

Wendel Ray interview

Andrea: So today is... let's see what is it... it's September.

Wendel: October 6th.

Andrea: (laughs) September 6th, 2012. I'll let you go first.

Wendel: Ok great. Well I'm glad to talk with you about the relationship between...I'm more comfortable calling him Dr. Bowen and Dr. Jackson...

Andrea: Perfect.

Wendel: Even though I'm a doctor myself and have been for twenty-five years, I have such regard for these two men, that's why I want to show respect.

Andrea: Yeah.

Wendel: I guess you had asked how did I find myself wanting to talk to Bowen about his relationship with Jackson. Is that correct?

Andrea: Correct.

Wendel: Ok, I'm a psychiatric social worker, which what I mean by that is that I have a master in social work and my mentor in my social work program, a man named Saxon, showed me a film of Jackson working with a family and said that he thought it was the best therapy session that he had seen anyone do, period. And so I borrowed the tape and watched it and studied it and asked Jack Saxon, my teacher at that point, this is 1981, to put a timeframe on it. He didn't have any papers and so he gave me, or no he didn't give me, he loaned me his copies of two lion set of papers that Jackson had published to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Mental Research Institute. That was my first exposure, a mentor of mine showed a film in a class of Jackson conducting what's called the Hill Press Family.

Andrea: Oh I've seen that! Yeah that's beautiful.

Wendel: Because you guys sent me many years later, either Mike did or maybe you did or somebody did. It was a very pristine copy of that series of the Hill Press Family interviews Bowen, Jackson, Whitaker and Ackerman and sent me to Jackson, and I had it already but the copy you guys sent me was on DVD and it was really clean, it was a good copy. So anyway, that was my first exposure, somebody who I had regarded for thought so highly of Jackson's work that I just started reading everything that I could find, and once I did that, it led to me to going to MRI. One of the things I did a few years later, I decided to go back and get a doctoral degree and decided to have as my dissertation topic Jackson's work, because he had just basically died, he had died in '68 and people weren't talking about him anymore. And I knew at one point that he was really considered one of the, if not the leading, spokesperson for the family, one of them.

Andrea: Yes.

Wendel: And so I gathered everything Jackson had ever wrote together and in a collection, basically, and went to MRI with the idea of interviewing everybody who had known him and who either had been trained by him or who were colleagues. Anyway, that's how I began on Jackson. In the pursuing of Jackson I kept coming across papers, the people at the MRI at that time, in the early to mid '80s, were all people who had worked with Jackson, so Don Jake and John Leakland, Paul S, Jules Risken were all people that had been prodigies or students of Jackson, and/or colleagues early on the Bates Project and then in the early years of MRI. So John Leakland gave me the basement and I spent, God knows how many hours, listening to old audio recordings, going through old papers and in the process of that I came across some correspondence between, not to say that it was a lot, but correspondence between Bowen and Jackson over a paper that Bowen had just written that became the paper on family that he published in a 1960 book that Jackson edited called the *Ideologies of Schizophrenia* and so I have the draft of that paper that Bowen submitted to that journal, to that book, that was published in '60 and a few correspondences, one of which Jackson just says, "hey, you've got a theory here".

Andrea: (laughs).

Wendel: You should print this, you should publish this, this was early enough, not to say that '60 was early because I'm aware that these men and a few other people were meeting one another informally at conferences mainly at the bar after the meetings where you could quietly whisper to one another that each were secretly seeing families when it was considered so unethical, let us say. I can't believe there was a time, and I know you know this is true, when seeing more than just the individual patient was considered completely unethically.

Andrea: Yes.

Wendel: So the story as it's been handed to me through the telling of it by other people who knew Jackson was a lot of the work happened in ortho-psychiatry as an example: conferences in the bar after the meetings where people would talk.

Andrea: Right.

Wendel: So with that information and with my desire to... I was already in the process, I had already interviewed a lot of people. I would read Jackson's papers, every time I ran across a name I would find out if they were still living and I would contact them and ask them if they knew Jackson and if they'd be willing to speak and what amazed me was how readily people were willing to do that, they said, "absolutely" I cannot think of one person that I contacted that didn't almost automatically (say yes), it was like magic, I would say "I'm doing research on Don Jackson, I understand that you knew one another, do you have some time, I'd like to speak with you?" and they'd pick up the phone, Bowen did that! When I called, I called the Center thinking that I was going to get a secretary and they were going to take down my name and tell me to write a letter, that was what I was anticipating and within just moments I was on

the phone talking to Dr. Bowen. When someone asked me “to what does this pertain to?” and I would say, “well I’m a doctoral student and I’m doing research on Don Jackson and I understand that there was relationship between he and Dr. Bowen, I would like to set up a meeting to speak with him...” “Just a moment!” and here I get Bowen on the phone talking to me. That became common. Because no one knew me, very few people know who I am but they knew who Don Jackson was and at least within that circle and that ended up Bowen asking me, “why don’t you come up, I’d absolutely like to talk to you, come up” and that’s when I came up in 1989, I think it was ’89, and that’s when he had his whole entourage, you remember that Bowen at that time... he didn’t have many more months to live and you guys were literally following him around with a recorder as I remember it. Or somebody was.

