META-REFLECTIONS

ON THE HISTORY

OF NLP

In 2010 I began writing a series of *Meta Reflections on the History of NLP* — and that is what you will find in the following articles. These appeared on the international egroup of Neuro-Semantics — Neurons (**www.neurosemantics.com).**

Here are the first ten of the Meta Reflections. More will appear later as they appear on Neurons.

This is not a formal history. They are my reflections about the history — where we have been, what the field of NLP has been through, stories of the origin, and so on. Why? Because if we don't know our history, we may be doomed to repeat it. I think Henry Ford said that. So the purpose is to learn— to learn from our history and use that information to forge a much better future for this field.

The field of NLP offers so much and yet is in danger of losing the opportunity to make a tremendous difference in the world. To be the change and offer the change that NLP can, we who love the models and want to use them to make a difference in our world need to rise up to a new level of collaboration, professionalism, ethics, and respect. I offer these Meta Reflections in hope that we can *live* the models that we love.

NLP HISTORY
AND SELF-ACTUALIZATION

As you probably know, I began exploring some of the pre-history of NLP a few years ago and discovered *The Secret History of NLP* in 2005. And at various conferences I have playfully said, "It is a secret history that Richard Bandler and John Grinder don't want you to know about." At other times I teased saying, "And they don't even know about this secret history." What I didn't know was how true that has turned out to be.

Recently I went back to re-read John Grinder's *Whispering in the Wind* to look for any indication that he knew or had any awareness of the relationship between Maslow, Rogers, the Human Potential Movement, Esalen, etc. to NLP. And what I found not only confirmed what I've been saying, but goes further. Even today John Grinder does not know about this history! Apparently he hasn't been reading my books!

What is the evidence? From his own words, here is some:
> On page 2 of *Whispering* he makes a list of therapies and he lists "self-actualization" which he keeps separate from what he and Bandler were doing in NLP. He also mentioned Aldous Huxley (p. 26) without indicating that he had any awareness of his role in the Human Potential Movement (HPM). He mentioned that Bateson was at Esalen and refers to "a lecture taped at Esalen Institute just before Bateson's death, available through Esalen" (p. 115)

Then he distanced himself from Maslow, the HPM, and Self-Actualization Psychology when he wrote the following which like his jabs about myself and Robert Dilts, he here does to Maslow:
> "Relax, Maslow, there is no full realization of human potential, only an ascending spiral of differences and change." (315)

So while Grinder knows about Esalen and Maslow and Self-Actualization, and even that Bateson was at Esalen, and speaks about them in a general wa, he does not, even to this day, demonstrates any awareness of their historical significance to NLP. He does not seem to know that Bateson, Perls, and Satir worked together at Esalen and that it was from the context of the Human Potential Movement that NLP arose. Perhaps he was, and is, too close to things to have that expanded historical perspective.

In fact, here's my analysis of all of this. I think that at the beginning Bandler and Grinder was so close to the idea of picking up the linguistic distinctions of Perls and Satir (and later Erickson)

that they never really stepped back to ask, "What's this all about? What is the larger frame? What unites Perls and Satir?"

Historically they simply stumbled upon the strange "effectiveness" that resulted when Richard was mimicking Perls in his "Gestalt Class," which surprisingly led people in the class to change and transform. Richard simply thought it was funny getting people to hallucinate a mom or dad into a chair and yell at them. So they began trying to figure out what was the structure of this "magic." Their focus was on the details, and since both were reductionists, or as Grinder admits, "minimalists," they looked down to the tiniest of distinctions like eye-accessing cues and sensory-specific linguistic distinctions. They never looked up.

And without looking up, they didn't even ask "What is Perls and Satir doing that's similar?" They only asked for differences, "What are they doing that's different from everyone else?" This was their original genius— *mismatching for differences.* And by focusing on such, they found some very unique distinctions that now make up the foundations of NLP. Yet without the balance, they also missed something that was right in their face— the Human Potential Movement which could have given them a *big why* and tie them (and hence NLP) to the HPM.

Yet the result of their mismatching was that they pushed away from everything and everybody else working in the field of psychology and psychotherapy as this sought to create their own unique field. You can see this *pushing away from everyone else* in all of the original NLP books. And it is still starkly evident in *Whispering* where John has to mismatch his earlier self, Bandler, and a great many leading NLP trainers in the field today.   Several unfortunate things resulted from this— one being the inability to define what NLP is. Of course, it is most fundamentally a Communication Model, yet it is also a form of psychology, and a field of modeling.

Yet because Bandler and Grinder were so driven by mismatching for differences, they could not, and would not, connect with all of the sources that define and position NLP: Gestalt (Perls), Family Systems (Satir), Cognitive (George Miller, Noam Chomsky), General Semantics (Alfred Korzybski), Anthropology (Bateson) or the Human Potential Movement (Maslow, Rogers, Huxley). So that left NLP out in the cold, alone, disconnected, and without a history.

Yet NLP does have a history— a history that goes back many, many years prior to Bandler and Grinder. As with every movement, it grew out of the ideas and passions of the time and "on the people on whose shoulders they stand" (even if Grinder has expressed dislike for that phrase!). NLP's history goes back to the very fields and people listed above and most of all, it goes to the movement that Maslow initiated as he pioneered a paradigm shift in psychology from the sick side to the healthy side. And that's why we have made Self-Actualization Psychology the foundation of Neuro-Semantics and to that extent, re-discovered the fuller history of NLP.

> [If you were there at the beginning, 1972-5 or in the 1970s or early 1980s and have some NLP history to share, send to me at meta@acsol.net.]

THE HISTORY OF THE BEGINNING

If you have been a long-term reader of Neurons, you know that one of my interests for some time has been the History of NLP. My interest is to understand the sources of this field and model and the giants upon whose shoulders we stand. Understanding our roots also allows us to acknowledge sources as any professional would do as well as to be able to see the strengths and weaknesses of the models that we have inherited.

Two years ago I wrote some of the history of NLP in *Self-Actualization Psychology* (2008). Prior to that, I published that same content as articles in various publications (i.e., *Resource,* London) and in an NLP Book published in India (*Neuro-Linguistic Programming: Concepts and Applications,* edited by Kunal Gaurav, 2008).

To know your history enables to know yourself— the narrative of the stories that define how a group started, why, the antecedents that set up the original direction, and how things evolved in the intervening years. This is also one of the things we do in NSTT as we prepare people to become trainers and leaders in Neuro-Semantics. Our aim is to provide *a historical perspective of NLP and Neuro-Semantics.* We also do that for a specific purpose— to equip those who are becoming trainers to know our history and understand the forces that have led to the experiences and conditions that they will find in this field. We do that to understand the people, ideas, and influences that have contributed to creating the field as we know it today.

So how did it all get started? By accident. It was all a combination of some strange coincidences. A young student at KresgeCollege at the University of California in Santa Cruz needed some extra money and so worked in the stockroom for *Science and Behavior Books.* And then somewhere after 1970 that led to him being asked to transcribe tapes of Fritz Perls. Now the gift that Richard Bandler had at that time was that of hearing, as a rock-star-wanta-be, he played the guitar and could hear with precision and then he found that he could mimic what he heard.

