

**Vince Kelly**

Interviewed by Andrea M. Schara

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**Andrea:** The 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2015 and this is Andrea Schara talking to Vince Kelly and you were one of the original fellows, you were a...

**Vince:** Well I was a resident.

**Andrea:** You were a resident.

**Vince:** I was a resident, I was a year behind. Have you spoken to Bud?

**Andrea:** Yes, Bud was my first supervisor.

**Vince:** (laughs) Oh was he really?

**Andrea:** In 1976.

**Vince:** Yes, ok, so he was trained a year ahead of me. I came back to Georgetown because I had been in the Navy, I had gotten one year of psychiatric training in the Navy and I decided I didn't want to stay. And even though I only had one year of training I was signed as a psychiatrist, for three years...

**Andrea:** For three years?

**Vince:** Then I got out of the Navy in 1964 and came back to Georgetown and finished my last two years at Georgetown.

**Andrea:** And that was when you ran into Dr. Bowen?

**Vince:** Dr. Bowen was there. So Bowen met with us as second year residents, he had a seminar, usually interviewed somebody, usually one of his patients and then talked about the interview after that; talked about what he heard and what he took out of that, etc. etc. He started describing some of his theories about what was going on and he even made predictions and if the person he was seeing had a relative, I can't remember what, in a psychiatric hospital and had been there for a long time he predicted that after he had seen this gentleman with a family therapy approach that that person would come out of the institution. Now, I can't tell you whether that happened (laughs). But that's what he predicted, that dealing with that part of the family system would have that impact.

**Andrea:** That is a beautiful one. And of course it's proven true over time, that people do much better when someone in their family who might be over-functioning, sees the big picture and calms down. And so this was 1965...

**Vince:** I started the last two years in 1964, so it would be July of '64, and then I finished my training in July of '66.

**Andrea:** So during that time did you think that he was on to a new theory of human behavior?

**Vince:** Oh absolutely! Well it was interesting because since I had this year of residency in the Navy it was an excellent residency but it was mostly with analysts, and that was mainly what I was exposed to...analytic thinking, but then having resigned the residency after the first year and after being assigned to Norfolk Virginia, I was assigned to the psychiatric department because it was in a clinic, I was a psychiatrist. Here you're a psychiatrist, good luck! (Laughs). And so I was not only the base psychiatrist but I was also the medical officer for the brig, which was the biggest brig in the world with all these young guys who had been put in there for a whole variety of reasons. I think the benefit of that, and this is pre Bowen, obviously, but the benefit of that is, that is what I was doing, I was seeing people and thinking family, I was bringing the dependence, if sailors had dependence, in that area. And seeing them together and just thinking couple and what have you. But I didn't know who Bowen was, I had never even heard of him.

**Andrea:** But you just did that yourself?

**Vince:** I did it on my own, that seemed to be the thing to do.

**Andrea:** (Laughs) Because nobody told you that was wrong.

**Vince:** No, and nobody can because I was a psychiatrist there and the commanding officer, Captain usually, he was kind of uncomfortable with me because he figured I would analyze him. He left me alone, I was all of what 26 and since I had two jobs, I could always be one or the other, so no one ever knew where I was. And the Navy Chief...they always assigned the Navy Chief to a doctor because doctors have no idea of what they're supposed to do. As a naval officer you were never told but the Chief ...they would say "Doc you have to put your stripes on." They followed you around.

**Andrea:** (Laughs) Oh that's so beautiful.

**Vince:** Yeah so that was the Navy, that was three years and I really [Addendum; 2018\_27\_06 VK... had not read nor been exposed to the concepts so] I had to make it up as I went along, so to speak...

**Andrea:** And it turned out to be a reasonably good things to do to see family members...

**Vince:** Absolutely.

**Andrea:** And it's amazing that no one came and got upset with you for doing that.

**Vince:** I don't know that they even had a reason to be upset because the officer.  
[Addendum: 2018\_27\_06 VK... in command was satisfied having a psychiatrist on staff to deal with any emotional problems or disorders].

**Andrea:** But you never had a supervisor which was...

**Vince:** I did not, what I did have, across the river from Norfolk is Portsmouth, and that's where the hospital was... So I did meet with some of the hospital people and we shared ideas, although most of the ideas were psychoanalytic and individual but it was still an opportunity to throw out your ideas and get feedback.

**Andrea:** And no one came across and said "Freud would be very upset with you in seeing family members", although he saw his daughter, the followers of Freud did not like idea.

**Vince:** I did not know that I was breaking some sort of rule, all I knew was that it seemed to make sense. So I did that.

**Andrea:** So then you go to Georgetown and you somehow run into Bowen. How did you meet him?

**Vince:** Well, because he was a professor there then and he had come from NIH where he had his project and I don't know how long he had been there, I don't think very long.

**Andrea:** Probably four years. I think he came in '60.

**Vince:** From NIH. Yeah.

**Andrea:** Yeah. So he had been there four years by the time you arrived.

**Vince:** And he was kind of, I realize he was marginalized, which was paradoxical because he was probably the only person who had a national reputation in the department of psychiatry at Georgetown, was Murray Bowen. But he was over here in his bailiwick because he was introducing some ways of thinking that the analysts found curious, and they were not necessary to change their ways of thinking. But I was immediately attracted to what he was saying, immediately

**Andrea:** How does it happen, what is it that immediately...

**Vince:** Well because he was saying things that reverberated with how I was already thinking about doing psychiatry. I mean, "oh yeah, that's a good idea". He started offering his principals and it just made sense.  
And there was another factor which is kind of cool and I may be exaggerating this but it was like every other psychiatric year, the psychiatrists ahead of us were primarily interested in analysis and getting their individual analysis. My group, not all of them,

was heavily curious about what Bowen had to offer. We were very eager to go to his conferences and to listen to what he had to say. And at that point, he always had an attendant, somebody who worked with him, and Bud Andres...