Andrea: Yes. That would be me.

Wendel: This was the old center not the new one, before you guys had moved...

Andrea: Yeah, he died before the new center opened.

Wendel: I see, well then it was set in a small conference room and cameras rolling. Bowen was sitting there smoking a cigarette, which cracked me up. And we had our talk.

Andrea: And that’s a two-hour video taped talk.

Wendel: It is. That you guys made, you sent it to me. I had an audio recorder with me and I do have...(undecipherable)...meeting with the audio recording that I made. But it’s funny. Mark it down I will send you a copy of that. Surely it’s somewhere in your archive it’s just, in the scheme of things, it’s a small moment in time. But anyway, I was just impressed with how deferential the entire staff was, you were busy people and Mike Kerr is a busy man and yet he didn’t want to miss an opportunity to hear whatever came out of Bowen’s mouth, basically. So anyway with a man like that, Bowen with that kind of stature, with people showing that kind of regard and difference to him, takes time out of his life to talk to me about his colleague, Jackson, that impressed me.

Andrea : He used to talk about Jackson as being the only other person he thought of, of the people who were originally interested in family therapy, who was at all interested in a theory of human behavior...

Wendel: That’s right.

Andrea: ...and he saw Jackson as being very unique in this. I think he somehow understood what Jackson was really heading toward, and he said that if he had lived long enough he would have developed a theory about communication.

Wendel: I’m absolutely certain of it. Jackson wrote a lot of papers, he co-authored or authored seven books and he died at 48. He was not mysterious, he did his best as clearly as he could, in prose, wrote down what he thought and published them, 130 or so papers, maybe 140, some where in there. Some very trivial, some very profound papers and so in reading (them we realize) he absolutely was developing, refining, more and more refining a communication theory, I guess, of behavior, of human

behavior, so in that sense I think Bowen was dead-on. That was right slap in the heart of doing that when he died. He really went a long way. Once upon a time Mike Kerr busted my bubble, I was so excited with this idea, I thought it was novel what I had come up with. I wanted to write a paper and I still might some day, called the "How and the What of Family". I was taken, and I realized it at the time... (undecipherable) was false and I knew that then, but I was saying...I said this to Mike once, if I can remember it, we had a conversation actually at a bar as a matter of fact. What I said was, "I see Bowen as the what and all of his differentiation work, mapping out triangles, the eight basic concepts of his theory as really exquisitely laying out what and Jackson, in his communication angle or lens was finding a language to describe the how. Now I thought it was just eloquent, but Michael said, "now wait a minute, Bowen does what and how" and my whole fantasy just popped (laughs).

Andrea: I wouldn't let that stop you myself because I think Jackson was focused on something different than what Bowen focused on. But Bowen did have a how: how to be a self, how to make contact with people in the emotional system. He had those kinds of hows but he didn't have the how as to the language, other than to say: staying in the "I" position, blaming others, there are some general things about language. 'You should' and all of that, which is blaming, shaming which isn't going to work. But I think he saw in Jackson something deeper, where he didn't go which is this double bind, the schizophrenic.

Wendel: See that was another thing, the early writings of the communication group which was Bateson, Jackson, Haley and Leakland, they were just trying to come up with the words to try to describe the transaction they were seeing repeatedly in the interactions of the people they happened to be talking to, and it happened to be that they were mainly talking to men who had been diagnosed as schizophrenic and their parents, or their family. Rather rapidly they pulled away, they moved past the...even in the first paper they moved toward schizophrenia, you can easily read it as somehow seeing the mother doing something to the child, that way of reading what they wrote really didn't reflect what they thought or did or wrote about at the time, they had moved way past that into forming the whole concept of the double bind, the elements of it. Once it gets started it has a life of its own, so there's no, it's your imposing of the...(undecipherable)...imposing an arbitrary starting point; to say, the mother is doing this to the child, you see...

Andrea: Yes.

Wendel: They wrote about a bit about it, the members of that team: Bateson, Jackson, Haley, Leakland and Bill Fry, can't forget Bill Fry, wrote a lot of papers about that kind of thing, pretty early on. I think one of the things that impresses me about Bowen is... by the way I teach in a masters program in family theory here at a small university that I teach at and these are required readings. Bowen is required reading here, Jackson is required reading here so is Bateson so is Haley, Leakland and when you read Bowen he is

just... I love the way this man unpacks the reasoning behind his suggestions for what a therapist should do in working with a person, it's so consistent with his theory. I love that. I like that kind of being a scientist, he was a scientist. I think that's something that he and Jackson shared too, a scientist in the best use of the word, they were curious, they didn't allow themselves to be lulled or fooled by the hypothesis that didn't hold up under scrutiny so I do think there was some kind of kindred something. You know there is some kind of another recording and I can't remember who sent it to me...oh yes, now I do, there was a psychiatrist who in the early days named Fred Ford, who's dead now...