So later Dr. Robert Spitzer would write that he would go into the room where Richard was transcribing the tapes and Richard would speak in the voice, tone, tempo, etc. of Fritz Perls and Dr. Spitzer would sometimes accidently call him "Fritz." That got Richard interested in Gestalt. On one occasion Richard said that he was house setting for a professor, found a book on Gestalt in the library and thought that the idea of hallucinating your mom or dad into a chair and yell at them about your disappointments was great stand-up comedian stuff. But then after Fritz died (January 1970) Spitzer asked him to finish transcribing and editing the materials for a book. That

became the book, *The Gestalt Approach and Eye Witness to Therapy,* published in May 1973.

The films and the transcribing gave Richard some experience with Gestalt and so in the spring of 1972, as a fourth year student, he was allowed to create his own curriculum for a class. That's when he "taught" a "student directed seminar on Gestalt Therapy." (McClendon, *Wild Days,* 1989, p. 9). And that had to be under the supervision of a professor, and that's how John Grinder got involved.

What surprised them both was that by merely repeating the Gestalt language patterns, Richard was able to "do Gestalt" and the participants began to experience some tremendous changes in their lives. How did that happen? And that led to the mythical story of their original collaboration: John would analyze the linguistic patterns that Richard was using to make explicit the "magic" of the transformations and Richard would show John how he was doing what he was doing so he could learn to do it as well.

Somewhere about the same time, Dr. Spitzer wanted audio-tapes made of Virginia Satir and so sent Richard to Canada to record her and then transcribe those tapes. This led to integrating Satir's language patterns, those of Family Reconstructions with those of the Gestalt awareness, empty-chair, and encounter processes. It began with their use of the "Encounter Group" as they had inherited it from Fritz, but because they were not therapists themselves, and had no training in such, they sought to understand what was happening using the tools (and theories) from other fields— primarily linguistics (transformational grammar) and computer modeling.

And that's how the adventure began. They happened upon two people who were leaders in the Human Potential Movement (which they either ignored or just didn't know) who were excellent in facilitating change and development in people using their separate models and understandings about people. So simply replicating those patterns and seeking to understand what was going on within the people due to the re-languaging and the re-patterning, they stumbled on a somewhat theory-free form of therapy (they thought they were modeling without any theory, but they did have a theory. But I'll leave that for later.)

To this format now add their attitude. That was a key to what happened as well. Both men were absolutely curious and playful and "Richard had a flair for the bizarre." They both sorted for differences, each had a lust for life, a "go for it" attitude and they were willing to play around so that if something didn't work, they'd do something different. And it was in that mix that NLP emerged a little bit at a time beginning in 1972 and fully as a model (the Meta-Model) in 1975.

THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

NLP began with the surprising effectiveness of certain linguistic patterns that Richard found in Perls and then Satir. So John got involved when fourth-year student Bandler wanted to teach a class on Gestalt. The surprise that *language itself* could facilitate pretty incredible therapeutic change by two men with no psychology or psychotherapy background sent them on a wild chase to find out what was going on— so using the tools they had available, they began modeling the language of magic.

That's what they called it, *The Structure of Magic.* Why? Mostly because what seemed like "magic," what seemed "magical" was not really magic, it had a structure and that structure could be identified. So what were the theoretical foundations of NLP at the beginning? Mostly and primarily *Transformational Grammar.* That was Grinder's contribution to it all.

In fact, my read on things is that John had been looking for some way to use Transformational Grammar (TG) for some years. After all, that was his speciality. He wrote his dissertation on it. He even wrote a book in the early 1970s with Suzette Haden Elgin, *A Guide to Transformational Grammar* (1973). And in *Whisperings*, John wrote,
> "We have stated that Transformational Grammar was the single most pervasive influence on NLP." (p. 92)

So in terms of theory, NLP began with all of the premises and assumptions of the Cognitive Psychology Models— which are inherent in TG. This explodes the myth that Bandler and Grinder propagated in the early NLP books that NLP is a model and has no theory. Well, excuse me, but if "TG was the single most pervasive influence on NLP" and TG was the work of Noam Chomsky who along with George Miller are credited with being the founders of the Cognitive Revolution in Psychology in 1956, then *NLP does have a theory.* It does come from a discipline (actually several disciplines) and so does have premises and presuppositions.

It was because Grinder and Bandler had their heads down— buried in the specifics of Perls' and Satir's language patterns and processes for facilitating growth, they were blind to the larger context— that Perls and Satir were leaders in the Human Potential Movement, that they were carrying out the original vision of Maslow and Rogers.

So yes, NLP has a theory. And that theory involves the premises that any intelligent reader can find in Cognitive Psychology (Chomsky, Miller, etc.), in General Semantics, in Humanistic

Psychology (Maslow, Rogers, May, etc.), in Gestalt, Family Systems, Bateson, etc. And as I have noted in numerous articles and books, Bandler and Grinder *snuck in the theory* and hide it in the form of the "NLP Presuppositions" (*User's Manual of the Brain, Volume I*). In other words, if you want to find the theory, you need to look no further than the list of NLP Presppositions.

> The map is not the territory.
> People operate from their maps of reality, not reality.
> You cannot not communicate.
> The meaning of your communication is the response you get.
> People are not broken, they work perfectly well given their representations and strategies.
> Behind every behavior is a positive intention.
> Etc.

And these are the ideas and premises that arose originally from Maslow and Rogers and that you can find scattered throughout the writings of Perls, Satir, and others of the Human Potential Movement as well as in Cognitive Psychology.

Now earlier this year, I've been in conversation with some people from the Grinder camp of NLP and several recommended that I go back and re-read what Grinder wrote about the history of NLP—at least as he remembers it or after he's run the Change History Pattern on himself (!). So I did. And in doing so I now understand why Grinder does not understand or like Meta-States, he no longer likes the original NLP! In fact, in *Whispering in the Wind* (2001) he rejects a lot of what the rest of us call NLP. I did not fully picked up on this when I originally read the book. For example, in that book he argues against accepting many of the NLP Presuppositions:

> "There is no need to subscribe to the so-called presuppositions of NLP in order to benefit from an effective application of the patterns to some problem or challenge. Normally these presuppositions include statements such as: having choice is better than not having choice. All resources necessary to make changes are already available at the unconscious level." (2001, p. 201)

> "If the so-called presuppositions are NLP are to be taken seriously this decidedly odd collection of different logical types and levels are badly in need of revision and reorganization. I believe that Robert Dilts played a strong role in their compilation. ... Unfortunately, presuppositions, like beliefs, are ultimately filters that reduce the ongoing experiences of their possessors. We personally do not find any value in the enumeration of such rationalizations (the so-called presuppositions of NLP)." (202)

Even some of the presuppositions which Grinder himself introduced, he no longer accepts. For example, he no longer accepts the law of requisite variety.

> "I accept responsibility for importing this law of requisite variety — here argued to be inappropriate for NLP practice." (309)

Rather than base NLP on these premises and make them conscious, Grinder prefers to postulate them upon something much more vague and indescript, "the unconscious mind." This, for him is the chief flaw with what he calls "the Classic Code:"

> "There are important decisions and it is unfortunate in the extreme that the classic code assigns the responsibility for these decisions to the client's conscious mind— precisely the part of the client

least competent to make such decisions. (214)

"This makes the work shallow and unecological as the conscious mind is notoriously weak in its ability to appreciate what the function of a consciously undesired piece of behavior might be in the larger system of the person's experience. The critique we offer is that such classic code patterns are flawed. They fail to provide for any systematic framing or access to the enormous potential of the unconscious. (215)

"The unconscious is superior in its competency for accessing the long term and global effects of some particular change with respect to consequences. Consciousness with its limitation of 7 -+ 2 chunks of information is ill-equipped to make such evaluations." (218)

So does that mean that "the unconscious mind" is more competent to make decisions for us? Does that mean the unconscious mind doesn't make mistakes (like allergies, false memories, auto-immune system diseases, etc.)? And didn't Grinder, quoting Freud, also postulate that there is *no time* in the unconscious mind? Then how does the "unconscious" now have such competency for accessing the long term and global effects of the consequences of a change? All of that strikes me as especially convoluted.

