

Interview of G. Mary Bourne, MSW
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Transcript by Luisa V. Cannon

Priscilla Friesen: Friesen
G. Mary Bourne: Bourne
Andrea Schara: Schara

Friesen: I'm with Mary Bourne in the Hyatt Marriott, following the symposium. So, Mary, these questions are really to guide you into thinking about Bowen the person, Bowen Theory itself – why don't we start with, the first time you met Dr. Bowen.

Bourne: Well I graduated from Social Work School in '71, and then sometime thereafter went to a conference, and Carl Whittaker was talking about different kinds of family theory, family therapies and he said, “I know this person Murray Bowen who can,” “work with a family by seeing only one family member” and he said, “I have no idea how he makes that work.” And he drew a family diagram I think, and so you could just get a little glimmer of how he made that work, and I thought I gotta meet this man. So, the first opportunity I had to meet him at a workshop or conference of some sort was, I think, was '73. And then he said he was thinking of a four-times-a-year program at that time, and I said I want to be in the first one. So, I applied for that and so I did that in '75 and '76. and then I skipped a year [laughter] – which annoyed him, I think he said something to someone about “Oh, I've been going out and doing workshops for her and she doesn't come back.” But I had sort of, first of all it was expensive to do, but besides that I think I reached the point of information overload by that time and sort of needed that vacation to, to think it through. Because for me it was a, – being somewhat a researcher and a great reader myself I think I reached a point where I just, I have to take some time out to think. And so I came back the year after that, and so then it...

Friesen: So...

Bourne: Go ahead, go ahead...

Friesen: I was going to ask you kind of more the idea side of this. So, when you, before you met Dr. Bowen you were, after Social Work School were you interested in family already? What did you bring to the [unclear what Priscilla says as Mary begins to talk].

Bourne: I was interested in family from the day I was born. And, it's a real cutting-off family, in my father's family the cutoffs were, there weren't many of them, but the cutoffs were, would be 40-year cutoffs. In my mother's family they were 20-year cutoffs. So, it, so I knew that something wasn't right in terms of, what now I would call intensity between my mother and me, but I didn't know what to call it then. All I knew was that life was pretty uncomfortable with her, and my father didn't get involved and he was just the nice guy in the background. And I knew that there had to be some way to look at this differently, but I, you know – so I started looking very, very early, I would think the first minute I heard about any kind of Psychology or anything.

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: And then, my husband – I married when I was 21 – and he was, had just started college on the GI Bill, so we got him through college and that gave me the opportunity to read all the books that came through the house [laughter], through college and graduate school, he was a, became a Social Worker. And so, I had read everything that was available on family, everything that the ordinary human being could get hold of, during those years. And then I started college myself when I was thirty, finished when I was forty, and got my degree when I was forty-two in 1971.

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: So, I, there never was a time that I can recall that I wasn't trying to figure out “what goes on here?”. Because the perception from the outside was one, and the perception from the inside, where I was supposed to be so happy with these wonderful parents, who were, you know, why didn't that register with me? [laughter]

Friesen: [laughter] Why didn't you feel it that way? So, let me ask, let's go to that question, which is what is it, what kind of impact did Bowen Theory have in your family, in your thinking of your family?

Bourne: It kept me plugging away at it because that cutoff eventually, by the time I married the cutoff had included me, you know, I was dumped for a period of time and that happened twice with my mother. And so, it kept me working away at it I think, otherwise it was such a tough, it seems to me to be such a tough cutoff because it came from so many places, and it was the easiest thing to do was to walk away, for anybody in, in the family. That was the way you did it, was just to say I don't need you anymore, and then that festers but nevertheless you have, you kid yourself.

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: But it kept me plugging away at it and I said to Dr. Bowen once, I don't understand all these people who say, “I am doing this family work and it's such fun, I really am enjoying meeting all these people.” And then I said “I don't have any energy for that, I have no, I don't understand what they're talking about.” Because I could do it, and I could meet, you know, go out and meet a cousin from the dim distant past or something and have fun doing it, and then I wouldn't do it again. It didn't do for me what others, what it did for other people. So, it was, it was the knowledge that it was valuable, and that always made sense to me, that that was the way to go, to reduce the cutoff and to, you know, all of the pieces that go with Bowen Theory. But I didn't have much energy for it.

Friesen: So, which, how did, so, when you think about your lifetime and the impact Bowen Theory has had, what would you say? Your children and [unclear words as Mary begins to talk].

Bourne: Well, it sounds trite to say, well it saved my life, [laughter] but I mean, but I suspect a lot of people say that, you know. I could not have separated from my mother, enough, and gotten

calm enough to keep on with my own life, with the criticisms that went on, you know. She would say “What is this stuff you do that you call therapy?” You know, and I would try to describe it and she'd say, “Is there anything you think you don't know?” And it'd be sort of like, [laughter] you asked me a question...

[laughter]

Bourne: And I answered it. So, to keep knowing that it made such good sense and that if I can back away and not be wiped out by “is there anything you think you don't know?,” no as a matter of fact, and laugh about it and go on. You know, we had a pretty good working relationship, and, before she died. And when she got made life difficult for my father in the years she had tremendous arthritis and was beginning to see people in the lights in the windows from their apartment you know, and talk to them, that would happen occasionally, and my father would call and sometimes I would wind up talking to her for four hours, to sort of talk her down from some of these things. But he knew I could do it and, she was okay with that and so when, so we had lots of nice, good things going on at that point, but it wasn't like it wasn't like in any way like a friendship kind of relationship. There wasn't anything about it, it, it wasn't like anything either one of us would have wanted by that point.

Friesen: When did she die? What year?

Bourne: '76.

Friesen: So, in the early years really, of your being exposed to Bowen Theory.

Bourne: Yes, I haven't thought about that, that was just that was, only a year later.

[laughter]

Bourne: Well, that was progress.

Friesen: So, it was a long year; it seems like a long year.