Andrea: I kind of remember Fred Ford, he kind of did video and stuff...

Wendel: Yes. Well I had a nice interview with Fred about Jackson and he sent me a really bad quality audio cassette copy of the part of a seminar that happened at an ortho-psychiatry conference in 1973, I think that's right, it was '73, Jackson died in January of '68, anyway at this panel, Bowen's on it and he's like the head of it and their talking about, somehow or another, I don't think it was the intent or subject but the room was full of people who knew Jackson and everyone was still reeling just a few years after his death. From his death. So they had a really nice conversation and it was mainly led by Bowen. So anyway Ford sent me that recording, which I still have, though the quality's just horrible, you really have to strain, I spent many hours with ear phones to make the transcript, I have the transcript of it and if you're interested, I'll send that to you.

Andrea: Yeah, that would be interesting to have too, definitely.

Wendel: It's been a while since I read it or listened to it but as I recalled Bowen said that he saw Jackson as a pretty undifferentiated person who in his personal life had just great difficulties with his wife and so forth. There's some information that I have about Jackson's personal life, I interviewed his wife multiple times, she's still alive although she's very, very old and his daughter and I actually eventually got to interview his son. He has two children, Paige, the daughter I know very well, well I don't want to exaggerate, but we have a very frequent and good rapport when we do talk. She's very supportive of the archive. His son Scott was 14 when he died and it was so sensitive the relationship that I was basically blocked from talking to him, probably for the first 15 years that I knew him. I have since talked to him, we've since had a couple really nice conversations but anyways, now I'm rambling here. But I'm think about what Bowen said about Jackson being pretty emotionally... one might even say low on the differentiation scale, accurately, the way Bowen was characterizing it, but that it was amazing the degree to which he shined, and maybe the reason he did so extraordinarily well in his professional life was that he knew what schizophrenia came from, basically.

Andrea: That's another great mind like that is Harry Stack Sullivan who had a few breakdowns...

Wendel: Oh yes, I've studied. I've spent my whole career studying Sullivan and Jackson was one of his protégées, Jackson studied under him.

Andrea: Bowen had a supervisor named Hill, Dr. Hill, was also a protégée of Sullivan's and Hill was the guy who mentioned to Bowen, 'you've got like a multi generational thing going on here' (laughs). I think Jackson contributing to Bowen's knowledge that: you've got enough information and ideas here to make a theory about human behavior and Hill saying, 'it's a multi generational process' and Bowen was quick to give credit to people who really had influenced him and helped him developed his ideas. Another one is Walter Toman who he thought had really helped him develop the whole concept of sibling position.

Wendel: Right.

Andrea: There was something very special about Jackson. I remember that I had heard at some meeting or another gossip that Jackson committed suicide and maybe when you were coming I said something about that, 'didn't Jackson commit suicide?'. The low level (laughs) and he slammed his hand on the table and he said "Jackson never committed suicide,! He wasn't that kind of person."

Wendel: Are you talking about Bowen?

Andrea: Yeah, that's what Bowen said, and he slammed his hand on the table and said, "no way did Jackson ever! That's pure gossip and why are you repeating gossip" I mean he really kind of came after me about that.

Wendel: Listen, let me tell you I can't tell you the number of people, it happens less now, but I can't tell you the number of people when I go give talks about Jackson which is pretty frequent, they always want to know: did he killed himself. To which I say, "your guesses are as good as mine but that's not really true." I knew him better than most because I have studied it and studied it, and studied it.

Andrea: I mean there are a lot of tell tale signs of people who threaten and want to commit suicide and there's a different tone to the whole thing when you overdose on pills, or whatever.

Wendel: Exactly. I think if Jackson did it, it was an unintended. Some while back some analyst told me that they talk in terms of intended, subintended and unintended suicide and Jackson does not fall in the intended group at all. I think the guy, I think he may have overestimated his... I know he was taking sleeping pills and I know he was taking some drink with them and I think that caught up with him and I really think it's as simple as that. I don't think there was anything intentional about it but there are people like his wife, now again I'm talking about interviews I did with her 20 years ago, who was so emotionally...his second wife's name was Angie... and she was so emotionally upset, it was such an emotionally charged subject that we couldn't have the conversation: what happened to Don that he died, that's what I'm referring to.

Andrea: Right

Wendel: In the interview that I was doing with her and she got so angry, she got really angry that I didn't want her to throw me out of the house so I pulled away from the subject and talked about something else but it was that emotionally charged as a subject 25 years after he had died. And she had remarried and

although I did the interview with her in the home that she and Jackson shared when they had split up, for about a year and half before he died, and she was living in the house with the kids, and they still owned that home when I did this interview so many years later.

Andrea: It's pretty fascinating when you think about even the idea that you communicated various levels and that what is known to you on one level is not known to you on another level and this has to do with the fusion between your intellect and your feeling system and that's how Bowen thought about it that your feelings were fused to the thinking system and therefore you could spin these more rational stories while underneath this other turmoil existed which you might reveal in body language, for instance.