Of course, many other problems are also created when we a dichotomy is set up between the parts of the mind that are conscious and that are not. So rather than solving problems, it only creates more problems.

Personally I prefer the original NLP model that equally trusted (and distrusted) both aspects of our mind— what is conscious and what is outside consciousness. I like the original design of NLP— to discover how to "run your own brain" and take charge of your states. I like the original NLP that sought to make explicit its theory and then hid them in the form of the NLP Presuppositions.

WHEN THE MAGICIANS WENT TO WAR

A few years ago, while thinking about writing a History of NLP, I played around with the title, *When the Magicians Went to War.* Several I spoke to didn't like it, and then many did. And undoubtedly there was a little bit of mischievousness in me as well to like it. Anyway I thought I'd use it for this post in the history of NLP series.

The "magicians," of course, are John Grinder and Richard Bandler and first went to war in the late 1970s. I don't know when the conflict between them began or even why (except for their egos, see below), but they did and the lawsuit between them was settled in 1981. Then a year or two later "The Society of NLP" went bankrupt and that marked the beginning of the end of that first era of NLP. Then in 1981, a lawsuit ended in which Grinder agreed to train in only six American cities for the following ten years, six cities that would be agreed upon by Bandler. Strange? Yes, very strange.

And why couldn't they get along? Terry McClendon wrote in *The Wild Days of NLP: 1972– 1981* that Bandler and Grinder "realized that the stage was not big enough for both of them" and so decided to go their separate ways in 1978 (p. 117). Undoubtedly there's a lot more of that story, but I don't know it. Perhaps it was over differences in how they thought about NLP; perhaps it was over differences in style. Perhaps it was that each thought they could do better apart from the other one.

From the court records that came later, Richard began using drugs like cocaine in the late 1970s after NLP exploded onto the national and international scene. And so when "the stage was too big for both of their egos" and they split, various trainer told me that they guessed that Grinder signed that lawsuit because he thought Richard would not be alive a decade later. That's what I was told. And given that Bandler experienced cocaine drug over-doses in the 1980s several times, it doesn't seem all that farfetched. The article about Richard's murder trail (1986-1988) in *Mother Jones magazine* said that "Bandler bragged about using large amounts of cocaine" (1989, p. 25) and described his life story as one of "a blur of fact and fiction, obscured by cocaine and gin..." (p. 27).

Whatever happened behind the scenes, what we know publically is that Bandler and Grinder went separate ways and stopped talking to each other. And as the 1980s saw a wild growth of NLP training centers everywhere and then various Associations around the world and Conferences, both men seem to avoid such as well as contributing any writings to the journals and magazines that rose. Now there is a quotation that I came across some years ago accredit to Robert Dilts

that went something like this:
> "NLP was given birth by two mad-men who modeled three wild individualists and who they never stayed around to father the community."

All of this has led, over the years, to the charge that many have made: Bandler and Grinder don't apply NLP to themselves. They created a world-class communication model, but do not or cannot communicate between themselves and the community that arose from the model. That was one of the comments I heard from the very beginning of my introduction to NLP in 1986. In 1997 at the *Visionary Leadership* conference that Dilts sponsored with Judith DeLozier at NLP U., there were even some skits that several people put on making fun of this very fact and asking why is this.

But more recently, Grinder (2001) tried really hard to answer this complaint. He wrote the complaint: "Why can the developers of the NLP communication model *not* communicate between themselves?" Then he not only denied it entirely(!), but turned it around asserting that he and Bandler "communicate perfectly." Yes, you read that right. Here it is in his own words:
> "We are aware during the last decade plus of a number of criticisms voiced with the implication that the 'two great communicators', Bandler and Grinder, themselves are not *communicating effectively*—that they are failing to use the very tools they created. .... From my point of view at any rate, Bandler and I are communicating perfectly. Neither of us has any further interest in pursuing either a professional nor a personal relationship and all the signals between us carry precisely this message— communication complete. ... The evidence for this alleged failure to communicate typically cited is that Grinder and Bandler don't agree. This is absolutely correct— Bandler and I do not agree." (2001, p. 121)

So let me see. When two people won't talk to each other any longer, that is "communicating perfectly"!? So rather than accepting responsibility for the division and the lack of communication, Grinder argues that he and Bandler are effectively and perfectly communicating by disagreeing with each other to such an extent that they won't even talk to each other! Amazing. So in spite of having engaged in two major lawsuits and refusing to have anything to do with each other, somehow this is "effective communication?" It is "communicating perfectly?"

Well, if that's effective communication, then I hope you and your loved ones never get to the place of communicating perfectly! It's best that you stay with your current ineffective communicating and at least love each other and stay together!

What ever happened to the idea that *communication* refers to people *communing* with each other to create a *union* together? Yes, when two people say words about how each do not like the other and do not agree and do not want to work with each other that may be a clear message, but it is not *using the tools of NLP to create the kind of relationship so that there's mutual understanding, respect, and a collaborative spirit*. And for two people who once worked together to co-create something to move to an absolute refusal to work together for a greater good even is while disagreeing, why not be agreeable and pleasant and affirmative of the other person? That would be a demonstration of *using the very tools that they created to communicate*

effectively.

Then to make things worse, John wrote in the following paragraphs the following about him and Bandler and how they are similar:

> "... the characteristics that I believe we share: arrogant, unimpressed by authority or tradition, strong personal boundaries, willingness to try nearly anything, utterly lacking in self-doubt— egotistical, playful, full capability as players in the Acting As If game, full behavioral appreciation of difference between form and content." (2001, pp. 121-122)

Perhaps this is the problem that keeps them from being able to demonstrate a respectful attitude toward each other, and toward others in the field with whom they disagree. Perhaps it lies in the characteristics of arrogance and being egotistical. This certainly does not strike me as something to be proud about. That seems like the wrong meta-state in this instance. Anyway, this is part of the story of when the Magicians went to War ... and the Cold War that has ensued since— a sad and tragic tale in the discovery of perhaps the most powerful Communication Model on the planet! (And yes, I realize the irony of that last statement.)

THE INVIGORATING 1970s

It all began with the creative collaboration of Bandler and Grinder which apparently occurred in 1973 to 1975. It was in 1974 that they collaborated on the writing of *Structure of Magic I and II* (published in 1975) and *Patterns of the Hypnotic Patterns of Milton H. Erickson* (published in 1975 and 1976). "What was within the original mix out of which came "Neuro-Lingiustic Programming?"

> 1) Gestalt Therapy (Perls) and 2) Family Systems Therapy (Satir) as viewed through the theoretical formulations of 3) Transformational Grammar (Chomsky) and 4) the Cognitive Psychology Movement (Miller, Pribram, Gallanter) and 5) the Anthropological and Systems approach of Bateson.