Bourne: Yeah, although you know having thought about all of these things, I started probably looking at family therapy with Nathan Ackerman's book, so I hadn't, none of this was beginning thinking on my part, but it didn't have a direction to go until I found Dr. Bowen, and then it just, then you could go.

Friesen: So, when you mentioned that you came to the Georgetown Family Center and he became, he started being invited to go to Minnesota as well? Was that kind of simultaneous or?

Bourne: Yeah, I look back at that and I think how naïve I was [laughter], about a lot of things. I kept thinking “this has gotta be taken back to Minnesota,” I mean I can't just sit here and absorb this. So, I took notes, as, I took them in shorthand and I took notes in a way that would allow me to go back and teach from the notes.

Friesen: So, were you already in a training situation before you went to the Family Center?

Bourne: No.

Friesen: Okay.

Bourne: No, I had, I always said, I have had periods of depression or something, over the years and I always said if I could find a psychiatrist who would let me do my own thinking I would go see someone. And people would, people in the field would say [laughter] “You know that person doesn't exist? [laughter]

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: They'll do your thinking for you. And I didn't want that to happen. So, I think that's when I knew, was that I found people here who could, who could hear me, and then ask questions that I couldn't get out of my head. So, I'd leave here and spend the next three months, six months, years, having those questions ringing in my ears. So, I knew how valuable it was, and then I went back to say to people who were running agencies and “I'm taking this training program and I'd be glad to come and talk to your staff if you're ever interested.” And the answer I would get is “Our staff people go to workshops too.” And, and I was [laughter] enough intimidated by that that I didn't argue with them I don't think. But it was clear that nobody in Minnesota wanted to hear me talk about Bowen Theory, but it would be alright if their staff came out to something but then they would report back. And I figured it would get lost that way. So, then I said to him, probably, probably in '79, '80 – he did come out and do some workshops for me, and in order, he said he would only come out for a prepared audience. [laughter] And I mean I was still in the training program, so I didn't know what a prepared audience meant. I thought, okay, so we'll do a set of three workshops and if they come to my two [laughter], then they're allowed to come to his. [laughter]

Friesen: Yes.

Bourne: So that's how I prepared his audience. And, but I think now how little I must have known by that time. And then he was so then it must have been '79 or something like that, before, just before the aneurysm...

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: I think I came out for a symposium and he, and I took him to lunch and I told him the story about what I'd like to do, I said I'd like to do something that's, that is a copy as much as I could make it of the Georgetown program, and then “you come out and be the central figure, and Mike will come out and teach the theory, and I'll teach what I can teach, and you'll come out and just talk about your latest thinking. You will have no other responsibilities than just to talk to us.” And he sat and looked at his napkin all the while I talked, which was, never looked at me. And [laughter] -- you smile like you, you've had some of those experiences too.

[laughter]

Bourne: And then he said it sounds, I said I'd bring out Georgetown supervisors and so that way we brought out three each time. And he said, "I'll come out four days, I'll come out two days at a time and it needs to be a Sunday and a Monday block of time."

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: And, so we planned the program around him and he was clearly the central figure. And, you know, really the reason a lot of people came there because he was there and played such a central role.

Friesen: So, this was in, the first year was '79? Or '80?

Bourne: That must have been, I would think it was, roughly it was in there and then he came out to do the first thing, I think, in '81, not many months after his surgeries, which surprised me as I looked back and looked at the dates, that he came out very quickly.

Friesen: So then --

Schara: Had he not been out before the surgery?

Bourne: Hmm?

Schara: Had he not been out before the surgery?

Bourne: No, he had not.

Schara: Okay, so, wow.

Bourne: Well, no.

Friesen: No, he had --

Bourne: That's not true, that he was out, I mean he was out there for workshops.

Schara: Right.

Bourne: But --

Schara: The program.

Bourne: The program began...

Schara: Okay.

Bourne: Six months or so after the surgeries.

Friesen: So, did you have an organization established already at this point?

Bourne: No. As soon as we decided – we had a client who said something to us about “If you really would like to do a training center, I’ll find you the money.” And that was a [laughter] that was another, another naïve [laughter] thing on my part as I thought she was going to immediately make that happen, but that took time. And it didn’t ever really, you know – halfheartedly materialize, there were years when we got money and there were years when didn’t. but I don’t know just where we started. Oh, how did that start? It started, with the lady who said...

Friesen: Okay.

Bourne: She would help us with that. And she was very helpful but, helpful as anybody can be with that fundraising business.

Friesen: So, you’ve talked to me before about that that training period was unique both to your, to Minnesota but also to Dr. Bowen. Maybe you can talk a little bit about –

Bourne: My guess is, I’ve always believed that it was the first, and that means that I, after, I think what I mean is the first freestanding training center. If you consider that Pittsburgh and Paulina McCullough had, had hers going for a period I think, and then (Philip) Guerin and (Thomas) Fogarty had one. But I don’t see either one of those as really freestanding, you know “we’ll put together an organization around Bowen.”

Friesen: Mm hmm.

Bourne: I see them as parts of other universities or, you know, different.

Friesen: When they began?

Bourne: Yeah.

Friesen: Yes.

Bourne: And so, I, they had existed before and I think Paulina’s was as early as ’69 or something like that. Umm, so we weren’t the first in that sense, but we were the first I think in actually saying this is going to center on Bowen, it’s not that we’re gonna bring him out as a speaker and I’m gonna run the show, it’s that he’s gonna come out as the central figure, that’s why we’re here. And, I always felt that that was critically important, and gave him a chance to be relaxed when he was there and to change his thinking from one day to the next, and we all had fun. [laughter] In a way, fun in that, you know, we were all working all the time but [laughter] it was fun.

Friesen: Very active.

Bourne: Yeah.

Friesen: So, how many students were involved at that point? How many trainees?