**Andrea:** Bud Andres was the first one.

**Vince:** Bud Andres was certainly one. It's terrible I'm forgetting the names of the other ones...Richie Guerin was one.

**Andrea:** Phil Guerin.

**Vince:** Phil Guerin, and later Mike Kerr.

**Andrea:** And later Mike Kerr. Tom Fogarty.

**Vince:** Tom Fogarty. That's what I was trying to get before that. And so in my third year, we had electives of what we wanted to do and I said I wanted to be the attendant and so I was. I was for that whole last year.

**Andrea:** So what year was that?

**Vince:** That would be the last year 1965 or '66.

**Andrea:** So you were his kind of go-to guy?

**Vince:** Yes and I would bring my cases to him.

**Andrea:** '65 and '66. And Bud was still there?

**Vince:** Yes, because he had gone out into practice, I guess. And did he go to the military after? Because I was in the military before. But there were others who went immediately into practice or went into the military after.

**Andrea:** I don't know about Bud but I know Mike Kerr went afterwards.

**Vince:** But that was a process too.

**Andrea:** But you could see that Bowen was marginalized because his ideas were so different. Did you ever think he would throw over psychiatry and turn it in a new direction?

**Vince:** I don't know that I ever thought about it in those terms

**Andrea:** Or that it would stay a small marginalized group of pioneers?

**Vince:** Yes, pioneers. But, of course, as I said we did have our own group that met in the coffeehouse and threw ideas back and forth.

**Andrea:** So that was once a month you guys met?

**Vince:** I'm trying to think, I can't really remember. But it was maybe like once a month. We enjoyed it because we had a lot of fun. It was a lot of laughter but we were talking about Bowen and our cases and the theory. So I finished my training and I did two things: I went into private practice to make some money but I also became the medical director of the psychiatric ward of the D.C. General Hospital. I was interested in community mental health that was the way to go in the future. So I thought that I would go into an outpatient community clinic but instead I got a job at D.C. General Hospital. And as far as I can remember, I started to bring Bowen ideas into that because I had a couple of social workers who were interested in it, curious about that...

**Andrea:** So you still kept up with Bowen during this time?

**Vince:** Well that's another [Addendum: 2018\_27\_06 VK... story. After I resigned from the Navy, we rented a place in Bethesda,] but it was from somebody in the military and the rule then was that if somebody got assigned back you had to get out of the...where ever he lived. So we had a couple of weeks to find a place to live. My wife and I looked for a place to live, we already had kids. And she found this house in Chevy Chase, and I said, "I know why you selected it" and she said, "No why?" "It looks like your parents house in [Addendum: 2018\_27\_06 VK... Niagara] Falls." But she didn't realize it.

So we bought that house with help from her father. It turned out that it was about three blocks away from where Murray Bowen lived. And because everyone said you unconsciously bought that because ...I didn't even think I knew where Murray Bowen lived. But he was in walking distance from my house so I started going to supervision there.

Yeah, so I would see him and since I was in private practice now I was starting to have cases that I could bring to him. So he was my supervisor.

**Andrea:** So that was great. So that was from ....

**Vince:** That was '66 and we lived in that house until we moved in '68. We didn't move too far away, we moved to Bethesda. Maybe I wanted to show that I [Addendum: 2018\_27\_06 VK... didn't need]...to be near Murray because I put myself a little distance from Murray because he continued to live there.

**Andrea:** Wouldn't it be funny if he followed you? (Laughs)

**Vince:** That would be interesting. There might be other things about it but I'll tell you two vignettes from that. The first was the place, we were right off Wisconsin Avenue in Chevy Chase, in Maryland but close to the District. Apparently, there was a farm house

that was there but that farm house was where the White House was and it was picked up and moved out into the suburbs or the country so we had somebody who was connected to that family and we had a neighborhood meeting and this older gentleman from the family talked about it, to get the history of what had happened and how this community had developed. And Murray and LeRoy, his wife, were there and so was my wife, now of course having been connected to [Addendum: 2018\_27\_06 VK... the Georgetown department of psychiatry maybe she already knew that] Murray was not socially adept, I don't know if you've heard that...

**Andrea:** (laughs) Yes, I have heard that. I actually saw it.

**Vince:** Yes, and so maybe she hadn't found out by that time but maybe she had because when we would go to an event that would include others and Murray being there she would always say before we got there, "Oh for God sake, don't leave me alone with Murray." (Laughs) 'Cause he'd say anything!