This is *the psychology of NLP as well as the philosophy of NLP*.   So what became NLP was truly an inter-disciplinary field from the beginning. Its theoretical and philosophical foundations come from Anthropology, Neurology, Psychology, Physiology, Linguistics (Transformational Grammar), Systems, General Semantics, Cybernetics, and Communication Theory. Many "NLP Trainers" either don't know this or don't communicate this foundation— to the detriment of those entering this field.

Who were the people who started it? NLP began with a young college student along with an associate professor. When it all began *Richard Bandler* was only 21 years old (in 1972) and a student at Kresge College. Myths have him as a mathematician and a computer science, but he never received any degree mathematics or computer science and such things were *not* part of the original models. As a matter of fact, Richard was *not* a Gestalt therapist, he was *not* a mathematician, and he was *not* a computer scientist. He was in his third or fourth year, it wasn't until 1973 that he got his bachelor's degree in philosophy and psychology (not in mathematics or computer science). His master's degree was also in Psychology.   And John Grinder was 32 (in 1972), had just completed his doctorate degree (1971) in linguistics, "On Deletion Phenomena in English."

The Modeling of three experts in therapeutic communication. Each of these experts had a different model and focus. Each also had a very different style and yet somehow each was able to facilitate transformational change that struck people as fascinating and amazing. Perls, Satir, and Erickson were the three original models. Yet what no book on NLP before 2007 ever noted was that Perls, Satir, and Bateson knew each other and worked together at Esalen as part of the Human Potential Movement (*Self-Actualization Psychology,* 2008).

1972 Fritz Perls was the first person modeled, but not in person. He died in January 1970 in Chicago after spending most of 1969 in Canada attempting to establish a Gestalt community there. There are mythical stories that Bandler has propagated about meeting Perls, but I have not been able to find any evidence of those stories. What apparently happened was that Richard read and studied various books on Gestalt and then learned the language patterns and voice emphasis from the tapes of Perls so that he was able to replicate those patterns. He then taught a Gestalt Class in 1973. Dr. Spitzer later wrote about this:

> "Richard spent day after day wearing ear phones watch watching the films —making certain that the transcription was accurate. He came out of it talking and acting like Fritz Perls. I found myself accidently calling him Fritz on several occasions." (p. 41)
> [Spitzer, Robert S. (1992). Virginia Satir and the Origins of NLP. *Anchor Point.* July, 1992, pp. 40-44]

1973 Virginia Satir was doing a Family System's Reconstruction and Robert Spitzer sent Richard Bandler to record the program. Richard apparently picked up on her patterns and processes while sitting in the small recording room. One story has it that he was listening to Pink Floyd cassettes and Virginia got upset and confronted him. His response was that "Anyone could do this stuff" and so Virginia challenged him to show what he could do. When he was able to replicate the patterns, Virginia was surprised and amazed.

> "During the summer of '73 Richard was asked to record for transcription a seminar Virginia Satir was doing in Cold Harbor, Canada." [Interview with J. Grinder by Patrick Merlevede, 1999, *NLP World,* Volume 5, No. 1, p. 51.]

1974 Gregory Bateson introduced Richard and John to **Milton Erickson.** Milton Erickson, a medical doctor (MD) and psychiatrist in Phoenix Arizona who had established the credibility of medical hypnosis, from which Ericksonian Hypnotherapy evolved. Two books were immediately produced from modeling Erickson, *Patterns of the Hypnotic Patterns of Milton H. Erickson.* In NLP, this became known as "the Milton Model." It is about the language patterns and processes that comprise the heart of trance.

About the same time that *The Structure of Magic* books were published, 1975, Bandler got his master's degree from Lone Mountain College in San Francisco. If you google "Richard Bandler" there are many websites that provide the following information:

> "Born: February 24, 1950) is the co-inventor (with John Grinder) of Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP). Bandler holds a BA (1973) in Philosophy and Psychology from the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC), and an MA (1975) in Psychology from Lone Mountain College in San Francisco. Bandler has no *earned* doctorate. There are various (unsubstantiated) reports (on alt.psychology.nlp) that Bandler has been awarded two honorary doctorates though the details of these awards are not specified."

So 1975 is the date usually given for the beginning of NLP. That was the date of the publication of the original books that brought together the original discoveries of the language patterns of Perls and Satir. Now one story that I heard in the late 1980s was that the University of Southern California at Santa Cruz wanted to grant Bandler recognition for his co-creation of the new model but that he had not finished his thesis, so Grinder wrote it for him. But apparently that's not

accurate, his master's degree wasn't granted from that university, but from Lone Mountain College in San Francisco. There must be a story behind that, but I don't know that one.

What was NLP called before it was called NLP?   I don't know. Rodger C. Bailey (1991) says that Bandler and Grinder "came up with the name [NLP] in 1977." [*Anchor Point,* Is It Time to Restructure NLP?, Oct. 1991, p. 20]. I had not noticed that before, but when I flipped through *The Structure of Magic* volumes, it does not appear to be there. The only terminology used there was "The Meta-Model of Language in Therapy." Isabelle David, Montreal Canada, tells the story of Richard and John up at the log cabin in the mountains, after many hours and a bottle of California wine asking themselves, "What the hell are we going to call this?" And they decided on Neuro-Linguistic Programming.

I heard a different story from Richard in 1989. He told about being pulled over on the highway by a policeman and being asked, "Who are you? What do you do?" And Richard, looking in the back seat of his car saw a book on Linguistics, one on Neurology, and one on Computer Programming, so he said, "I'm a Neuro-Linguistic Programmer."   Of course, many, many years before all of this, **Alfred Korzybski** (1933) wrote about "neuro-linguistic" and "neuro-semantic" training and processes and in fact, Korzybski traveled the United States in the 1940s doing "Neuro-Linguistic Training." So who knows the real story. Given that "the map is not the territory" came from Korzybski who constantly used the term Neuro-Linguistic, I would put my money on him being the original source.

1976 Robert Dilts wrote his first papers on what was later titled, "Roots of Neuro-Linguistic Programming" (later published under that title by Meta Publications, 1983).

1977 NLP Taught for the first time as "NLP."   Richard and Leslie were married that year and then divorced in 1980. This was the year also that Leslie founded "The Society of NLP" over which the lawsuits in 1981 and 1996-2000 were about.

1978: David Gordon, a psychotherapist, took the basic NLP models and wrote the book *Therapeutic Metaphors.* 1978 also was the year that Bandler and Grinder ended their collaboration. Bateson moved to Esalen as the scholar-in-residence and died in 1980. This year also Richard and John commissioned Robert Dilts to write *NLP Volume I.* Robert had written a paper, "NLP: A New Psychotherapy." (McClendon, p. 103). Steve Johns left Gestalt therapy and entered NLP and become Steve Andreas (his mother Barry Stevens, owned Real People Press, a devotee of Fritz Perls).

1979: Daniel Goleman visited Bandler and Grinder and wrote an article in *Psychology Today,* "The People who Read People." In this year Leslie Cameron Bandler developed the first curriculum of NLP for the first Practitioner and Master Practitioner courses in 1979 and the first Trainers course was 1980. Rodger Bailey says that within the original curriculum a dilemma was introduced.

> "The modeling technologies and the psycho-therapeutic models were mashed together into a single, undifferentiated curriculum. People did not learn that Strategy Elicitation is a

modeling technology and that V-K Disassociation is a psycho-therapeutic model." (P. 21, *Anchor Point,* Oct. 1991).