Bourne: I think we started out, I believe we started out with an advanced class, partly because of Bowen's frailty at that point. so that we weren't pushing him too hard. But, but it I would say maybe 16 per class, which would, you know, sometimes there would be 16 beginning students and 16 advanced. and it probably didn't ever grow bigger.

Friesen: Were they the same people over the whole time?

Bourne: Well, that was the fun part of it, one really fun part is that, that we began fairly quickly to call people faculty just because they were good. And they were people who'd hung around me long enough to, to, to have learned a fair amount with, from me before we got to that stage. And so, the people who got really involved stayed. And, we'd just make them a faculty member and [laughter] -- they'd just come. so that, so that there was a small handful of people that, that were there probably through the whole 9-year period. So, it was, for him it must have been, that advanced class must have seemed a little unusual because it never, people would never go away [laughter].

Friesen: Mm hmm. So, the tapes that you have then, are of both of these days.

Bourne: Yes.

Friesen: Right. So, one day was kind of more people that were newer to the theory? Or just --

Bourne: No. He, he did the advanced, I don't know why, but we, maybe because we started out that first year with an advanced class and didn't have a beginning class I think, but, but he would do the advanced class the first day and the beginning class the second day, and often would change his approach by the second day.

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: And sometimes that happened because he would watch something on television in the morning and come in and say, "I heard this, and I don't really believe that," what, you know, and sort of shift the day, although the major topic, I think, would stay the same for the two days.

Friesen: So, I remember you speaking, Mary, about how you thought that it was, I don't know whether you thought this in hindsight or whether this is something you actually talked to Dr. Bowen about, about it being a, a thinking place for him, around his theory in that last 10 years of his life.

Bourne: Yeah, I'm just trying to think of the word that he used, it's sort of like, "I try things out here." And he was free to do that, and he did. I mean sometimes he was very, pushy in his questions and really intimidating and just shooting questions at people. And other times he would say, "What" you know, "what, what are your questions, what don't you understand about this?"

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: And [laughter] people could sort of relax, and then if they did relax [laughter] then they might get, scared back into their shells, but they, you know, because all of us wanted to know, wanted to be the one, I suppose, that really understood this theory. [laughter] And if you throw a term out without understanding what you had behind it, he'd call ya on it. That, that, in the tapes that I've transcribed the, the person who says "I don't understand this, differentiation of self" or the [laughter], or triangles, or whatever. And "I don't understand what you understand, or what you know about – I think I don't understand what you understand about triangles" – it's like he'd dump it right back in your, in your lap, so he, he was good at that.

Friesen: Yeah. So, this was all during the period of time then that he had a series of hospitalizations, and in the middle of that he kind of kept coming. Would there, was there any period that was interrupted with your training based on his health? In the early '80's or even –?

Bourne: He would sometimes no I don't think so. I don't think there ever were, because he sort of had the ability to call the shots, when we planned the program for the year, it's what months do you want to come out here? So, I'm not sure I knew about other hospitalizations or, until way up toward the end. there was a point where he said he wasn't coming back. And that was probably, probably somehow related to that, in that he knew there were going to be hospitalizations, or there were going to be tough times, and so he said, "I don't think I'm coming back here."

Friesen: What was that, what was the last time he was there?

Bourne: I don't know exactly, but it was just a matter of months before he died. and I don't know what that was he set it up so "I'm not coming back here," and the suggestion was, the feeling and, you know that's probably me again, was cuz he put some of that into words, it's sort of like I don't think there was something worrisome about us that he didn't want to come back. And I think he always had a sense, well there's no question about it, he always had a sense that my business partner, Dan Myers, and I had, were the Bobbsey Twins. And he would [laughter] sort of suggest we [laughter] split that up somehow and not be so Bobbsey Twinish. And my guess is that that was a piece of his argument, his excuse for not coming back. So, it was to be in October and, I'm not just sure, it may have been the last time he came out, and he said, "I'm not coming back in October because I'm not satisfied with whatever." Okay, I said, you know whatever, whatever you need to do I will work around that. And he said, and then a few months later, he called up and he said, "Are we on for October?" And I said, well [laughter] you know that's, that's fine, whatever you want to do. My thought about that is that he, that it probably was that he knew something was coming up physically, that that would make it difficult, difficult to get out here. And when he knew he could do it he called and said [laughter] but it was not "I've changed my mind" but "do we have a date for October?"

Friesen: Yeah. So, in that 10 years what would you say was kinda central in, in what he was communicating?

Bourne: If I had to pick a word, it would be "function." And I say that because I've been chasing that word for 20 years ...

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: And no way, no real direct way to figure out how to get there. But I remember saying to Mike Kerr at some point after his book came out, “I thought the next thing you were going to say was that “Function” was the next concept.” And I couldn't put my finger on what that was, and I spent years and years and years – two decades [laughter]...

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: Trying to figure it out.

Friesen: Say more about what you mean by the word “function.”

Bourne: Well, it's a tough one to talk about because it's, in my view at this time with a lot, lots and lots and lots of reading across a lot of fields, I think it means “process.” And I think when he said the words, he said “I didn't use, when I put the theory together I didn't use names for things, I used action words.” And I kept thinking does he mean I didn't use nouns I used verbs? And I, but I thought he's so careful about the English language that if he meant nouns and verbs he would have said that.

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: And so that's what I was searching for was what – the final analysis, I guess, is that I do believe that that what he was saying was that he was not after concrete things, that he was after process. And, and I, and then looking back there was a lot of, of talk – well I, what I guess I want to say is the, that in looking back over the transcripts the first time and beginning to do an index of what was in them, I realized that the word “function” kept coming up over and over and over again. And I didn't remember ever hearing it at Georgetown. But that I didn't know where it began. Whether it, he was first – but that's part of what bothered me that it appeared often in Mike's book, and it appeared often in our stuff, during the [MIFD] training program, but it never got addressed, I mean it was never like anybody ever said to him [laughter] “what do you mean by 'function'?”

Friesen: Yeah.

