

FOREWORD

On behalf of the Board of Directors of The Murray Bowen Archives Project, I wish to express deep appreciation and gratitude to Clarence Boyd—teacher, consultant and long-time student of Bowen theory—for giving TMBAP permission to publish on its website (www.murraybowenarchives.org) an electronic, serialized version of his remarkable, self-published book, *Commitment to Principles: The Letters of Murray Bowen, M.D.* Online serialization of *Commitment to Principles* is part of TMBAP's long-term effort to make Murray Bowen's archival materials available for study, scholarship and education (or just plain curiosity) to all those throughout the world who might wish to learn about Bowen's remarkable contributions to understanding the human as part of all life on Earth.

We also wish to express our deep appreciation and gratitude to Michael Kerr, M.D. for his permission to include his introduction to the self-published edition of *Commitment to Principles*. Entitled, "The Bowen Letters in Historical Context," Dr. Kerr's introduction offers an essential overview of an extremely critical period in the development and extension of Bowen theory, the founding of the Georgetown University Family Center, and its subsequent evolution as the Bowen Center for the Study of the Family under Dr. Kerr's direction as successor to Dr. Bowen.

Clarence Boyd's personal odyssey toward the understanding of emotional processes from a systems perspective began in the mid-1950s. However, he did not encounter Murray Bowen until the early 1970s, when he began attending Bowen's monthly programs at the Medical College of Virginia, making the three-hour trip to Richmond for several years. Becoming fascinated by the way Bowen thought, Boyd started writing down all of Bowen's questions in an effort to understand how Bowen thought and how he maintained such enduring clarity of thought. Finally, Boyd enrolled in the Special Postgraduate Program of the Georgetown University Family Center from September 1979 to June 1982, where he found his "theoretical home."

After the National Library of Medicine in Bethesda, Maryland opened the L. Murray Bowen Collection to researchers, Boyd submitted a research proposal to NLM, which was accepted. His original plan was to trace the evolution of Bowen's thinking from the Menninger years forward. After encountering the layout of the Collection, however, he decided to focus on the carbon copies of Bowen's original letters to patients, colleagues, students, and persons seeking Bowen's professional advice. Starting in July 2003, Boyd traveled to Bethesda numerous times in order to read the letters at NLM. He finished reading them (1,001 in number) two-and-one-half years later! From the letters, he selected seventy-seven letters for copying and further review and, from these, selected the sixty-one letters included in *Commitment to Principles*.

As the book's title captures, all of the letters set forth principles, prompting Boyd's discerning question as to "how does one stay so focused for such a long period of time without wavering and without getting off track or going sideways rather than forward"? The letters left Boyd with a clear answer—"the only way to get through this life is some kind of focus on responsibility to self. . . . So it was a principle of the importance and necessity for the person to focus on what he or she is going to do about his or her life." Actually, it would be a lifelong effort: to stop, Boyd concludes, would erode one's progress toward understanding more fully the human condition and taking full responsibility for how one acts and lives responsibly.

All of the above is discussed in the interview that *Family Systems Forum* editor, the Rev. Katie Long, did with Clarence Boyd that took place shortly after publication of *Commitment to Principles* in 2008. Rev. Long and Mr. Boyd have kindly given their permission to publish the interview on the TMBAP website, for which the Board and I are deeply appreciative. It provides a superb introduction to Boyd's choice of title for his book and to his own discernment of what it means to engage in a lifelong commitment to principles.

With this Foreword, TMBAP is launching the first of nearly sixty (60) weekly installments of *Commitment to Principles*. The inaugural installment will take readers from the Title page to the Table of Contents and Appreciations and Acknowledgements to three Introductions—Introduction I, “Letters”; Introduction II, “Letter to Dr. Bowen”; and Introduction III, “The Bowen Letters in Historical Context” by Michael Kerr, M.D. The first Chapter of letters (entitled “‘Another Way of Thinking’—The Nature of the Lens”) will complete the inaugural installment.

A Chapter may consist of one letter or a group of letters. For each Chapter, Boyd has written an Introduction, posing questions inspired by his own thinking about the questions and principles Bowen wrote about in the letter or letters. The concluding chapter, entitled “The ‘Erosion’ Letters,” contains a series of sub-chapters. They forcefully bring home that the process of differentiation of self is a lifelong process, without which erosion of self's functioning and erosion of the theory that guides the formulation of the life principles at the core of the process of differentiation inevitably occur.

Within a year, we hope Clarence Boyd's book will be entirely available online. In the hardcopy version, which was self-published, copies of carbon copies of Murray Bowen's letters were used, in part because the cost to transcribe letters was prohibitive, but also because Clarence believed the original documents as written were very powerful. My father typed these letters late at night, when he was able to write freely and words flowed. From my perspective, remembering the many evenings of hearing him type with two fingers, these hand typed letters resonate with meaning.

For the online version, ease of reading is a criterion, and therefore volunteers have stepped forward to help with retyping the copies of the carbon copies and proofing the retyped letters where necessary. To date, they have retyped and proofed all sixty-one letters. It is our hope that the entire publication of *Commitment to Principles* will be online by mid-2017, when you will see the entirety of the collection laid out as Clarence Boyd envisioned them. The Murray Bowen Archives Project welcomes you to the world of Murray Bowen's letters.

Joanne Bowen, Ph.D.

President,

The Murray Bowen Archives Project

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