During these early years of the 1970s John formed Grinder, DeLozier and Associates and Richard had his company, Not Limited. From *The Wild Days of NLP,* we learn that Leslie joined with Michael Labeau and David Gordon, Robert Dilts; Terry McClendon joined with Robert Dilts; and Frank Pucelik created a partnership with Byron Lewis.

In an Interview with David Gordon, Patrick Merlevede writes in *NLP World* about 1978-1979:
"First Institute in San Francisco, called DOTAR (Division of Training and Research) ... situated in a converted church which they used as a seminar room. Leslie Cameron was the director of the Institute, Robert Dilts the director of research, and David the director of training. They worked together, basically every day, creating the field, including the first practitioner and master practitioner programs, but also working with private clients. Richard and John mainly acted as patriarchs. ... The DOTAR period was probably the most productive in the NLP field. It went on until 1982." (p. 63). [Merlevede, Patrick E. (2000). Volume 7, No. 1. The Story of David [Gordon]. pp. 61-64]

So the 1970s were indeed invigorating years for NLP as it was first launched!

THE 1980s
WHEN NLP FRAGMENTED

The 1980s started out pretty well for the field of NLP, but it did not end that way. In fact, almost as soon as the 1980s began, the field began dividing into various divisions as both founders led the way by going their separate ways. By the end of the 80s, each was claiming to do "pure NLP" and essentially "dissing" the other. As the 80s others were creating their versions of NLP and creating separate "kingdoms." What a sad development for such a dynamic field.

Now the 1980s actually began in a wonderful way with the publication of *"Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Volume I"* (1980) by Robert Dilts published by Meta Publications. Robert had been commissioned to write that book back in 1978 having written a document on strategies that impressed both Richard and John. And this book, along with Robert's other original books on NLP, went a long way to establishing the credibility of NLP.

Many years later, Oakley Gordon wrote a two part article in *Anchor Point,* "What is NLP? A Brief History" (May and July 1995). In those articles, he wrote in part the following:
> "*'Volume I'* implies a *'Volume II'*. The second volume was to present the modeling techniques of NLP, the processes by which the NLP developers modeled excellence in human behavior. The project was aborted, however, due to the dissolution of the community of NLP developers." (p. 14, *Anchor Point,* July 1995).

And so the vision of a series of volumes on NLP came to an end immediately after the first one. No other volume in that series ever appeared. Many years later when I wrote *NLP Going Meta* (1997/ 2004) I contacted Meta Publications and asked Fred Tappa for permission to name it "NLP: Volume II." He said the term was reserved for the next volume and that was 1997— 17 years later! At the time I thought Fred was holding onto hope; but looking back my guess is that it was a joke and I just didn't get it(!) at that time. The very next year, **1981**, the first law suit between Bandler and Grinder occurred and as McClendon noted in *The Wild Days of NLP,* "Bandler bought John out of the Society" of NLP (p. 117).

About this dissolution of the society (and the community to a great extent) the collaboration between the original developers came to an end. Gordon (1995) noted:
> "While there was some degree of tracking each other's innovations, the overall effect of the breakup of the original group was a diversification in the trajectories of NLP with a resulting blurring of its definition." (p. 16)

So in a way, the 1980s brought so many challenges to the field that in some ways it is really surprising that NLP survived the 80s. Now among the challenges to the field, one of the strangest was Grinder's attack on the original formulations of NLP. In **1983** Grinder and DeLozier decide the whole field was wrongly oriented and formulated and so created a "New Code" to replace the old code of NLP. Grinder went on to argue against the focus on conscious awareness in NLP claiming the "unconscious mind" as more intelligent and less likely to error. So the idea of "running your own brain," so central to NLP (as per Bandler's 1985 book, *Running Your Brain for a Change*), was called into question.

1986: Bandler provided his own challenges to the field due to actions in his personal life. In the middle of the 1980s he was arrested, charged with an account of murder, and spent 120 days in county jail. That certainly didn't do the field of NLP any good! Steve Andreas lead a defense fund for Richard and personally provided $60,000 to Richard for the trial. What happened? A young woman, Corine Christensen, was shot by a .357 magnum revolver, the only other persons in the house was Richard Bandler and James Marino, an admitted cocaine dealer and her boyfriend. Though it was Marino's house and although they had been fighting, the district attorney decided that the evidence pointed to Richard than the drug dealer! Anyway this lasted from 1986 to 1988 and ended in the grand jury unable to decide, so the charge was dropped. But, of course, not without the trial hitting the headlines in many papers and journals— including a scathing review in *Mother Jones* magazine that you can still find on various websites.

Another Bandler lawsuit occurred sometime later (1988 or 1989) against Tony Robbins. That one was against Robbins because he was not certifying people as NLP Practitioners or Master Practitioners through The Society of NLP. Settled in 1990 out of court with Tony promising to "certify people through the Society and pay his $200 for each one certified in NLP," he promptly stopped training "NLP" as such and invented a new name, NAC— Neural Associative Conditioning. And so with that Richard Bandler essentially chased Robbins away from the field with the result that even to this day Anthony Robbins will not say the three letters, NLP, when he is on Larry King or other international television programs. Richard just chased away the greatest salesman he could have ever had!

Another conflict arose during my Master Practitioner training in San Diego, 1989. One of the trainer there was Tad James. He had been participating in the Bandler trainings, but this time was different. Apparently without informing Bandler, Tad had claim ownership of the Time-Lines model that Bandler had created and had filed a trademark for "time-line therapy" (which by the way was never registered). From the stories I heard from trainers who were there, Richard and Tad argued loudly about this and almost came to blows. So that ended their relationship. After that Tad introduced his many versions of New Age religions including Huna into his sect of NLP.

With all of this fragmentation, many new Associations were created throughout the 1980s, but by the end of the 1980s, there was no International Association or body to govern the field of NLP. Again, Oakley Gordon (1995) write in *Anchor Point:*

"There is no organization with the authority to pass judgment on the quality of the diverse NLP training programs currently being offered, or even to define what is, and what is not,

NLP." (p. 17) ...   For the field of NLP has no single voice, no universally agreed upon definition, no quality control over what is offered under its name. An outside entering these waters may encounter anything from the sublime to the ridiculous." (p. 18)

On a very positive note, it was during the 1980s that NLP went global. It was introduced into England 1981 or 2; then to Europe in the early 1980s, NLP came to Hong Kong in 1982, and so it went. Men and women from around the world began showing up in Santa Cruz and other places in America where NLP was being taught and then taking it home to their own countries. When and by whom NLP was taken abroad is much of the story that I don't know so if you do know specific details, do let me know.

So the decade that began so positively and that began to see the spread of NLP everywhere, a decade that began with so much hope ended in fragmentation, embarrassment, and conflict. It's the way of many movements, perhaps most movements. And yet for a movement about positive psychology, human excellence, and all based on a cutting-edge communication model— the 1980s were really a challenging time for the field of NLP.

THE HISTORY OF
NLP's IDENTITY CONFUSION
1975– 1980s

From the beginDning NLP has had an identity confusion. After all, *what is it*? What exactly is this thing that we call Neuro-Linguistic Programming? Now if you ask the people who should know, even NLP trainers, you will actually get all kinds of answers. So the confusion exists even here.

 For example, many of them will identify NLP as a form of therapy. "It's a new form of psychotherapy," many will assert. True enough, this field began from the field of therapy as it was modeled from therapists and because it has at its heart many therapeutic processes. Yet while it began from there, that's not what NLP is.