Wendel: Right, see, those kinds of thinking that you just described, Bowen and Jackson were exactly on the same page. You could have been telling me what you read that Jackson had said.

Andrea: Exactly.

Wendel: It would have been exactly the same thing, he talks about levels of knowing, of understanding, ones that you know, ones that you know you know, ones that you know but you don't let yourself know that you know (laughs) and the fusion of intellect and emotion, that's very useful as far as I'm concerned, I think it's explanatory in the best sense.

Andrea: Well I think he sort of saw this early on in in the Menninger days when he did this regression research and allowed people to regress because he didn't want love with a demand put on to these patients. From seeing the way that the patients reacted with their families when they saw them once again when they had been separated for many years and had lived in this clinic far away from their families and when the families came back the parents were asked to take care of these patients in a cottage on the grounds there in Menninger.

Wendel: Ok.

Andrea: And what he called it was: smother love. That it was love with a demand that you do something for me, which is more or less hidden or concealed in the "I really love you" message. He brought this out to challenge the Freudian way of seeing things as it was the hostile rejecting mother that created the harm and Bowen said it wasn't really that that lead to this deep slide into symptoms but rather the difficulty of perceiving this love with a demand. When the staff stop making any demands, not even telling the person when to go to bed or when to eat or anything, they would regress and then they would come out of this regression, he said, and be more, not quite adult, but be more like a self-oriented, responsible person rather than a seeker of tell me what to do from the environment demanding that the mother get into this 'smother mother' position. He kind of put that all as fusion that same kind of fusion that selves have towards one another. The mother, child and father is involved in that too, you don't really know who you are or where you begin or end and where the other one begins or ends and of course after a death people wonder whether or not they've acted in all the correct ways, were they

compassionate enough, did they give the double bind to the person, what did they do. I can see why many, many years later people are still confused about that and people are still confused about a lot of things that Bowen did, they don't really get what he was doing when he wrote all those letters to his family and they say he was a manipulator and my answer to that is to say, 'well everyone manipulates, you can do it spontaneously or you can figure out the way that you think might be more useful for you and maybe for your family and try to move yourself into that direction' or as Bowen used to say, "fake it 'til you make it" (laughs). Pretend to be a little more grown up than you are, which has been one of my favorite things to do.

Wendel: I blame Michael but it may not have been him. One of you from the Bowen center sent me a recording of Bowen's 1967 presentation at EPPI Eastern Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute in Philadelphia. It's a meeting of all the people that were in family study at the moment and part of it is his presentation that got written out in one of the papers that Bowen wrote where he makes a presentation of the letter that he would go back and forth with his mother and brother and his trips home to Tennessee and it was somewhere in there that Bowen says that his mother said, "stop reading between the lines" and Bowen says, "stop writing between the lines". Do you remember that? (Laughs).

Andrea: Yes (laughs).

Wendel: I loved that. It's such a loaded, thought provoking utterance that I played that just for students. I have them read that paper and then I have them write a paper about that paper, it's one of my favorites, I swear, Bowen was doing something. He saw family; he saw dynamics and acted accordingly.

Andrea: And damned the consequences (laughs).

Wendel: And damn the consequences, yes, that's true. But you know I think there's a hopefulness in that.

Andrea: Yes, because you're outside of the system, you're not being incorporated into it, you're somewhat free, you're a new entity.

Wendel: Yes, and it's in your modeling of it, you're showing others that it's possible, I mean I just think there's a lot to be learned from that.

Andrea: There is and I'm trying to finish my first book in English. I wrote a book and it was translated into Spanish in '09 and I thought it was just a little too much mushy and loose to be in English and it's taken me all this time.

Wendel: What's the name of the book?

Andrea: It's called *Create Your Mindful Compass, Navigating Through The Social Jungle*.

Wendel: Oh my.

Andrea: So it's about....

Wendel: I think English readers would love something like that...

Andrea: I hope so, it should be done in the next month or so, I'll have it up on the Amazon. I'm hoping that it'll be useful to people but it takes that long to simplify your message, it's a long term process to really comprehend what an emotional system is, how you're caught in it, and how you might get outside of it. I think Jackson saw what the emotional system was and he could describe it but he couldn't get outside of it...

Wendel: I think that may be what Bowen was alluding to when he said he didn't think that he was a particularly emotionally individuated person. I don't know how I feel...

Andrea: But he could observe and he could see and he could do...

Wendel: Oh absolutely, and he could describe and could act with a client in a way that helped them...

Andrea: 'Get out'.

Wendel: Yeah, 'get out' but I think he himself was...I don't know the right word... a wreck. But actually I don't want to trivialize it or protect him because I don't think he needs protection but I also don't want to reduce Jackson to some caricature that he was this or he was that. He had an extraordinary range of things that he was interested in and writing about and doing...

Andrea: He was brilliant, like a genius guy. I guess you go back again to Sullivan to just think about Sullivan a little bit here, that was another genius level guy who could describe the excruciating way in which people pin each other down and he could also describe how if you're willing to be authentic, genuine, real, whatever that was, but he believed that by being more himself, not being in the discipline of the transference and the counter transference thing, whatever, that you could deal better with anxiety in real time rather doing it through the transference thing.