**Andrea:** He'd say anything to make people uncomfortable.

**Vince:** To make people uncomfortable. So she may have said that before we went to that talk. I don't know if that was true, I know eventually that it was true. But in any case, we had the talk and it was very interesting. I remember very little about it and then it was kind of a social event afterward. Maybe they had cookies or something like that. The neighbors were there, the neighbors from this area, and Murray and LeRoy were there. Well Leroy was with a bunch of women and chatting and being very vivacious and what have you and Murray was just standing over in the corner. But I paid some attention to that going on and not too much time went by and Murray walked over to LeRoy and said something like, "Well LeRoy, looks like it's time to go home." And what she did was and I remember this, I can almost see it. She turned and looked at him with a lovely smile and didn't say anything and turned back to the women. She didn't say anything. And I think that happened one other time. I watched that happen. Well that was the art of differentiation. You don't defend it, you don't argue, you just do what you choose to do in the face of somebody else saying you should do this. So that's where he got that idea.

**Andrea:** So he watched his wife, you think?

**Vince:** He watched what his wife did. What his wife demonstrated. Take a hint, position of differentiation of self right there because she just kept talking to the ladies. He moved away for a time and didn't say anything. He said what he wanted to do, she acknowledged it, and smiled and then did what she wanted to do.

**Andrea:** And there was no reaction? He didn't say "I'm leaving right now."

**Vince:** No, no.

**Andrea:** He didn't react to her stance?

**Vince:** No, no. It happened. She took the stance by behaving not with words and that was it. I thought it was wonderful, it was one of my opportunities to observe what went on. The other thing that I remember from that was and I'll give you the simple version. I guess we had a conference, some visitor who was talking about network therapy, which was going to the couple, to the family, to the network. And Murray obviously got curious about all of that and he talked about that and whatever steps took he decided he would try it and that he was going to meet with the network [Addendum: 2018\_27\_06 VK... for the very first time] and it just so happened that I had had my session with him just before it was going to happen. Did you ever see his office?

**Andrea:** Yes, in his basement.

**Vince:** Yes, and if he looked outside he could see out the walk to the side of the house. And so we were finishing with my session and the network was arriving and he turned and could see people gathering and he turned to me and said, "Hell Vin, here they come!" (Laughs) and sure enough they came. Now he didn't stay interested in that for very long. I think he just tried it out.

**Andrea:** I can remember it was a women's name Margaret Otto or something like that. That was one of the leaders of it.

**Vince:** Yeah, but it was a man, too. I wish I could remember.

**Andrea:** Yeah it was a human family day, they had a lot of these people came back for that human family day which was held in 1978 I don't know if you came to that or not.

**Vince:** I think I did.

**Andrea:** But a lot of the leaders in family therapy came. And I remember that...the whole idea of separating self from the emotional system and he talked about it as in triangles as in putting two together and getting yourself out.

When you're making a move. And whether that would mean much that was his thesis, I think, that it wouldn't mean too much to your friends. But that usually if you did this people got irritated. And then you had to, as he did in the anonymous paper, just be funny. And did you happen to be there when he delivered that anonymous paper or did you hear about it?

**Vince:** No, I did not. I know I was not. I am trying to think, do you remember the date?

**Andrea:** 1968 I think it was. But it could have been '67 or '68, sometime in there.

**Vince:** I know I heard about it. But the details of it...of course it had appeared in the book.

**Andrea:** Yes, right.

**Vince:** No, I was not there.

**Andrea:** Did you supervise people when you guys were still at the nursing? Or Dr. Bowen's office was in the basement at the nursing center over there. Some of the people supervised like Florence Kamm or...

And Maryanne Ames...

**Vince:** I did some supervision. One of the things I was very involved in was the beginning of the conference.

**Andrea:** Ok, yes. The symposium.

**Vince:** The symposium, right at the beginning. I was part of putting that together.

**Andrea:** I forget, who was your first speaker there? Mostly family therapy people as I recall.

**Vince:** Yes, that's right, although it branched out then it was just any kind of people in biology and sociology or what have you, which would make more sense. Seeing that it was as broad as Bowen suggested. It is just tapping into the human nature.

**Andrea:** We inherit that human nature.

**Vince:** Yes, exactly. Yes so it did evolve but early on it was somebody who was in...

**Andrea:** I was thinking maybe Nate Ackerman. Do you remember if he was the first person that you guys had?

**Vince:** We had Nate Ackerman and then...I'm forgetting all these names, it's terrible, but we had the Italian from Argentina. What was his name...it's terrible.

**Andrea:** Argentina, it might have been Carlos Sluzki, he was from Argentina.

**Vince:** That's not who it was.

**Andrea:** He's the only Argentine famous family therapist that...

**Vince:** I think he was from Argentina because his background of an Italian name. It's terrible. His theory was structural family therapy.

**Andrea:** Minuchin?



**Vince:** Minuchin. Sal Minuchin. He was big, he attended it. And then there was a big involvement, a member of the American Family Therapy Association.

**Andrea:** Yes, AFTA. You were a charter member?

**Vince:** I was a charter member. I went to the early meetings.

**Andrea:** And what did you think of that group?

**Vince:** I thought it was good initially. I became disillusioned because they started to become very political. And I thought they were going in wrong direction, so after a time I resigned from that. But I went to the early meetings and they were good, I got some stuff out of that. But then again, I just thought that it became too political.