The big confusion that confusing NLP with therapy has created for the field of NLP has been highly problematic from the beginning. And yet, how that confusion came to be makes perfect sense. After all, NLP was modeled from three therapists, three world-class communicators who worked with hurting people who needed healing. So it really isn't a big surprise that many people, right from the beginning even to this day, confused it with therapy. NLP has a significant background in therapy. Add to this the fact that all of the original books and writings about NLP were written in the context of therapy and the examples and illustrations that were used were almost always from the field of therapy. Nevertheless, this was still a big confusion because NLP is not a therapy, not even a psychology.

Of course it makes sense that it took two men from *outside the field of therapy* to walk into that field and see things that those on the inside did not. Thomas Kunn (1972) wrote about this in his book, *The Scientific Revolution.* Those inside a paradigm often become paradigm blind and cannot see what is obvious to those on the outside. So when Bandler and then Grinder happened upon the "magic" of Perls and Satir, for a short while they had a distinct advantage.

Now against that background is another one, and one of far more importance for identifying what NLP is. I have been calling it "The Secret History of NLP." This is the fact that Perls and Satir and Bateson were part of the *Human Potential Movement* and that means that the focus was on psychological health (self-actualization) rather than therapy. It was on Maslow's idea of modeling

the best and healthiest in human nature.

Imagine how things might have turned out for the field of NLP if that had been made the focus and the "therapy" context was made more peripheral. But they didn't. In fact, one of the surprising things that I found from the time I began studying NLP is that throughout the early literature of NLP, both Bandler and Grinder refer to themselves as therapists! Of course, they were not. They might have been working with clients and taking on therapeutic issues, but neither was trained in therapeutic work and neither had any expertise as therapists or psychologists. As a side-note, later in the late 1990s, the name NLP was changed in several countries in Europe to NLP^t — which stands for Neuro-Linguistic Psychotherapy.

An interesting comment from Bandler, Grinder, and Andreas comes from *Frog into Princes,* which was published in 1978. In the following quotation they seemed to have just gotten the idea of moving from traditional therapy to Self-Actualization Psychology although they didn't have a name for that:

"We are very slowly tapering off teaching and doing therapy because there's a presupposition common in the field of clinical psychology which we personally disagree with: that change is a remedial phenomenon. You find something that is wrong and you fix it.

"There is an entirely different way to look at change, which we call the *generative* or *enrichment* approach. Instead of looking for what's wrong and fixing it, it's possibly simply to think of ways that your life could be enriched: 'What would be fun to do, or interesting to be able to do?' 'What new capacities or abilities could I invent for myself?' 'How can I make things really groovy?'" (190)

"The idea of generative change is really hard to sell to psychologists. ... We are currently investigating what we call generative personality. We are finding people who are geniuses at things, finding out the sequence of unconscious programming that they use, and installing those sequences in other people to find out if having that unconscious program allows them to be able to do the task." (191)

What is NLP? Many others confuse it with hypnosis or hypnotherapy. But again, that's not what it is. That is just one of the sources of the original modeling and one of the applications. The "magic" that Milton Erickson was able to produce with his medical hypnosis led to a second communication model in NLP, the Milton Model. And with that discovery, it seemed that the original founders took a strange turn, one that brought many other confusions.

So what is NLP? *It is a Communication Model.* That's what it *is*— a discovery of how people use words to inform themselves, map reality, and create their behaviors. Modeled from people who were excellent in their use of language, NLP used Transformational Grammar to generate the Meta-Model from Perls and Satir. And as a set of communication tools, the NLP model provides a way for us to *model* human experiences. *So, NLP is a modeling process.* That's how it began, accidently, and that is (and will be) how NLP will grow and develop. The founders called themselves modelers in that early literature of NLP. And if they had really focused on that, they might have turned to focus on business and if they had done that, the field of NLP could have

possibly discovered the field of Coaching and would today own it. But they didn't. It would be many years later before NLP applications for business would develop. That came in the 1980s, not the 70s.

NLP'S "NEW AGE" CONFUSIONS

Not only has NLP long been confused with therapy, it has also for a long time been confused with the New Age movement and many of the way-out ideas involved in that. I don't know when "The New Age" movement began. In the USA it seemed to have arisen during the 1960s as freedoms of various sorts were sought for and explored— during the Civil rights movement, Women's Rights, etc.

It also seemed to have also been part and parcel of the Human Potential Movement (1962–1985) and eventually became part of the Trans-Personal Psychology (approximately 1965). Esalen played a big role in it as it served as the New Age Center where the wildest ideas could be explored and where "East and West spirituality" could mix and mingle in new forms.

What specifically is this "New Age" movement? What ideas determine and govern it? Well, that's where things get pretty messy. It is almost a catch-all-term for *anything outside of the mainstream thinking.* Sometimes it involves thinking outside-the-box and imagining what could be such imaginative questions as the following:

> *What if* we could send our thoughts through space without speaking, just thinking? *What if* we could move physical objects by our thoughts? *What if* we are reincarnated from a previous life? *What if* this is just one expression and we will be back? *What if* thinking creates reality without having to invent and innovate products?

Wild and crazy and imaginative ideas, right? And if we keep it as just that— some imaginative thinking for exploring—it keeps us playful and open. But once a person starts to believe in such things—well, then the self-validating and self-reinforcing and self-fulfilling nature of a *belief* kicks in and then a person will begin to "see" and "perceive" evidence of their belief— even when there is nothing in reality. That's when all of this becomes a problem. Then imaginations take flight and they never come in for a landing! They continue to hoover in la-la-land.

The challenge here is how to maintain a realistic (and scientific mindset) of testing things, checking things out, demanding rigorous standards for "proof," *and* staying open, playful, and imaginative. It is believing-while-being a skeptic until there's external evidence that even an unbeliever has to acknowledge.

So a New Age *Believer* is just that— *a believer* in something, someone fully convinced about something and who also believes that he or she has "proof." In this, a non-believer does not see

or perceive what the believer does. This differentiates true science from pseudo-science. In legitimate science, the evidence stands on its own— there's a process for testing, and it can be replicated by others, even by those who do not believe that something exists or that something works. In fact, when the non-believer has to agree with the facts and legitimacy of something, then you have proof that isn't a function of a self-validating belief.

Now you know why double-blind and triple-blind research design projects are so important in science. If the persons conducting the study *know* what to look for or *believe* that they will find it, they will mess up the results.

Why is it that this comes so easily into NLP? Well the answer is this: As a cognitive-behavioral psychology based on a constructivist philosophy about reality and a phenomenological philosophy of human nature, we start from the assumption that there's a difference between our mental maps about the world and the world. We start from this "the map is not the territory" distinction. We know that the way we "bring the world" into ourselves is through the "abstracting of our nervous system with its sense receptors." This is what Alfred Korzybski described in great detail in *Science and Sanity* (1933, 1995). This is what NLP began with in saying that "We do not deal with reality (the territory) directly, but through our maps."

> [In *Whispering in the Wind* Grinder reveals that he has *not* read Korzybski as he accuses him of a shallow understanding of the "map" that we use to navigate reality and what Grinder calls 'first access' Korzybski mapped out in 1933 in much greater detail than Grinder as his Structural Differential and the neurological stages of abstractions.]