Bourne: And so that's been an interesting proposition for me to track that down. That's one of the next things I'm gonna write about [laughter]...

Friesen: Okay.

Bourne: After I get through the [laughter] finish the transcripts themselves.

Friesen: So, you were referring to that you've done a lot of thinking and kind of, more broadly, reading about kind of some of the ideas that came from Bowen. Can you speak of, a little bit about that? You, I think once in a phone conversation you and I had you talked about how many

you were trying to understand where ideas, where Bowen got ideas in broader disciplines.

Bourne: Yeah, I've always been a, cross discipline reader. Not because I thought that was anything special, it was only that, that's, I was always looking for what was going on with families and I read everything everywhere. When I read the transcripts at this point and run across him saying that I, that "I was interested in what part families played and I read everything from, I read everywhere, I went everywhere to look for information." Now whether he actually read it or whether he did this in conversation or letters I'm not sure, because the story from the family is that he didn't read books [laughter], and I wouldn't be surprised. I mean, I think Darwin was one of those people who kept up this wonderful correspondence with people all over the world – if he wanted to know what a volcano looked like somewhere he'd, he'd find somebody to tell him. Umm, so I don't know whether Dr. Bowen's stuff was, his cross-discipline stuff was necessarily reading books. He said at one time he had access to so much, to the books coming into the library at Menninger's and that he [laughter] what he told me was that he read the first page and the last page of each book. Now, I, my guess was, is that you'd almost have to read the introduction or the preface or something and then read the last page, but I think that's a legitimate way to get a lot of information.

Schara: He told me that too. He was on the library committee at Menninger's he said, and, and he said that the way to read a book is you look at the beginning, the introduction, what's the guy want to communicate to you, what's the book about, and then you might read the first little bit in each chapter, but the important part was who did they cite, what the index ...

Bourne: Aha!

Schara: Who was in the index, who did they cite, who did they read...

Bourne: Yeah.

Schara: Where did they get their knowledge from. But he said if you do it that way you can read a book in a couple hours.

Bourne: [laughter]

Schara: [laughter] But he was on the library committee and he had to, he had to give a report.

Bourne: He exaggerated a bit when he told the story to me.

[laughter]

Schara: Yeah I hear that; I hear that. But I think he did have a fundamental knowledge in, of, of the basic ideas just like you do. You went to the books and you have a fundamental grasp of the nature, and you have a fundamental grasp, I think, of the leap Bowen took in psychiatry, – and you talked a little bit about your Matrix, of how you kind of tried to put together where all the ideas went, and how, what, what was Bowen's leap that he made, which is just kind of my interest.

(long pause)

Bourne: Well, I'm just trying to think of "leap."

Schara: Function is one leap, definitely, because everyone else had classified mental illness in a little compartment called, you know, neurosis, manic depressive, schizophrenic – those are not functional compartments.

Bourne: Yeah.

Schara: So.

Bourne: Yeah, at one point during, in the transcripts he says function versus, – well, a senior moment.

Schara: Diagnosis? Function versus diagnosis, that'd be where it is in psychiatry. [laughter]

Bourne: Um. Well, anyway.

Schara: What is the function of dysfunction? Sometimes I think like that, that's what Bowen used to say sometimes, the function of dys...

Friesen: The functional dysfunction.

Schara: The functional dysfunction instead of the diagnosis.

Friesen: And functional helplessness.

Schara: And functional helplessness, that was another one.

Bourne: The, the other piece of that I think is that, that he the other, the other thing that ties it together for me is that he that, one time when I was pestering him about how he put the theory, theory together, because I was just sort of looking for some rough feel for how that – there's so much in the transcripts that I find now that, there's such a strange value in being able to go back and, to something that you've heard and maybe taken notes on, and go back and hear, see, in writing the progression that his thinking went. Because if you read it you can see the, the leaps that he made, from – he'd start to say an idea and then he'd get halfway through it, or even just a few words into it, and he would pause a second and make a shift and finish the sen..., and he, it was clear he hadn't forgotten this piece, but then he might end with [laughter] the end of it.

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: So that makes it, it makes it so interesting to sort of watch his thinking, which you don't have time to do if you're listening to him talk.

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: And that's something that I've, fascinates me – is how people think and how people put ideas together and, and sort of stammer around trying to get [laughter] to the end of an idea.

Friesen: So, when you talk about the working on the transcripts, what does that mean now?

Bourne: Let me, for a minute, finish the little piece about...

Friesen: Sorry.

Bourne: Don't and hang on to that...

Friesen: Okay.

Bourne: That I was asking him about he put the theory, theory together and he said, “anybody who studied comparative anatomy could have put this theory together.” Which, of course, is another overstatement or understatement or whatever [laughter], but that sent me looking for comparative anatomy, so the two pieces that I was putting together was function and comparative anatomy. And I believe those two pieces fit really tightly together, that the concept of function that he was using came from comparative anatomy, and I believe specifically from Cuvier.

Schara: Cuvier?

Bourne: Yeah.

Schara: Who's, who's Cuvier?

Bourne: A comparative anatomist.

Schara: He's a comparative anatomist, okay. From?

Bourne: He [Georges Cuvier] was, he was teaching comparative anatomy in France at the time that Darwin was...

Schara: Oh, I know him, okay, Cuvier, yes.

Bourne: Trying to study medicine in, was it in Scotland or?

Schara: He was in, he was in England. Did he go to...

Bourne: I thought he went to, I thought he went to Scotland.

Schara: Did he go to Edinburgh, to Edinburgh?

Bourne: I wouldn't be surprised. I don't, I really don't know. But at any rate, during that period

Cuvier was teaching. So, I think those, I think those tie together, and that, that that's the brand of, of comparative anatomy he was talking about, whether he was talking about Cuvier personally. But the more I read about comparative anatomists of those, that period, they varied greatly from people who really resented Darwin to those who were fighting for him, you know?

Friesen: Yeah.