Wendel: I think that's right.

Andrea: And so he could a little bit get himself out of the problems that he got into. Another one is Nash, who won the Nobel prize for game theory he also could see these voices and things that were going on in the feeling system as not him, as not true, and he could separate out from that to a limited extent and survive. I think Bowen is the first person to ever really describe the one, two, three, four steps that you take you take over, and over, and over again to get out of this fusion with others and it could cost you your life trying to get out, there's no guarantee here that this is going to be...it's a lot safer to sit in the psychoanalytic office and free-associate for twelve years or so than to take a stand with your mother and talk to her about why are you writing between the lines (laughs).

Wendel: That's right, that's right. I think that Bowen, the very fact that he lived as long as he did, productively, as far as I know from an outside observer's eye, Bowen died on the way to work. The guy worked until he wasn't breathing anymore and that to me is something remarkable good about that.

Andrea: He was an observer until the very end of his life, he just saw everything that was going on. His wife told me when he was dying, he would say, "now I'm going through this stage and now I'm going

through that stage" (laughs). Even in psychoanalysis they have this concept of the objective observer, the observing ego, the part of yourself that is able to see and be neutral and describe objectively what is going on, and I think somehow he had a tremendous skill in that direction to be an observer and I think that's also what Jackson had to be that observer but to put some understanding to what he saw. The other person, and maybe I'll get your viewpoint on Bateson in just a little bit here, because Bateson just sort of walked away from MRI saying, "ok well that's fine that we've discovered this and that but I don't want to help people and try to help schizophrenics and I want to try to understand more about this way of learning. How can you figure out what the message is that your mother is really sending you? Or the dolphin trainer? And how can you be free in discovering that?" And so he went out to do that work with the dolphins which was in my mind just amazing, amazing work.

Wendel: Well about Carl Bateson and I spent a lot of time...he was another one of my favorite hobbies professional, hobbies of reading him, thinking about his work, talking to people who knew him, he has three children. The son I don't know at all, but Mary Catherine his oldest daughter from his marriage to Margaret Mead, I know. Nora Bateson, who is his youngest daughter from... my gosh I can't believe I can't remember... from Lisa...I can't remember, I'm blanking on Bateson's third wife...

Andrea: I don't remember either.

Wendel: It starts with an L though (laughs) Anyways, I know Nora really well, and Bowen from my understanding of what he did resonates with what you describe Bowen doing when he did that experiment at Menninger's and observing if there was an motive or any ulterior agenda... I don't know the right word to use... involved in helping a person that that doesn't help the person and the more that Bowen got the staff or whomever or observed the staff when they would interact with the patient and not in order to get the patient to do something but just to accept the person as best they are. That I think goes a long way in understand of Bateson's decisions and actions after he left Palo Alto. When the research project, and there were four in a row, ran out of steam, in about 1961, Jackson invited Bateson to continue at the MRI, the MRI was founded in late 1958 and Haley joined him, Leakland part time, join him, Bill Fry did but Bateson came with...Louse, Louse was his wife's name, Louse Bateson. Bateson came as a consultant and the story as it's been passed to me, well to others and I'm one, is that he just got so tired of observing how inhuman we could be with one another as people that people that he didn't want to study people anymore. He went to study octopuses, any mammal other than a human being (laughs) is what he wanted to study because he was very interested in how they communicated to one another, utterly convinced about the communicative phenomenon and so first it was octopi and then it was to Hawaii where he got a little money, or got hired basically, to study dolphins but that's what it was. He wanted to be able to observe, without intruding, how people communicate, or how mammals, I suppose, of the same species communicate with one another. To me that rings of what Bowen was looking at in

those in those early Menninger studies of what you were just describing a minute ago. There's something to be learned if you could just keep out of it and again in it enough so what you could see and observe and even check your emotional reactivity and they wrote about that; Bateson writes about that, Leakland wrote about that, the importance of holding, to the degree that you can, not imposing, allowing yourself... especially if you're not aware that you're doing it... imposing your emotional subjectivity and then calling it objectivity.

Andrea: Yeah, that's always a good trick.

Wendel: That was a big topic of conversation in the early MRI years and when Jackson was still alive and later probably throughout the entire Bateson team era which was '52 to '61 and it was an overlap there so anyway that's how I see Bateson. I see Bateson as... and that's what I mean by pure scientist by the way... earlier what I was trying to say was that something I thought Bowen and Jackson shared was that they were scientists. They really had a sense of how easy it is to find yourself in something and not realizing it and the moment that happens how that just changes everything, I'm being careful with the words I choose to use.