So far, so good. In science we know that the electro-magnetic spectrum of "energies"out there in the world are processed and interpreted by our nervous system and sense receptors as light, sound, and sensation. And we know that different nervous-system structures in neurology, as the eyes of owls, the ears of dogs, etc., see and hear and interpret the "energy signals" out there in the world differently from ours. They may see the ultra-violet aspect of the spectrum where for us, we see nothing and sense nothing. Then there are all of the extra-neural devices that we have invented over the years— devices that allow us to register, detect, recognize, interpret, and understand what is "out there" that we cannot pick up naturally with our neurological sense receptors.

And yes, there is a world "out there" beyond our nervous system. There is a reality of objects that impact us independent of whether we know what they are or how they work. You don't have to believe in cars or car accidents (or disbelieve in them) in order to experience an accident. Reality exists outside of you and your inner "reality" (subjective experience of reality) is co-created by the mixture of your thoughts and beliefs with the stuff outside. So reality is not pure or only subjectivity. We do not merely project the world. We project our models and theories *onto* the world, our assumptions and then see the world in terms of those assumptions.

So we know that there is more "out there" than we can detect without special help. And this is where our playful imaginations come in as we imagine the *what ifs...* and play around in our thinking about what other extra-neural devices we could invent and wonder if we could re-

program our thinking and feeling in order to expand our capacities. And as long as that's what we're doing, I say, go for it.

But I also think we should be very, very, very careful about turning imaginative ideas into beliefs, and then into creeds. I would love to move things only with my mind. But until someone figures out how to do that, demonstrates it to non-believers, and can demonstrate it under laboratory conditions, tele-kinesis is just an imaginary desire and sci-fi plaything, and not reality.

But this is what begins to create *the New Age Believer*— that person has jumped over the evidence stage and has become a *believer*, and often times a *fanatic,* who is absolutely convinced and therefore no longer open-minded and no longer open to feedback that he or she could be wrong. And that, of course, is a big danger sign!

NLP was designed, as a child of the Human Potential Movement, to be creative, playful, imaginative and to stretch forward to play with the various possibilities for developing new human resources. So no wonder so many "New Agers" were (and are) attracted to NLP and many end up as Trainers. And with that another problem begins. They not only teach and train the Cognitive-Behavioral psychology of NLP (if they even know it), but they also *mix it with their religious belief system, alias their "New Age Religion."*

And they have the right to whatever religion they want! I have no problem with that. But to confuse NLP and New Age Religion, well, with that I do have a problem. They are fusing together a model of human nature with a set of beliefs. And doing that confuses things. Nor should someone confuse NLP wth Christianity, or NLP and Buddhism, or NLP and Isalm, etc.

We have been very, very careful in Neuro-Semantics about keeping the model of Neuro-Semantic-NLP clean and clear from any and every religion. Within our ranks are people who are believers in these different spiritual disciplines who *use the models* that govern language, emotion, meaning, performance, mental filters, etc. in their religious expressions. So far, so good. And what we ask is that they keep them separate. One is the model itself, the other are the various applications.

So if you see or read about some NLP or Neuro-Sematnic person into what I personally consider pure non-sense, like the stuff in "The Secret," or other New Age Beliefs about tele-kinesis, channeling the dead, reincarnation, Huna (Tad James), "quantum" psychology or linguistics, "new humans" emerging with mutated DNA, etc., *none of that has anything to do with NLP or Neuro-Semantics.*

Now our official position in Neuro-Semantics is that all of this is pre-scientific and much of it is pseudo-scientific and is the idiosyncratic *beliefs* of certain people and have *nothing to do with the models.*

ON THE SHOULDER OF GIANTS

In spite of all of the hype and myths about NLP, the models and field of NLP did not appear all of a sudden just from the work of Richard Bandler and John Grinder. In many ways, they were just the final catalysts who brought together the thinking, spirit, and focus of many others. And to a great extent they just *happened upon what we today call NLP, it was not a thought-out plan or strategy.* It was as much coincidence and accident as anything else.

For example, did you know that long, long before Bandler or Grinder were even born, *Alfred Korzybski was conducting Neuro-Linguistic Trainings* around the United States as a way of making General Semantics known? Yes, that's right. That occurred during the 1940s. Today we recognize Korzybski as one of the giants upon whose shoulders NLP stands. He set forth the presupposition that "The map is not the territory" as well as the terms "neuro-linguistic," and "neuro-semantics." And long before Grinder ever used the words "first access," Korzbyski mapped out the multiple levels of "abstracting" that occur in our nervous system long before it reaches conscious awareness. He called that the "before words" level of abstracting.

And long, long before the idea of modeling excellence dawned in the midst of either Bandler or Grinder, *Abraham Maslow was actually engaged in modeling self-actualizing people.* After writing an exhaustive volume on *Abnormal Psychology,* Maslow turned his energies to the highest and best in human nature, the "Farther Reaches of Human Nature" and began modeling people who showed some of the characteristics of self-actualization. In fact, he began with one of the co-founders of Gestalt Psychology, Max Wertheimer. This was the man who Fritz Perls later followed as he developed Gestalt Therapy. Maslow also modeled Ruth Benedict, the mentor of Margaret Mead, and Gregory Bateson's first wife.

Maslow and Rogers, in the 1930s and 1940s, then set out the foundations of Humanistic Psychology, the psychology of the Human Potential Movement of which Perls, Satir, and Bateson were second generation leaders and who worked together at Esalen. These were the giants upon whose shoulders Bandler and Grinder stood and which enabled them to create the synthesis called NLP.

And there were others.   NLP was also founded, in part, on the work of the two men who founded the field of Cognitive Psychology. Both Noam Chomsky and George Miller are each credited as the founder of the Cognitive movement beginning in 1956. Chomsky because of his work in founding Transformational Grammar — the first tool that J. Grinder used to create the

Meta-Model of Language and that defeated Behaviorism as the dominant model in psychology. Miller for his classic 1956 paper, "The Magic Number 7 plus-or-minus 2" and for his 1960 book on "Plans and the Structure of Behavior" that introduced the TOTE model which Bandler, Grinder, DeLozier, Dilts and others used to create the Strategy Model in NLP.

And others— of course, the work of Milton Erickson in hypnosis and hypnotic language patterns, Virginia Satir which brought in systems thinking. There was Gregory Bateson the professor at the University at Santa Cruz whose work on meta-levels, double-bind theory, anthropology, systems work, and general creativity powerfully influenced and enriched the NLP model.

The point? *NLP was inevitable.* The idea of stepping back from structures of excellence and using various tools and models — General Semantics, Transformational Grammar, Human Potentials, Gestalt, Systems, etc. Already the Self-Actualization Psychology of Maslow had encouraged a new *strengths-focus* in many areas—education, therapy, training and development, etc. It had encourage people to look for and explore human potentials and to begin to look at and model positive examples.

What NLP added to *this spirit of the times* in the 1960s and 1970s was that using two sound disciplines—linguistics and neurology— they intentionally sought to understand *the structure* of an experience apart from the content details (the story). And with that focus, they were able to identify *some component pieces* of "mind" and "body" and that's what gave them some control and management in replicating excellence. And with that the modeling of NLP began.

Korzbyski calls this whole process *time-binding.* This refers to our ability to *bind* into our very being— our minds and neurology— the learnings, insights, and discoveries of people who went before us so that we don't have to reinvent everything with every generation. Ideally, we could begin each generation where the previous one left off. Using symbols (language) I can take what Aristotle or Einstein or Maslow or Bateson or anyone else and *bind* what they learned and make it mine. This is "standing on the shoulders of giants" so that we can see further, so that we can progress to the next level of development and not have to start all over again.