**Andrea:** Well they have been a real political force AFTA, for all people marginalized. And a lot of emphasis on trying to create a place for family theory in the world of reimbursement. And then they have that Family Process Journal, which is an excellent journal. I went to a couple meetings, and one of the people there said "When I first came here it was 80% men now it's 80% women"

**Vince:** Yes, I believe that.

**Andrea:** Psychiatry has moved from being a male profession to being a female profession.

**Vince:** Right.

**Andrea:** But you stuck with Bowen theory as your primary way of thinking?

**Vince:** Absolutely. And I did until the last session I had in September (laughs). It's interesting and I'll just mention this because it's blowing your own horn, but there's a psychiatrist Brian Crowley who's been very active and continues to practice, he told me just the other day. We meet, at this point, I go to the Simulcast Operas, have you ever gone to those?

**Andrea:** No.

**Vince:** Well we met and this has been several years and Simulcast live operas from the MET and they have them in theaters. So instead of paying \$200 for an orchestral seat it's \$22.

And it's better. It's better than being at the MET because they have these wonderful interviews with the performers, the producers, and the costume designers. It's really great. So I've been doing that for a number of years. The reason I bring it up is because Brian Crowley the psychiatrist, is there frequently so during intermission we'll meet and talk. And just the other day I saw another psychiatrist from my generation was

there and he said, "Vin retired. And it's too bad because by far if someone was in need in a couple, he was the person to send them to," so I had that reputation.

**Andrea:** You think that Bowen Theory gave you the ability to deal with couples in a way that other psychiatrists didn't?

**Vince:** Oh absolutely.

**Andrea:** So how would you describe it that....

**Vince:** What is was...It depends on how you see it. You don't only see the individual, you see the relationship. You see the unit, you see the triangle. You see the reactive nuclear reactivity, what have you.

**Andrea:** So that was your focus?

**Vince:** Absolutely.

**Andrea:** And people would respond to that.

**Vince:** Yes, yes.

**Andrea:** So people would ask questions that allow them to think about the dynamics and the way that the family is structured.

**Vince:** Precisely. And then I felt that I should educate people about what a family structure is and what's happening, give a name to it. Early on, I had this interesting couple, he was actually a psychologist and she was the principle designer for the national medical [Addendum 2018\_27\_06 VK ... library] brilliant, brilliant lady. They never had children but they had a curious relationship. So I don't know how it happened, because he was a little reluctant to see me, as is often the case, I don't know how they were referred, but anyway they started seeing me as a couple. And I guess I had seen them for about a year and a couple of things happened and their conflicts or what have you were better, and they were getting along, and either he or she said, "You know, prior to coming to see you, we were probably in analysis for a total of fifteen years" [Addendum:2018\_27\_06 VK... individual analysis of course] and one of them said, "We've got more benefit in a year from you than all the total fifteen years put together" (laughs) so that gave me some thought, maybe I'm doing the right thing.

**Andrea:** So you became an educator. Did you take the role of coach, like Bowen did?

**Vince:** Yes. Absolutely.

**Andrea:** So you stayed outside the transference? Kept sort of a look at the system that was guiding people in unknown ways.

**Vince:** Precisely.

**Andrea:** It makes so much sense and you wonder why has it dwindled and it's made negative forward progress.

**Vince:** I think so. I'll have a look at that. I'll tell you an anecdote which may explain some of that which is insurance. I was on a committee for the Washington Psychiatric Society...what's the name of the committee...it was psychiatric practice dealing with early administration and insurance and so the issue came up in meetings of family therapy and couples therapy. I guess because of what I did they decided that I should meet with Blue Cross Blue Shield people and the purpose was to educate them about what this was all about. Family therapy, systems theory. So I did it over the course of months and they responded, "Oh ok..." and finally when that was finished I think he... he had a big role at Blue Cross Blue Shield, it might have been nationally. And I can't remember the details of what he said, but basically what he said was, "We really appreciate meeting you because we understand much better than we did before we started meeting with you. But it's very complicated so what we'll suggest is just call it individuals therapy and apply for reimbursement on that basis." (Laughs) But I said, "that's what we're doing already and we want to do it more honestly so you know what's happening"...but it was too complicated. That was the end of my effort, but at least they said that they understood it better. So I guess [Addendum:2018\_27\_06 VK ... I used that as a justification for billing in the name of one person]....

**Andrea:** There's no reimbursement for thinking family.

**Vince:** Exactly. And a matter of fact I'll tell you another anecdote if you don't mind. Something about how I think, so I was meeting with this family early on, because I went into practice right out of... which was successful, 48 years, and anyway I was meeting with this family who were very complicated. I really enjoyed it because they were complicated. And they had insurance and I had to make a bill out and put down what I did. Which I did. And the insurance refused it and they refused it on the basis of: Who was the patient? You had to have a patient. This is how their mind thinks, so I wrote to them and I said, I'm paraphrasing, but I said, "I recognize that in therapy that I'm offering to so-and-so and that I do have other people in the family in the room at the same time, but I want to assure you that none of those people will gain any benefit from what I'm doing.

**Andrea:** (laughs) Only the patient.

**Vince:** (laughs) I never heard from them but they accepted. They reimbursed. (Undecipherable)...what the hell is he saying (laughs)

**Andrea:** Here you are, "I'm not treating them".

**Vince:** But I certainly wouldn't want them to get any benefit from it, that's against the principals of treating the individual (laughs).

**Andrea:** That's so funny. There was an article in Sunday's opinion in the New York Times and it was about schizophrenia, about the British Psychoanalytic Society saying diagnosis, labeling people, doesn't help them, it doesn't help you to treat them. And then Tom Insel who's at NIH was saying the same thing, basically,. You have to look at schizophrenic and manic depressive illness as things that have functioning roles in the group and that they can go away these symptoms or people can say, "I didn't mind being manic, I performed ok being manic. I don't like those anti- psychotic meds." But it was amazing to see the writer saying that talk therapy is going to come back into vogue.