Schara: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: So that, there wasn't something called comparative anatomy it was branches of, and I think that's where, I think that's where function originates if you want to [laughter] get historical about it. and in, and I can't see it any way, any other way than process. And he used process easily in putting in the concepts, you know and I always was sort of aware of that. Some of the concepts are named process, so, those two, for me for the moment those two fit together.

Friesen: Mmm hmm, mmm hmm.

Bourne: So anyway. That's my back to [laughter] back to that story. But you were asking a question about the training program, or...

Friesen: Did you have any other follow up on that question Andrea?

Schara: What, what Mary's comment made me think about is his interest in evolution and how he said the emotional nature of man, which is where you get mental illness from, is due to the fact that we have more in common with other species than our uniqueness. He always used to say that so that somehow people would think that we're neurotic like Freud said in a way because of culture. And Bowen just said that, you know, culture has its influence on you, societal regression and so forth, but the basic issue is you're, the comparative anatomy issue, the fact that you're functionally, emotionally like the other species and, therefore, we can go back to the other species and learn from them about our instinctive behavior, etcetera, etcetera. So, a lot, when he turned to, toward science, again I'm going to make the leap which we made a little bit earlier when we talked just you and I, which was that – in your Matrix you said Bowen was outside the family system and that was a very strong departure from all of psychiatry at the time. So that was definitely a leap, no more transference. You, you stayed out and...

Bourne: Yeah.

Schara: You coached the family about the process, in the nuclear family or the multigenerational family. So definitely that was one leap and another leap would have been the evolutionary leap which then made, in the '80's kind of when he started coming over to you, not having any more family therapists at these symposiums.

Schara: Gonna have Deborah Kleinman and Jack Calhoun, and we went right behind him marching over to science, to evolution...

Bourne: Yeah.

Schara: To comparative anatomy, to find out more about the human than his neurosis, or the fixed states that psychiatry saw him in.

Bourne: Now, I don't think I heard that in the years when I was coming out here, which was '75 to '78 or whatever.

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: And I suspect that's me and not that it wasn't here.

Schara: Well, I think...

Friesen: I think--

Schara: Jack Calhoun was seventy-, I came in '76, Jack Calhoun the first non-family therapist was '75. And then...

Bourne: Really? Hmmm.

Schara: Deborah Kleinman was '76, the first symposium I came to.

Bourne: Well, see seventy-, that's when I...

Schara: So '75 was the...

Bourne: Yeah.

Schara: The flip from regular psychiatry and the people that he had as symposium speakers to the scientists. And there hasn't been a family therapist since then, speaking.

Friesen: And then the more clear shift happened within the Bowen Center, within the Family Center at the time...

Schara: Mmm hmm.

Friesen: Around a kind of a delineation among faculty – who was going toward science and who was in, who was technique. [laughter] You know, that kind of...

Schara: Yeah.

Bourne: Yeah.

Friesen: Difference, and that was in the '80's around his illness. So, you're, you know, I mean, out here a year you were a little bit ahead, but he was talking, he was living that...

Schara: Mmm hmm.

Friesen: In the '80's.

Bourne: Yeah, I can remember his saying I don't know how you, how you sort of like you have to have science in order to understand this, you have to study science. And I said well [laughter] I don't know how I'm doing it but I [laughter] the only science I ever had was general science in high school with a teacher who spent the time in class painting her nails red.

[laughter]

Bourne: And I absolutely hated it and never took another science course ever. I would get them to consider a math course science I would...

[laughter]

Bourne: And I don't know how I'm understanding any of this because it's not through science [laughter] it's, it's coming from another direction.

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: But that's interesting that that was the early push for that cuz certainly he was, must always have been thinking that.

Schara: Since he mentioned about compara- that anybody could have thought of the theory if they had done comparative anatomy.

Bourne: Oh yeah, yeah, that's true.

Schara: When he said that to you that was all about evolution. But I, you know the thing that I always gather from hearing Bowen talk about you and going, his, kind of reports when he came back, was that Minnesota represented a place to think, for him. That there was something about you and your program that allowed him more freedom to think, and maybe to observe himself thinking, I don't know, sometimes I think about that. That there's certain people that when you're in their presence you think better. Did you notice that?

Bourne: Oh yeah, and I, but I about our program; I think the fact that we took the ju-, I mean I don't want to deny the other part of that as well...

Schara: Yeah, right.

Bourne: That there, there were some, there were some good thinkers...

Schara: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: And good thinkers from different fields, because I didn't limit my, my program and we,

we just didn't have fancy people necessarily in our program that, that you had out at Georgetown. And he remarks about that at one point the, the "there are people from a lot of different backgrounds here and I guess that's a good thing." So, it, there was that kind of freedom of people thinking from different fields. But I think the fact that we took the work, the teaching of the theory – which I think is a real problem which I want to get to in a minute – we took the teaching of the theory off his shoulders and we just said, "we're teaching this stuff, and you can do what you want, you can use it for anything you want, we'd like to hear your latest thinking." That must have been just a relief to not have to explain the theory, you know he could say go look it up in the book...

Schara: Exactly.

Bourne: Because we hadn't given him that job. I think it was just a different feeling, and, and as I look back on it, particularly talking to people the last few days, I'm amazed at how differently they saw it. Because the theory piece that I want to talk about is the, that I think there is such a tendency to learn this, and I, certainly I think that's the way I learned it, you know, there are five – there were five concepts at the time – ...

Schara: [laughter]

Bourne: That you write down the concepts, and there are five interlocking concepts and that's a theory, and that's the end. And I think working on those tapes makes it clear to me that that notion of a science was there, that he borrowed that from, from Freud, that Freud wished he could put together a science of human behavior and he [laughter] took a wrong turn here and there. And that Bowen had, early on, the notion that, that a science, headed toward a science was valuable. Maybe he couldn't get there but that it was worthwhile. And I think that that's, maybe that's what I hear coming alive as I listen to people today, because I haven't been here in 15 years, so it's a, tapping into a different place for all of them. But I think that I can hear two things at one, at this point, one, one of them is the notion that, that this theory is not the top, that there is more. And then in the transcripts he says something about "there are ten more concepts out there I know of."