Andrea: Well it's true. Two things: one is the whole world of family therapy, of course, you're getting paid to diagnose people so if you're neutral in the room with them for an hour or so and then they walk out now you need write to the insurance company and tell them all the things that are wrong with them (laughs). That's a double bind so you can't really maintain a neutrality if you have to label people and describe their pathology, that's pretty heavy. The other point is how much does this neutral observing, which is a different state than what Bowen did when he wrote those letters to his mother, that wasn't really neutral observing, he was neutral and observed the system enough to figure out how to probe it, how to manage himself in it, how to self regulate in it so that he wasn't...I don't like to use the word a victim but it's such a great word. You're like a puppet on a string so the family does things and you dance to their tune. He did do something, and what Bateson did and this was what I was getting to that fascinated me was when he had the two dolphins and the one dolphin was very intelligent and she figured out, which was what Bateson's hypothesis was, that if you don't disturb the situation, this dolphin could figure out why that trainer is not throwing fish for all these tricks for a long time for many years he's been throwing the fish to me when I do this and then when I do that and I get no fish. He finally figured out what the trainer wanted or maybe he just stumbled upon it by accidentally doing something new and he got a fish and so then that first dolphin made, I don't remember how many new behaviors, but maybe 30 some new behaviors that he had never seen in captivity, tricks that they'd never seen.

Wendel: That's right.

Andrea: But then the second dolphin was stupid and couldn't catch on and got severely depression and swan around in little circles and put it's head down and then Bateson's interfered and he had the person

throw fish for no reason at all, so that just for nothing; the kid's depressed and you go in and you give him five bucks for no reason and the kid says, "well why'd you do that?" "I don't know" (laughs).

Wendel: This has been written about in terms of learning and learning how to learn and along those lines. I have heard it described as the dolphin that started getting very excited and started to swim rapidly and the next thing you know he has performed X number of new behaviors that had not been previously seen, it has been characterized by some as having an "ah ha!" of not learning, but learning how to learn with the reinforcement contingencies of this other entity, not throwing fish when they in past did. That's a fascinating piece of literature by Bateson.

Andrea: I think so.

Wendel: It gets you closer to what he was talking about when he was talking about learning and learning how to learn, he called it...

Andrea: The funny part was that they became more childlike in adolescences and the trainers couldn't stand that they were always doing all these unexpected things (laughs).

Wendel: What this folds back into is something that Bateson said a lot and Jackson; they had a little slightly different ways of saying it, but they said essentially the same thing, this is about: who am I in relation to you, this is defining the nature of the relationship. And these transactions that go on, that's what Jackson was absolutely in the heart of doing, of approaching people on the basis of what you could observe happening between them as though it was message, about what? About who I am in relation to you and out of that emerges redundancies and repetitions and so forth that it is almost as if they're following rules.

Andrea: Absolutely.

Wendel: And then his therapy was about getting rid of that and the therapist acting in a way that those rules had to change and he really was... I wish that he had...Well, I wish that Bowen had written more. I wish Jackson had lived long enough to write a book about just that. The way I would hope that Murray Bowen would have, because all Murray's got, and not to trivialize it at all, is his collected papers in the first book, and then Mike Kerr he has that epilogue of Mike's, unless there's stuff that I don't know about. I just wish that Bowen...I just want more, I always want more. But then again I need to get in and reread and study like crazy the papers that are in Bowen's book, because he probably did say everything he wanted to.

Andrea: Well, I don't know who among us has said everything we wanted to and the way we wanted to say it. I don't know if Bowen could come back what he would say that he didn't get to say, my take on him was that he was a researcher, he set certain things up to see what would happen, he was curious about the human condition, I think he thought that he had written enough that people could figure stuff out like he figured stuff out, if they wanted to and if they didn't want to....

Wendel: I think that's right.

Andrea: And if they didn't want to, well that was the way it was going to be. He put certain fish (laughs) in people's cars and maybe in their suitcases and who knows and maybe in their coffee cups. If Gregory Bateson, and Don Jackson, and Murray Bowen were to convene a little talk today what would they all say to each other, would they all be tricking each other and busting rules right and left. (laughs) What would it all end up being, who knows. But it would be three people who enjoyed thinking about the way people related to one another and how we get to be the people that we are because of these relationships that we formed with one another. And then what do you want to do about that as to the future. So I don't know more than that, I know I feel I learn a tremendous amount from history, I can't prove it so I have to say it's a feeling or maybe I can say it's a belief, maybe I can say it's faith, but the more I do study people's lives who have really contributed something original to human behavior, the more I think I understand and that's somehow very satisfying to me. There's one way of learning which is to set up a research thing and do observe and another way of learning which is to filter the ideas of people who've gone before you and to try to more deeply comprehend what it was that they were trying to communicate. So that's what I'm trying to do.

Wendel: I think you and I are in the same frame here.

Andrea: Yes.

Wendel: It isn't merely... I'm not so ... how do I want to say this... it was almost nothing to do with Jackson and his personal life or whatever it has something to do with how much I get out of listening to his recording, thinking about why would he say that, the way he said it, when he said it, and who was in the room when he said it, what were the troubles they were having, I'm talking about audio recordings mainly. We have Jackson working with families which are just astonishing, can I tell you about one?