**Vince:** It's already.

**Andrea:** Yes definitely. Because these anti-psychotic drugs are bad for people over the long run and that talk therapy does better for them. So it was like back to the past...back to the '60s.

**Vince:** It goes back to my training at Georgetown. And this was 1964 and also the training in the Navy. Talk therapy was it, it was psychoanalytic oriented. That's what you did. You gave medicine...ok, maybe you shouldn't or only as a last resort that kind of thing. Over the years, I have to say, I found that medicine was helpful but the content was still meeting with people. And another thing about psychiatry is what's happened is that psychiatrists are now thought of as medicine givers.

**Andrea:** Well only 15% of psychiatrists in the US right now practice therapy. 15%!

**Vince:** Well it's lower now because I got out.

**Andrea:** Now it's 14% (laughs). But it's a small...

**Vince:** That's interesting I hadn't heard that. Some of our friends who do this, like Ted Beal, who is semi-retired and you know, we see ourselves as dinosaurs, but that's the right way to do it. I just started thinking, one of the people I was seeing got admitted to a hospital up in northern Maryland or something but in any case the social worker, a young social worker called me to get background. And I thought that was very good, that's the way to practice. I let her know but she started off by asking the medications that this person had been on and then she said, "Who's his therapist?" and I said, "What did you say?" "Who's seeing him in therapy?" and I said, "I know you're young and now you're going to hear from me. Don't you ever say that to a psychiatrist, I'm his therapist for God Sakes!" and it was silence.

**Andrea:** She was like, "You're a dinosaur. I've never in all my years met a psychiatrist who was doing therapy" (laughs)

**Vince:** So that's the thinking at the time and insurance has made a big part of that. Insurance doesn't want to pay the doctors fee but supposedly a social worker or educational therapist. So money pushes it.

**Andrea:** How much more do you charge than...I mean, how much does a psychiatrist charge?

**Vince:** Well... I don't know...at the end my fee was \$250.

**Andrea:** Yes, so I charge \$200 as a social worker, so what are they saving? So it's this false belief that they've fallen into. However if you could really get \$250, which I think psychiatrists can, every 15 minutes for prescribing medicine, I think that's the real incentive, you make three times as much money.

**Vince:** I hear that sometimes in therapy with somebody and they see them every four months for fifteen minutes and say "How are you doing?" Barely have any response and they renew the medication and that's therapy and that's nonsense.

**Andrea:** Exactly, that's a med check.

**Vince:** Yes, a med check.

**Andrea:** You could still get \$250 for fifteen minutes and so that why...

**Vince:** I've never done that.

**Andrea:** I wonder about society and how Bowen Theory might... I think a couple things about what you mentioned, one that Bowen himself was marginalized and that, for instance, he didn't want to stay with AFTA so he also played his part in this marginalization.

Maybe he believed that just as on the Galapagos you have to get isolated on a little island. Right? In order to breed these new forms of life and maybe that's the way he thought. I only have X amount of energy but that kind of explains to me anyways some of what went on. I think he wrote in one of his chapters early on, maybe the second chapter in his book, that I only have so much energy. All my friends are very into what it is that they're doing, they don't have time enough to understand what I'm doing so if I want to go forward I have to go it alone and if I don't want to go it alone then I have to give up.

**Vince:** Very interesting. I've never thought that though. That's interesting because I will council people who are involved with family like that woman who hadn't had a connection with her son for years and years and maybe she had some connection with his wife, briefly. But she was curious about that and she wanted to do that. Now I could have said, "Give up, you have better things to do". I said, "If you want to do it, let's talk about it. Let's talk about what you do and how you might approach it because you're taking your position, it's your position, it's not the position that's dictated by your son or whoever it is. I'll give you a personal example: I don't know if this will make any sense to you, I'm Irish but my mother was Italian. I'm half and half, half Gaelic and half garlic

(laughs). Anyway, the emotional part of my family was the Italian side, they were always fighting, all the time. So at some point something came up about the family that my aunt and uncle objected to and they called me up because my sister was talking about it. My sister was lovely but sort of naive about this. And they were outraged because of what she had shared and they told me that I had to punish her or do something to my sister. And I said, "She's my sister, I can't do that". Well they cut off from me. They cut off from me, probably for the better part of two years or more. And that was significant because I was the oldest in the family, the first one to go to college and be a doctor so I was a prince. But they wouldn't have anything to do with me. My wife counseled me to just leave them alone and I said, "I don't do that, it is not their decision if they see their nephew or not. I'm their nephew. And so I am going to be their nephew and I was." On holidays, I wrote to them, I had a couple grandchildren while that happened. And the cutoff went on. I would write her and say, "The new baby would love to have a sweater from you." I would never hear anything from them. I was playing to a...

**Andrea:** Dark house (laughs).

**Vince:** Dark house. My wife was saying, "Oh leave them alone! Don't [Addendum: 2018\_27\_06 VK... be bothered with them]" on a pretty regular basis. And then I got a letter. They had four girls, my cousins, two of whom were their allies, the other two were put in the same position as I was and I get a letter from one of the allies, Carol, saying, "You no longer have to write to our parents, please don't bother blah, blah, blah." So I immediately I wrote to their parents and what I wrote was, "I got a letter from Carol and I'm concerned, I'm really concerned because something about I shouldn't write to you, are you ok? Just let me know."