Schara: Mmm.

Bourne: You know, but the typical kind of I'm not going to tell you what they are.

Schara: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: But it sure gives you a notion that, not that I would suggest sending everybody out to try to find ten more concepts, that's sort of a waste of energy [laughter], but at least if you spot one [laughter] that you don't run away from it and say but Bowen said there were only eight. And that, that he had a notion that there was more to be done. So, I hear that happening and then I hear the effort to, to take the experiences people have and how they connect it with theory, and to write books or articles or whatever, that say here's how I see it, let me tell you that so that maybe you'll see it then, maybe you'll see something. And really that's what the training program was in Minnesota. You know, he would come back, he would go to lunch saying, "the things that people

asked this morning say they were thinking technique.” And he would sort of grumble that. And then he would come back and, almost to himself would say, “How do you make a point?” And it was like he had been thinking during lunch about how he was gonna, you know, and that's what's happening in, in the Bowen group at this point for, based on a lot of things I've heard – I want to do research, I'm doing research on this – but it always seems to be, and “How do I make a point?” Because we all know we know something [laughter] but we can't figure out a way to say it [laughter].

Schara: I think that's beautiful.

Bourne: And we probably don't even know the same somethings. [laughter]

Schara: He used to talk about the, the blind man and the elephant.

Bourne: Yes.

Schara: And all the blind men would come around and claim that they'd found the elephant and they would only have found the tail or the ear, one leg.

[laughter]

Schara: And he used to say about the Family Center that if you put everybody on the faculty and staff together, you know, then you'd have some good ideas but no one person had it all.

Bourne: Yeah.

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Schara: And that if you can create kind of diversity, of different ideas about theory maybe then you're, you're moving somewhere toward greater knowledge. But if you just look at one person then and think that's all there is, whether it's Bowen or Mary or Priscilla or Andrea or whoever it is, that's not, that's not theory moving forward.

Bourne: Right.

Schara: It's one person's best perception and that's really a lot. The fantastic and that's actually my interest, and I think Priscilla's interest too, is to capture the ideas, the diversity of ideas of people who knew Bowen early on, and who were tremendously influenced by him, and whose brain got big because of the relationship with Bowen.

Bourne: Well you know, I don't know about that really early period, say that '69 to '75 period or whenever that, they started. but it seems to me that they had to be pulling in people, at the beginning, who already had a belief system about family or about therapy or about psychoanalytic theory or what-have-you.

Schara: Umm hmm.

Bourne: That were starting already with a, a, a mix, and then there were those of us who came in who didn't have anything before Bowen. I mean I think I was fortunate to have done all that cross-discipline stuff before I found somebody. But there are a lot of people, I think, in later years of the training program who, who came in for Bowen, and, and that's really all they wanted to learn. And I don't know you get back that cross-discipline research piece, after, because I don't see much going on.

Schara: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: I mean, I can say do you, you know, have you read Bateson (Gregory Bateson)? Well no, somebody tried it, but nobody's read it. I mean it's like, umm...

Schara: I have read, I've read Bateson, because he said to me "nobody can read Bateson," and...

Bourne: [laughter]

Schara: I'm counter-phobic. Don't tell me I can't do that. I can read Bateson...

Bourne: Yeah.

Schara: I can present, and I know it, you know, and blah, blah, blah. He had a way of pushing your button in paradoxical ways and...

Bourne: Yeah.

Schara: And he was, he was an incredibly clever ...

Bourne: So, he said the thing about "you can't read Bateson"?

Schara: Yeah.

Bourne: Oh.

Schara: And I said "Oh yes I can" ...

Bourne: [laughter]

Schara: And I did a presentation the next, the next moment. And he used to say things, but he was a paradox-provocative guy, he would say things like "Freud never read Darwin." And I'd say "Well, Dr. Bowen" and I'd bring all the books into his office and say look at all this where Freud footnoted Darwin. And he'd say "well, he didn't read him the right way."

[laughter]

Schara: But he wasn't a straight-on guy, he was how can I make a point?

Bourne: Yeah.

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Schara: That is the fundamental question which involves, Bateson, which involves paradox. That's how you make a point...

Bourne: Yeah.

Schara: To an emotional system, it is, in my opinion. And I think that is another concept, I think functioning is another concept, I think what I might want to call communication, which I might want to call interrupting, which I might want to call paradox, which I might want to call Zen. I think that's another, you know, way to go, or area. But I just really have a tremendous interest myself in meeting and talking and listening to the people who early on were influenced by him and who have gathered and respect his knowledge. So, that's why I wanted to do this, and I think Priscilla, same thing, different version.

Friesen: I wanted to get back to your, what you want to do with the transcripts?

Bourne: Now that I've been pushed to do something with them, I mean I really had given up the idea that I was ever, ever going to get to them, that I was ever going to have the energy to do them. I would sort of dream about the fact that it could be done, but I couldn't figure out just how you did it. And I didn't think that I had the moxie to deal with a publisher or, you know, to make, find somebody or to make that happen. So that, Ona Cohn Bregman and, and Charlie White did, made possible by finding the publisher and providing the book [*Bringing Systems Thinking to Life – Expanding the Horizons for Bowen Family Systems Theory*, edited by Ona Cohn Bregman and Charles M. White, 2011 Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, LLC], and saying yes, we'd like a chapter, and eventually saying we'd like three chapters. So that pushed me to do really, probably a couple years of research. What I did was to move out and take, take pieces of the, of the transcripts and then figure out what, try to figure out what, where he got the information from or what correlated with it. And then I went out and read other books, that were not Bowen books to figure out where he might have, where our sources of information may have come together. And that's been the most interesting thing for me, so that's what I want to finish the whole of the transcripts, it's 2000 pages. Not all of them really easy listening to because they're, you know, it depended on which room we were in and whether we had airplanes flying overhead or whether he was scratching his beard with the microphone, because we weren't doing it for... we were doing it largely for his voice because he had trouble talking to the audience and, and he'd forget he had the microphone in his hand and so some of the tapes are not easy to listen to.