Andrea: Yeah! Let's put the date to it because I want to put that in to the earliest time when Jackson recorded families was in the 50s.

Wendel: About '55 is the earliest surviving recording, I'm sure there were other recordings but the earliest surviving recording of Jackson was 1955. You know I'm getting feedback somehow that I wasn't getting earlier.

Andrea: I don't know, is that better?

Wendel: That is better.

Andrea: I was too close to the microphone, that's all.

Wendel: When I hear myself echo I say uh oh (laughs)....

Andrea: I had the phone too close to the recorder, yeah.

Wendel: I see, well the earliest recording from the Bateson team era is really one of John Lealand working in or conducting what's called a structured family, a structured interview. They had a particular

protocol they would use when they would interview patients in the VA Hospital. The earliest recording out of the Bateson team recordings was actually John Leakland and the next is Jackson and so I think that's just a matter of what recordings actually survived and it isn't so much that there weren't other recordings. They were poor and they would record over the older recordings when they ran out of tapes. Anyway, and then John Leakland, thank God for John, because John was a cultural anthropologist and he basically put everything into a boxes and put them into the closet and then passed them on to me just before he died. He passed them on to my care to put into the archives, and so that's why we have the recordings to begin with. But anyway, what I wanted to describe for you was that Jackson is working with this mother and father who come to get a second opinion from him. This is 196...let me think about this, you know what I'm about to tell you could be wrong, but I think it's late 1964, early 1965, there's a total of about five or six sessions that were recorded and that survived. They came to Jackson because they had just been seen so they brought their fourteen year old son to a psychiatrist and the psychiatrist said that he's destined to be a criminal and that he was basically hopeless, the boy is hopeless. Everything indicated that he was borderline personality, oppositional defiant before they used those words to describe children to an extreme and at best he might be able to help the kid if he could have him in years of individual therapy but it didn't look too good. And so that upset the mother and father and somehow someone referred them to Jackson to get a second opinion and in their describing of their son they characterized him as quote another Lee Harvey Oswald, ok? And they're scared, they're totally scared... they've been told by experts that this kid is going to go out and shoot somebody like Oswald killed Kennedy. So with that first interview, there is a total of five one-hour interviews and the first interview it's Jackson talking with the mother and the father about the kids, giving basically a history using many of the what would become standard initial questions that he would ask others, out of which the responses would give him information about their interaction, the nature of their interaction, the way they interact, so he would ask a lot of things like, 'out of all the billions of people in the world how did the two of you meet?' It doesn't even matter how they're described, it isn't even what they say, it's how they say what they say, who talks, how the other qualifies it and it's through watching that dynamic, that's one of Jackson's assessment tools, basically. Anyway, he does an hour interview with them, tempers this hopelessness a little. The second interview is with them and the boy and his two siblings, mainly because Jackson at around the same time wrote about how he thought the kid was already being pulled out and focused on too much, the IP, the Identified Patient, so he would rather see the whole family and try to temper that or see how it plays and then act in such ways to moderate that or modify that, focusing too much on the kid. The long and short of it is over five, about fifty minute long, because you know in our line of work an hour is fifty minutes...

Andrea: Yeah.

Wendel: In five fifty minute long interviews Jackson completely shifts how this family behaves and their no longer focusing on the kid, he's no longer failing in school, he's got friends, it's just extraordinary the changes, how this kid blossoms. The mother and father are going off together on a weekend jaunt, different things to do and their working out their own business with each other, very much more "I" position, to translate the shift into Bowen's use of language, way with one another rather than this pseudo emotionally reactive fused stuff that was resulting in this kid basically going down the toilet, being flushed almost. But what's extraordinary about is that he does that in five sessions and he sees that the kid, the one that he identified, the one that everyone says is so messed up, I think he saw him in no more than three, and I want to say two, of the total five interviews. Most of the therapy was done with the mother and father and getting them to behave differently with one another and in term in handling the children. And this wasn't every week, this was maybe of the course of three or four months that he saw them. If I could package that, if I could accurately, in a compelling way, that people actually could see the value of being able to understand the nature of family process so that you could help people behave differently in that way and the kid is free from a life of being labeled diagnostically as some beyond help diagnosed peg and headed to prison. I just think that that's what this whole thing is about. I'm in business of trying to teach masters level student and PhD people how to be good clinicians, that's my main thing, that's what I teach, and how do you do it. Bowen could do it too, that's the extraordinary... Do you know that...well I know that you probably do know that that tape that you loaned me of Bowen, where he's working with that hospitalized women at the Menninger foundation. She is completely beside herself with her upset-ness. She is almost incomprehensible she's so anxious and Bowen just sits there for the longest time, I bet you the first twenty minutes maybe more of that therapy, of that tape, he doesn't say a thing. He just sits there and listens. Listens and then the first thing out of his mouth, this is just as I remember, I wish I had asked to have a copy because I would love to study this interview, so I have to go on recollection, but as I remember the first thing he says is something to the effect of, "you have been so mistreated..." no, no, how do I want to say this..."your life has been so difficult, can you do anything to take care of yourself?" something to that effect, I can't remember the exact words. When he first finally speaks he's gentle and he says something about how her life has been a life of giving to others and has she ever been able to give to herself or something along those lines. The women almost chokes. You could hear palpably although it's an old audio recording, you can hear the effect of those words on her, positively, not negatively, so that by the end of the interview I think Bowen is off and running with this women not by focusing on her limitations or whatever but focusing on how deprived she has been, having spent a life taking care of others. I see, myself, similarities between that adroit handling by Bowen of this women and Jackson adroit handling of this couple.