**Andrea:** Were you strong enough to take a letter?

**Vince:** Yes, yes. And it's not bad, simply because Carol said (undecipherable). So two years later, another two years and my cousin, the one who was on my "side", son got married and so there was a wedding and so I was invited to wedding, naturally, as they were. It was not only that but the other thing they had to deal with because they were in the front row...and I sing, I do a lot of singing. And so I was the vocalist in front of them singing Ave Maria or something. The service was over and we got out onto the steps of the church and my uncle who was a little Sicilian comes out and, this is after two years of not having anything to do with me, and comes up and says, "Hi Vin" and I said, "How you doing Uncle Tony?" and that was it.

**Andrea:** (laughs) And that was it, it was all back to normal.

**Vince:** All back to normal immediately. We never talked about what had happened, why they had cut off or what have you.

And it's because I took, as far as I was concerned, I differentiated from them, but I wasn't going away. I wasn't going to define that I was no longer their nephew and they were no longer my aunt and uncle.

And I use that with my patients...

**Andrea:** Oh yes. It's kind of healing the family tapestry by staying compassionate within yourself about the suffering that they have, they got too sensitive for whatever reason.

**Vince:** Oh sure, it was very complicated for whatever reason...

**Andrea:** I see this in my family too, it's an amazing thing how all of a sudden it can just go away and it can go on. Like in my father's family I had one that went on for twenty-four years.

I lived in Virginia Beach and then they lived in Williamsburg and I would go to visit them and they would never come to anything in Virginia Beach. No family event. And finally twenty four years later, when my last grandchild was born in 2001, my aunt came across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

**Vince:** That was a big journey.

**Andrea:** A big journey. Hampton Roads Tunnel rather.

**Vince:** They were building, that by the way, while I was in Norfolk.

**Andrea:** Oh really? Were they? The Chesapeake Bay? That was one of the largest ones in the world. But maybe that's what family therapy is, it's a way of tunneling through the madness, and the blaming and the shoulding and the "you must" and the all these things.

**Vince:** Precisely. I like to use the term mindful and this was a term that I didn't realize but now it's become very popular. Before I used it in my practice I was saying that we need to talk about being mindful. And mindful simply means that the emotions may be going on, but you retain enough to check it out.

**Andrea:** To have a periscope.

**Vince:** That's a good term.

**Andrea:** But that's what I thought, people think of mindfulness as mindfulness training to meditate and be present now but you can be present now and see all the things that are going on around you and not react to them. I think seeing the system is the beauty of Bowen's ideas.

**Vince:** Yes, exactly, that's it. Back to Georgetown it sort of described what I had decided to do anyway when I was a psychiatrist in the Navy. He gave words to it, he gave concepts to it.

**Andrea:** It's almost like there's a subtext to what goes on in families, that family members are not aware of, they're not aware that they're living out these rules and so they get really upset and try to marginalize you or cut off from you, just as they did from Bowen and you bring the subtext up, that you have a right as an individual to be your own self and not knuckle under the social pressure and it's that blindness.

**Vince:** I think it's crucial, and I see that as blindness too. We are the largest society and it gets more complicated.

**Andrea:** The larger society plays out between nations and the vulnerable ones, the weaker ones, are scapegoated, and they play their part in it by antagonizing the bigger guys. You know, it goes back three and a half or four billion years ago, when one cell said to the other cell, "You fix nitrogen. You give up your reproductive rights and you are the problem."

**Vince:** I think, I'm not sure, it's true, but I think that international dynamics are simply family dynamics writ large.

**Andrea:** Yes, at large. Yes, that's a good one... but anyways I hope that by collecting these kind of stories about Dr. Bowen and his influence on people and how people were able to actually alter their programming, whether it was the medical school programming or psychiatric programming or their family programming and to have basically more respect for people and their differences in their families.

**Vince:** I don't know why I'm thinking about this, but the couples that I've seen, two of them at least happened this way. The couple in each case was the husband wanted to come in and I saw this couple for a time and the wife was into an affair but the wife decided not to come in, to stop, and the husband wanted to come in and did and she said she wasn't going to come in anymore because I was too fair.

**Andrea:** (laughs) You were too fair. That's so true, you were too fair.

**Vince:** I remain myself and I would deal with ...and that happened with another couple. She didn't use that expression but she called me big names and all that. But I know that Bowen got that too, people got angry with him.

**Andrea:** Or they called him cold, indifferent, stuff like that because he won't take my side. If you don't see it my way then...

**Vince:** Yup, and that's what people expect, they come in wanting to get you on their side. Someone said, "You're on his side!" "No, no, it looks that way but I'm on MY side" I'm always going to be on my side. We might agree on something, but I'm on my side, I'm not taking any sides. That's putting yourself in the middle of it rather than staying on the side of it, dealing with it and maintaining that individual's health.



**Andrea:** It seems like you can learn so much more if you don't take sides. People want that love and that unconditional agreement, there's a wonderful writer, David Foster Wallace is his name and he committed suicide at 46 but probably the most brilliant person of our generation as a writer. But he wrote something called the depressed person and it's a fantastic view of someone with a depression who believes that if they could just get enough love and approval from you, if you would just understand them. And it goes all the way to the end where this person recognizes that their friend is dying of cancer and they don't have much energy, and this depressed person needs that and so even if it's going to kill you, they're going to take it.