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: But, I want to get as much as I can get at this stage of the game, and then I'm hoping that through your help, and Joanne's, in getting the, the Library of Medicine to look at the originals is to, you know, I should have preserved them, I knew I should have years and years ago I should have put them someplace with better you know, temperature control but, but I

didn't. But I'd like to see those preserved in the present condition so that someday with even better technology we can get a better picture of what he was really saying. But some of the tapes are really, really good and some of the transcripts are really, really accurate. We had a wonderful bunch of people typing who would, you know, make a point of punctuating the way he was, putting dashes in when he paused and, and keeping it as accurate as, as we could keep it. So, I think the transcripts are very good and I want to do that, or to be, or to choose who...

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: Takes over that piece because if I were to die it's important to leave them. So I thought I would do them as smoothly as possible, as much the same as possible, keep them consistent at the level that I've got them worked out so that I either, at one point I'm picking out 20 pieces that, that I could use, and at the next point I'm sort of making them a little better and eventually building them up so that I could leave that to a writer, and a copy editor, or a whatever you call those people...

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: To help get them done. So, I figure if I do them, keep everything consistent, done consistently that I could turn it over to somebody at every, at any point. Because I want to see, I want to see them done now that I see the first three in print they...

Friesen: Yeah, they are so good.

Bourne: They've gotta be done. and Joanne was saying, do a book by, 2013, and Mrs. Bowen last night said, "How about 2011?"

[laughter]

Schara: Yeah.

[laughter]

Friesen: Move it along, right?

Bourne: And I said okay [laughter].

[laughter]

Schara: Yes, she told me...

Bourne: And I don't what, what else you're thinking, about what I want to see happen with them.

Friesen: Well, I guess what I was wondering, I guess, I'm interested in what that takes to do. I don't have any idea of that means in terms of time for you and kind of, what's useful for you when doing it.

Bourne: I don't know that either. I know that it, to my surprise, that first 30 pages took me a year and a half. but I anticipate that that won't happen again, because what I, because what I did was to just go back to a lot of the reading I'd done before and do that more carefully. And, put margin notes in that particularly applied to, to the Bowen tapes. So, I, my guess is that they would be the same resources that I would use. So, I would hope that, I would hope that it could be done in a year, and that, that one could be done in a year and 3 could be done in 3 years and get it out of the way. I think it, that would, I think there's enough material there to, to do three books, that may be my imagination.

Friesen: So, is that by, so by three are you saying that that's kind of a, a grouping of...?

(GAP IN RECORDING / REPEATS SOME CONTENT)

Bourne: resources that I would use. So, I would hope that, I would hope that it could be done in a year, and that, that one could be done in a year and 3 could be done in 3 years and get it out of the way. I think it, that would, I think there's enough material there to, to do three books, that may be my imagination.)

Bourne: But it's basically waiting until 'til you reach the right, sort of knowing which crossroads to stand, for divergent ideas to fall together and, and I think he was on to that early on. So, there's something about that business of waiting for a ... of knowing you've got psychiatry out here and medicine here, or you've got whatever and he, and you can't put those together, you can't force them together, and you can't, how, how do you get them to talk to one another? And that if you -- sitting at the right crossroads you can put that together. I think that's an early, I think that's one of the, one of the leftover concepts. and I don't know what shape it's going to take, but I think, I think it's there.

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Schara: Should we call it integration? The somehow, the possibility or the probability of integration?

Bourne: I think integration is too final. I think it's a ... he talked about superseding the differences. And the first thing you think about when you, when you say superseding the differences is going above.

Schara: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: But it doesn't mean that. It can mean that, but it doesn't necessarily mean that. It doesn't mean above, sometimes it can be going below.

Schara: The profound thinking is outside the system is somehow coming away, outside the conflict to arrive at some other crossroad and, and then going back all the way to Hegel [Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel] who was a process guy, philosopher, but he, he said you know the thing swings out to one end of the polarization, and then it swings out to the other end, and...

Bourne: Yeah.

Schara: Then as it comes back again, it integrates, I think he used that word. Some, that you learn something from these, the crazy times that are out at the extremes. And then society or the mind of the person becomes a little bit more integrated. It doesn't mean it, it ends, it's going to swing out to the extreme again, and then maybe it will integrate a little of that knowledge, and then swing out here again. I don't know, something like that though, I think, it might not, I don't know the word for it maybe Priscilla does, but...no?

Friesen: I was thinking integration too, but I hear what you're saying is that it sounds like it's done.

Schara: Yeah.

Bourne: It's that you have to do ... you have to get to a place where you can listen to both sides without homogenizing.

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: And so, any solution, and when you say “supersede the difference” that leads you to think about homogenizing, it leads you to believe that you can find a central thing, a, a belief above that these two can a, can agree on. And so, in the abortion argument, you know, the answer would somehow be that we don't want any unwanted pregnancies or something like that. That, that its but that's the way most people translate that, and most people understand what he was saying by supersede the difference, is that you find the thing that the two could agree on, and then you, keep getting' focused there, instead of focusing on here. But I don't think that's enough. I think there is a, I think when you say how can you get – there's psychiatry out here, there's medicine here and those two don't get to talk to one another. How do you get them to talk to one another? I don't think it's necessarily superseding the difference. I don't know...

Schara: Absolutely.

Bourne: How it's gonna go, but I don't think it's necessarily through swinging back and forth either. I think there is something about I don't know, I'm just talking off the top of my head but, it, it's something like the, a convergence of a – cuz all you want to do is get psychiatry and medicine to talk to one another – you don't really want them to come up with a, something they agree on. You don't, you want them to be able to listen to one another. And maybe that's what all of family work is about. That you don't want them to agree...

