical implication of our preconscious experience of unity and vigorously espoused in her writings and her group research efforts the unity of *humanity*. She was an outspoken advocate of the idea that we co-exist in a social fabric that crosses all symbolic boundaries of nationality, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc. She was in the truest sense of the word a humanitarian.

Barbara Redmond:

After writing to her daughter, I felt I had no more words to say except that Alfreda was wonderful and she remains so in the minds and hearts of all of us.

Philip Woollcott:

I am terribly saddened by Alfreda’s death. Few people are so dedicated, so committed to their work as Alfreda was to Burrow and to The Lifwynn Foundation.

Despite a hiatus in the 70’s, I have been involved with Alfreda, Hans and The Lifwynn group since 1968, and have always found it highly stimulating intellectually. But more than that, it always warmed my heart to visit there. I feel privileged and grateful to be a part of things, and in it all Alfreda was central.

“Using examples from dreams, poetry, and religion, Burrow illustrates the deep sense of confluence and unity that also informs human life. Familiar to many of us is this mood of serenity and quiet that may suddenly be there as we stop to gaze at the sunset, say, or listen to solemn music in an empty church...its persistence in memory is a reminder that wholeness is the soil from which we spring.”

Alfreda Galt

Trigant Burrow and the
Laboratory of the “I”

Margaret,
Alfreda
and Jane
circa 1918



Bill & Alfreda
1948