**Vince:** Yeah, that's the other part of it that they talk about, the person and the selfishness of it, they literally talk about their own selfishness. They demand it of the other person. What they look at as someone maintaining their own position, they see it as selfishness, and it's not. Because if you ask anyone to be anything other than what they are, that's insisting that this is just who they are and sticking with that.

**Andrea:** Yes, it's such a sophisticated, complex idea that the world is better off when people are more themselves and not trying to force others to change. My client said that I often feel like it's a death march. If they can't get that love and approval, it's so hard. It might take them two years to be able to get to the other side of that.

**Vince:** Oh yes, depends on how long you can hang in there and there's a light bulb...Oh! This is what!

**Andrea:** This is what it would be like to be, a more autonomous creature.

**Vince:** Some people just can't do it. They cannot do it. A couple comes to mind. I was really offering her the opportunity to be an individual. And what I heard was "yup, yup". She saw herself as a feminist and what that meant was, "You got to do what I want because I'm a feminist!" And if you don't do that you're...what was the term they used...a pig.

**Andrea:** That's good, only a three letter word (laughs). Bowen used to say so many funny things, but he used to say psychiatry was like chasing greased pigs, if you could just make a factual world out of it. If people would just turn to look at the facts of it they wouldn't have to chase those greased pigs all up and down the road.

**Vince:** That was what he was teaching and I guess to some extent he was cold or at least came across that way. I didn't think about him like that.

**Andrea:** No, I didn't think about him as cold. I think he was firm about what he thought, sometimes he would get irritated, there's no doubt about that. But he had those sparkling blue eyes and he had a tremendous ability to relate to people who were psychotic and to get family members to back off and he just connected at some real fundamental level to allow the people to emerge.

**Vince:** I think about, and maybe you've heard this from others, I wasn't there but he would consult up in Manhattan, in the hospitals up there, Mt. Sinai, I forget which ones, but he was up there as a consultant to talk about family concepts and he was asked if he would interview this family. And the family had a mother who was terminally ill with cancer. But they asked if he could meet with the family and the social worker who was working with that family before meeting with the woman because they wanted to make the point that they hadn't told her how ill she was and they felt that they shouldn't because that was too upsetting. And they had a handle at it without letting her know that she was...and it was one of those big things that the stuff was there with the one way mirror. The family was there with the patient now and Murray walks into the room and sits down and he turns to the women and says, "Do you have any idea why they won't tell you how ill you are?" Right from the start! (Laughs).

**Andrea:** (laughs) Just out the secret.

**Vince:** Just out the secret because she should know because she's an individual. It's her illness and what I hear was that the family started to cry but so did the therapist. So all that emotion. They don't protect me, they were protecting themselves from the reality of what have you. I thought that was a very good piece of education.

**Andrea:** Yes, and he could carry that out. He could do it without making the situation worse, just bringing it into consciousness. A fact.

**Vince:** Well I'll tell you a personal story about this. My aunt, unmarried aunt, she had lived with us for a time. Lovely, she was a saint, she was just wonderful. Her nieces and nephews including me. For a time I was sort of her boyfriend, she worked in Manhattan and would have me come in to see a show. She was just a lovely creature. But a nervous wreck, very, very timid, and what have you. But in any case she came down with liver cancer. I would go up and visit with her, but the family insisted that I see them first before I go to the hospital and the message from the Italian side of the family was, "You're here for a couple of days, right, and I know you're a doctor, but when I tell you how ill she is, now don't you screw it up!"

**Andrea:** (laughs) That's real Italian.

**Vince:** "We're sharing it with you because you leave and then we have to deal with it." I don't know how I'm going to deal with that because that's unacceptable. So this is what I did, which was kind of avoiding it...well I don't know....so I went to see her and she was so far along that she wasn't yellow, she was green ... (undecipherable)...and so I said, "I'm a doctor Miniva and I can talk to the doctors to know what's going on, and so I would really like to do that, but you tell me what questions you have. She thought briefly and she said, "Could you see if you could get the food better?" (Laughs). She gave me her message, screw it, I don't want to hear what's going on. So I (sound of relief) "Nothing else?" she said, "I think if the food was better, I'd be ok".

And she died a couple of days after that. She was in her 70s, but in any case.

**Andrea:** But the family and the person who is symptomatic has probably been under a lot of social pressure from that family and is going to carry it on. That's been their role and they don't want to change, necessarily.

**Vince:** That part of the story where Bowen interviewing the woman, the woman responded by saying, "Well I've known about it, I knew they were upset to talk about it". She was protecting the family!

**Andrea:** She was protecting the family, exactly. So everyone has been assigned a role by evolution and automatically you go right along with it, swimming down the pike and then if you want to be mindful you can change if you want to. You can swim out.

You can take a break. Have a Coke (laughs).

**Vince:** And apparently Bowen hated, I think he had said it, he regretted the phrase that he used, "undifferentiated family ego mass".

I think it's a good phrase because that's what it is. You have to rise from the glue, see what you can do and what you can't do.