Schara: Mmm hmm.

Friesen: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: You want them to listen to the crazy viewpoints and mannerisms of two sides of a family, or two people in a family and, and not force them together, but to respect them both. And

I think that's bigger. More profound.

Schara: Mmm hmm.

Bourne: And you, you with your philosophy would know, probably, where those come from. And I'd want to talk to you sometime about that.

[laughter]

Schara: I read a lot, but I don't really know I try, like you did with your Matrix, I try to, I'm very interested, too, in the compartments of knowledge. And that by looking at the compartments of knowledge, especially in psychiatry, you can see where Bowen grabbed this idea and that idea, and he didn't try to make them agree but he built on them. Almost like, you know, if you were gonna make a statue out of clay or something, you need a little more clay maybe for the arms and the legs, and then it, it forms. But you don't just go get an arm. You have to take some of those ideas, and then you reform it...

Bourne: Yeah.

Schara: So that the arm fits on the body. And whatever that is, we, we've given up on integration but...

[laughter]

Schara: And, swinging back and forth. Profound thinking. Here's a way Bateson did it, to go back to Bateson, he what I got from Bateson it's kind of like the idea of the chess game, he called it meta-learning, and he did this with dolphins. So, you can reward a dolphin and he'll jump through the loop, and so that's just simple behavioral stimulus response training. But when he mixed that up, kind of maybe like Bowen did with the trainees, he would give you a reward for no reason at all. And then he would give you no reward when you deserved a reward. And now all of a sudden, these dolphins started doing stuff that no one had ever seen them do before – they'd jump up and make 3 twists in the air and, whatever – and he called that meta-learning. So, it's, a reward when you don't expect it, and punishment when you don't expect it...

Bourne: Do you, do you recall why they did it?

Schara: Why Dar-, why Bateson did it?

Bourne: Why they did the, the re-...

Schara: He did it as curiosity, as an experiment to see what'll happen if you go beyond behavioralism...

Bourne: I don't think so.

Schara: Beyond stimulus response. What do you think? It is also related to the double bind, I

know that. But, what do you know? What do you think?

Bourne: They did it, they did it because, when they had these – I believe this is the way it goes – when they had these programs going where they have all these, the dolphins and the whatever, the Sea World kind of stuff...

Schara: Yeah.

Bourne: They would say to people, let us show you how we, using rewards...

Schara: Yeah.

Bourne: How we teach them a new trick. But the problem was that they had rewarded them for certain tricks and they weren't actually showing them anything about teaching them a new trick. So, they were trying to get them to come out...

Schara: Yeah.

Bourne: And, so that they could come out sort of unprepared, and the trainer would get, get them to do a different trick. And when they caught on to that, it was like 'you don't want me to, to do the old tricks, you want something new,' and then they would come out and play, and do new stuff, and demonstrate a piece of learning. And, so, read that piece again.

[laughter]

Schara: The other, the other thing that I remember about it was having to do with the double bind, which is that, that the, the double bind is always the message, like the mother walks toward the child and says, "I love you" and has their hands out. And as soon as the child comes for the hug, the mother puts the arms down. And the child says, "What's wrong, Mom?" and the mother says "What's wrong with you? Why don't you want a hug me?"

Bourne: Yeah.

Schara: So, you never know exactly whether, when it began and ends, so the uncertainty of rewards, the uncertainty of punishment, is at the heart of the double bind message between, that is in the fusion between the mother and the child. And this ... most uncertainty rests with the child, and the child begins to believe that if I am psychotic or I am crazy, or I am sick, I will save my mother. And that's the, the reason the child will remain ill. But anyway, the Bateson and, and, had his, his view. I will go back and read that again and...

Bourne: I think it's amazing that anybody out here has, has read Bateson.

Schara: Yeah. I belonged to the, American Cybernetics Society for a long time...

Bourne: Mmm.

Schara: Because of Bateson. Because he and Margaret Meade were with the, Macy group [Macy Conferences, meetings of scholars from a variety of disciplines, held in New York 1941 -1960], and they began that, that group, and at the time Bateson, after Bateson died a guy named Maturano [Humberto Maturana, Chilean biologist] took over and a friend of Priscilla's, Joan Lartin told me, "You like Bateson," after I did my Bateson paper, "you must meet Maturano because he's the next Bateson." He had written a paper called The Frog's Eye. And what he did, he's a neurobiologist, and he had taken the frog and rotated his eye so that it looked backwards. So, when you present a fly on a string to the frog he turns around and leaps backwards to get the fly-- because our perception is a function of our memory, you don't really see the real world, you see the fly where you think it's supposed to be...

Bourne: [laughter]

Schara: According to your memory, but your eye's been rotated, and so you respond to your memory and you leap backwards. So, but anyway I got just a lot of perception and a lot of different things about that, and then and Bowen used to just give me a hard time about it [laughter] saying I was going in the wrong, wrong direction.

[laughter]

Bourne: Well, he...

Schara: It was a great triangle.

Bourne: I said something to Bowen way, way late in his life and I don't remember how it, how it came up, I just said I, "Well are you going to drop me off the edge for reading Bateson?" And he said "No, I wouldn't do that," he said, "you'll never regret having read Bateson," "as long as you can find your way back."

[laughter]

Schara: That's a beauty.

Bourne: So, and that really, that was really important for him to say, for me to hear because, because you go, you go around feeling like you really should be learning that theory, and shouldn't waste the time going off on other things and, and it was nice for him to say, "you won't regret it if you can find your way back." [laughter]

Schara: Your way back to yourself.

[laughter]

Schara: There is no other way back. You can't go back to Bowen, you can't go back to Kerr, you can't go back to Priscilla...

Bourne: Oh my.

[laughter]

Schara: You can't go back to Bateson. You have to go back to yourself. So that's all, all I have. I appreciate the time and, it was wonderful actually.

Friesen: I think it was good too. Thank you.