Andrea: Absolutely. They both did not read the system and respond the way normal people would respond.

Wendel: That's right.

Andrea: They somehow were able to see how the system is wound up and to take a position in relationship to it that sets the other one free, so you get free. It's like the ad where the oxygen mask drops and first the adults get the oxygen and then the other patients (laughs).

Wendel: I can see that. They say first get yourself on the oxygen mask, then help the others.

Andrea: Get yourself neutral in it, it might take you to listen twenty minutes before you can be neutral and be outside the system and relate to it. It is such a paradox to be able to really connect when you're outside rather than...and I'm sure you've seen and hear this from other people, they say 'why don't you believe me, you've got to believe me, this and that and the other thing happened', you say, 'I believe that you believe that that happened but (laughs) I'm not sure how that's really helping you for me to believe what you believe'. But so many people want that fusion, that thing, that connection that drags everyone down into the dungeon...ugh God. But it's fabulous to walk through the forest of ideas with you like this and think about these men who were able to see this and take these kinds of steps that no one else had ever taken. I mean when you think about it how amazing, such a long leap from the transference relationship to be able to do these kind of actions for self, even though you're a therapist you're really taking an action for self in a way by asking people how things function and then giving them some feedback on it, it's amazing.

Wendel: It is amazing, some of these days I don't know, and you may not be interested in this but I think this would be an interesting presentation somewhere. To juxtapose... I like how you said it...it might take you twenty minutes to gain your composure and get up and manage yourself and really give consideration before you actually open your mouth and speak, the way Bowen did with that women in that interview. And Jackson in essence does the same thing, he doesn't just jump in, period. When he does enter in, he usually enters in asking questions, from almost a naïve way... 'I don't know who I'm talking to'. You can feel or hear in these two examples we have the absolutely advantage of it being an audio recording not a video recording because video to me is almost overwhelming, the amount data that I'm trying to process as I'm looking at it. There's the advantage of these being audio recordings that requires the viewed to attend, basically to that silence. I don't know how long it was, it might have been five minutes, I'm just remembering it as longer, I don't think so, I think it was a very long time before Bowen actually said something and I don't think that that is just him sitting there and doing nothing. I think it has to do with getting your bearing and listening intensively and having and watching the women say what she's saying, and how is she saying what she's saying and thinking about all of that, in light of what he knows about her life situation. I just think there's a lot going on there.

Andrea: A lot.

Wendel: For them to be able to from that point, when they do speak, speak in the manner that they speak is just thick with knowledge, I would even go as far to say since I'm talking about someone else: wisdom. Whatever they say is almost like an experiment to see how its received and is it going to push things to a less resourceful direction or more resourceful direction. I'd like to do that.

Andrea: It would be fascinating. We've talked believe it or not, an hour and forty-one minutes (laughs) and so much fun.

Wendel: Listen, I have really enjoyed speaking to you, that's true.

Andrea: That's true, me too. I don't find many people as obsessed as I am with the history of family therapy (laughs).

Wendel: I'm failing at this but I'm trying to get people to not to think about it as history, I talk about it as theory. Theory is alive and we just happen to have captured these moments in time when you can almost hear the theory being born.

Andrea: I love it, that's a beautiful way to put it.

Wendel: I even don't like the word archives because to me it implies a dead audio knowledge when this is anything but dead, this is everything to do with theory. This is everything to do with humans and a couple of guys who devoted their lives to watching their own species closely, closely.

Andrea: That's fantastic. Well I will make a copy of this for you. What is your mailing address?

Wendel: I have your email address I will email you my mailing address.

Andrea: Ok perfect.

Wendel: And I'll get this DVD in the mail.

Andrea: Ok, perfect. We'll think about what's next.

Wendel: Ok, great. Well listen, good luck on your project.

Andrea: Thank you Wendel. Appreciate that.

Wendel: Are you still at the Bowen Center?

Andrea: I am over here at the Learning Space in Washington now so I'm with two of my colleagues Priscilla Friesen and Kathy Wiseman from the Bowen Center. We're still involved with the Bowen Center but we have our own little group over here in D.C.

Wendel: I see.

Andrea: I was just over at the Bowen Center today looking at the tapes, like I told you at the APA. Alright, so I'm going to get back with you and I look forward to, as Bateson might say, continuing the conversation (laughs).

Wendel: (Laughs) Very good. Ok.

Andrea: Ok talk to you then.

Wendel: Have a good evening.

Andrea: Ok you too, bye!