**Andrea:** If you want to or you can sink down, way down. But yes I think often the people who take to Bowen Theory, in my estimation, and stick with it were those who had really serious problems in their own families. And so it becomes so life giving whereas if you just have an ordinary headache you might not want to put in the kind of effort that it takes to heal your family and to go back through the cutoff and do all the things. But people should at least have a choice they should have an awareness if they wanted to, that there's a body of knowledge out there that could help them.

**Vince:** Well I think part of therapy is giving them the choice or letting them know that they have a choice.

**Andrea:** That's great, well that's probably a good point to...

**Vince:** And how do you do that, can you reach a person so that they know how? The couple where the wife didn't want to come in anymore, because I was unfair or whatever it was, but the husband continued, he made enormous gains by finding out that he had a choice and dealing with the criticisms and judgments and what have you. And I ended with them, they were the last people I saw.

**Andrea:** Well I love stories like that because I think that it shows the power of Bowen Theory where a new world awaits people if they want to go through that door. You can point to the door and they can decide whether they want to go or not.

**Vince:** That's always a thought and it's a decision that they make. It's not forcing them or telling them or berating them.

**Andrea:** To make them change and all of that.

**Vince:** You do what you can to try and persuade them that it might be the smart thing to do. Well, I think I can say and maybe you can say too: it's added a great deal to my life.

**Andrea:** Honestly, it saved my brother's life. It saved my life probably. But you have your own experience and I don't want to burden people too much with my own experience. I've written about what happened in my own family so it's available for people to see if they want to, but it's not for everyone, but it's there if anyone wants it. It's a body of knowledge that offers a way through emotional turmoil that's magnificent in my view. That's why I'm doing this to give people the chance to look at these stories.

**Vince:** And this will all be collected?

**Andrea:** And transcribed. You'll get a copy of it and eventually various people will probably use it on websites. I want to write a book with some of these interviews in it or at least parts of interviews just to show the power of Bowen Theory over long periods of time in people's lives. It's not a quick fix thing, it's a way of thinking and it's a way of being your best self. So it'll be part of the Murray Bowen Archives Collection in the National Library of Medicine and just to try to fill out what kind of man was he. What was he dealing with and so forth. I think you really added to that knowledge with your vignettes. I appreciate that.

**Vince:** Again, not just in the office, I think, I hope, (undecipherable)... but the whole idea of using the term mindfulness in a very broad sense. You have to pause to think about it and struggle with it. There have been things in my family that I've had to deal with... I've lived the charmed life as far as I'm concerned.

**Andrea:** (laughs) When the Italians meet the Irish. Charmed.

**Vince:** Absolutely. The best of both ethnic groups.

**Andrea:** Well thank you for your time, I appreciate it so much.

**Vince:** It is interesting, it's getting around because I had... my wife died of basically ovarian cancer, it'll be seven years next month. And so I have a lady friend who [Addendum:2018\_27\_06 VK... my wife would have adored] and she was in.... what's the term...industrial consultation and that kind of thing...but she came up with something that she came across on the internet. Somebody is looking for people to do industrial consultation and they specify people who have been exposed to Bowen Theory.

Isn't that amazing. She got it to me... (undecipherable)...but just to see that come up, it wasn't a therapist, it wasn't a psychiatrist, it was people who were in the industry and wanted to use to concepts in that area. I thought that was pretty good.

**Andrea:** That is fantastic. Keeping hope alive.

**Vince:** The other person who I wonder, have you ever read Carolyn Hax?

She`s really very...

**Andrea:** Carolyn Hax.

**Vince:** Hax is her name.

**Andrea:** H-A-C-K-S?

**Vince:** H-A-X

**Andrea:** A-K

**Vince:** No, H-A-X

**Andrea:** H-A-X

**Vince:** I mean if you got the Post today she`s in it, she`s in it almost every day.

And I have to believe, I don`t know this, that she had to have been exposed to Murray Bowen. Now people call in with their family issues, relationship issues and she responds to them and the way she responds is so Bowenian that I just wonder...

She`s a regular contributor to the Style section of the Post. You can check it out. You can Google it. Caroline Hax. She just thinks Bowen, whether she knows it`s Bowen or not, she does. It`s really good, I enjoy reading it. I generally agree with how she responds to people`s questions and it really gives you an idea of how crazy people can be. How bewildered they can be about life. People will write, women will write in and talk about that she just loves this man and he`s delightful except when he`s beating me and controlling me, is there anything you can suggest? (Laughs) She doesn`t say "get out". She`s very thoughtful about it, "Well, have you thought about this thing?" (Laughs)

**Andrea:** (laughs) When he starts to beat you, you might want to get out. Call him, "Hey I`m at the movies, if you want to come down to the movies to meet me there" (laughs).

**Vince:** It`s very good, if I don`t read any part of the Post I`d want to read her because she`s so good. I know nothing else about her.

But you ought to check out Caroline Hax. I don`t know what her training is or what have you but she`s certainly Bowen.

**Andrea:** She`s got the common sense. A lot of Bowen is observation, he was just such a fundamentally brilliant observer of emotional process and he could put it into ordinary terms and so it`s not shocking that someone else could come to this too. That they could have the ability to be an observer and put it into terms that other people could understand it.

**Vince:** That`s good.

**Andrea:** Well I`ve got to run. Thank you so much, I appreciate it.

**Vince:** The big question that I think you asked was, how I used...that`s what I`ve used.

**Andrea:** You`ve lived it!

**Vince:** Why would I use anything else because it works!

**Andrea:** That`s so great, thank you!