THE LAWSUIT
THAT ALMOST KILLED NLP

In the 1990s a blow was delivered to the field of NLP that nearly destroyed the field in the United States. Elsewhere in the world NLP kept growing and thriving, but not in the United States and the effect has continued to this day. What happened is a very sad chapter in the history of NLP.

It began in July of 1996 when Richard Bandler filed a $90,000,000 lawsuit as a civil action against John Grinder, Carmen Bostic St. Clair, Christina Hall, Steve and Connirae Andreas, and Lara Ewing and 200 John and Jane Does. In that lawsuit Bandler claimed exclusive ownership of the Society of NLP. Copies of the lawsuit are still available on various websites.

The first effected me in early 1997. Having just completed another NLP Practitioner Course with 20 people, I sent a check for $4,000 ($200 per participant was the arrangement) and the certificates to the "First Institute of NLP" in San Francisco for Richard Bandler to sign. As a NLP trainer, this was the arrangement that I had been following for seven years, but this time Brahm von Huene returned the check and certificates and sent a *new* contract for me to sign.

In the contract, I crossed out the section that said that anything I developed based on NLP would be considered the intellectual property of Bander and the section that if he decided to sue me, I would assume responsibility for all legal bills. Of course, I would *not* sign *that*! I initialed both places, and then sent the money, certificates and the contract back. Shortly thereafter all was returned again with the statement that I was no longer a NLP trainer under the Society of NLP.

By June of 1997 the lawsuit had become big news in the field of NLP, and so when Robert Dilts sponsored the *Visionary Leadership* conference in Santa Cruz California, word about the lawsuit was the central thing that everybody was talking about. There were over 200 NLP Trainers who had gathered from all around the world for this conference.

A day or two later, Judith DeLozier announced in the conference that John Grinder had showed up—but he would not come into the meeting place where we were all gathered. I think it was Judith DeLozier who announced that John would meet with anyone who wanted to talk to him about the lawsuit "out on the grass" in front of the venue. So many of us met with John and listened to what he told us about the lawsuit. He was there also to raise money for his legal defense.

The very next day, Richard Bandler sent his lawyer (!) who also came and meet with anyone who wanted to talk to him "out on the grass." And again, many of us when out to talk to him. Wyatt Woodsmall and I stood next to each other, and when there was a moment for some questions, I had the contract that had been returned to me, so I held it forth and asked Richard's lawyer about it. But it was a futile attempt for any reasoning.

The contract that I signed, sent back with the two sections crossed out, began with these words which tells a lot about what all the ruckus was about:
> "The Licensor owns throughout the World all rights, title, and interest in and to the intellectual property known as Neuro-Linguistic Programming..."

So there was no question that Bandler's 1996 lawsuit was an attempt to take over and totally control the field of NLP. And from the perspective of 1996, 1997, etc. it seemed very likely that that might happen. It seemed that he had the trademark. That's why Dr. Bob Bodenhamer and myself decided that we would trademark and register "Neuro-Semantics." Our thinking was that if Bandler did win the lawsuit, and forbid us from training NLP, we would still be able to train under the banner of Neuro-Semantics and that also explained why we set forth a vision of being more professional, more collaborative, more "applying to self," etc.

During this time John Grinder put out a Statement about the lawsuit, Robert Dilts wrote a paper on Trademarks, and *NLP Connection,* and many other journals kept the field informed about what was going on. Steve Andreas asked me if I would be available and willing to make a deposition about NLP and be disposed by Bandler's lawyer. I was to provide "some substantial documentation of the many sources that Bandler drew upon in the development of NLP— what he got from Bateson, from Perls, Satir, Chomsky, etc." I had been writing about the intellectual history of NLP for years, and I readily agreed to provide that. I told Steve that I was highly disappointed in Bandler, that Steve had done more to put Bandler on the map than anyone, and that yes, of course, I would testify on his behalf.

From 1996 to 2000 (when the lawsuit was settled), hundreds of people in the United States, scared of Richard and fearful of being added to the lawsuit as one of the "John Does" began divesting themselves of NLP— they stopped referring to what they did as "NLP" and those running training centers either closed shop or changed their names. By the end, there were but a dozen centers left (if that) and even today, there's very few Centers left, no journals, no magazines, and no associations of NLP in the US.

What happened? Chris Hall (no relation to me) explained in *NLP World* (July 2001):
> "The Court's rulings have made it clear that Bandler's claim to exclusive and sole ownership of the Society and the intellectual property rights associated with NLP have been false and unlawful." (p. 17)

Christina Hall was one of my trainers when I learned NLP. I recorded some of her presentations and referred to her in my first two books on NLP: *The Spirit of NLP* (1989; 1996) and *Becoming More Ferocious as a Presenter* (1990). She was in a special internship with Richard when I first

met her in 1989 and the president of "The Society of NLP." And given that she was the representative leader of the "Bandler Group" who owned the trademark, "Society of NLP," when the trial was all over, she won the judgment over Bandler and was awarded some $600,000. I doubt she will ever receive any of that because Bandler moved to Ireland! It turned out that Richard Bandler did not have the trademark for "NLP"—no one did. And with that NLP was declared in public domain. (A similar thing happened in the UK, as Bandler was convicted of receiving the trademark of NLP by fraud and fined 175,000 pounds.)

"The Bandler Group" was the group who in 1983 purchased the trademark of "The Society of NLP" after Liquidation of *NOT Ltd.* (Bandler's original company) went bankrupt. This group was named "the Bandler group" and was comprised of Christina Hall, Max Steinback, M.D., Karen MacDonald, Ed and Maryann Reese, Joseph and Linda Sommers-Yeager, and Richard Morales.

The trial lasted nine days and ended on Thursday, Feb. 10, 2000. Chris Hall tells about the testimony against Bandler and those who testified in the court of Judge Yonts in Feb 2000. This included Dr. Max Steinback, John Grinder, Karen MacDonald (widow of Will MacDonald), and Christina Hall.

References:

Andreas, Steve (1999). Personal communications.

Hall, Chris. (2001). *NLP World* (Vol. 8, No. 2, July 2001). <u>In The Matter of ...</u> Summary of the Bandler Lawsuit. pp. 15-24.

NLP Connections: June 10, 2010. Volume XI, No. 2 and 3. Phoenix, Arizona.

Bibliography

Bodenhamer, Bob; Hall, L. Michael.   (*User's Manual of the Brain, Volume I*).

Bandler interview: *Get the Life you Want*. June 24, 2010   www.Brainsync.com.

Chancy, Frank; Yorkshire, Heidi. (1989). *The Bandler Method. Feb./March 1989.*

Dusen, Wilson Van (1994). <u>"NLP in Historical Perspective,"</u> *Anchor Point,* March 1994.

Perls, Fritz. (1973). *The Gestalt Approach and Eye Witness to Therapy.* CA: Science and Behavior Books.

Emerick, John J. (1999), NLP World, Volume 6, No. 2.   <u>What is NLP? A Very Important Question.</u>   pp. 20- 40.

McClendon, Terry. (1989) *The Wild Days of NLP: 1975– 1981.*

Grinder, John; *Whispering*

Hall, Chris. (2001). *NLP World* (Vol. 8, No. 2, July 2001). <u>In The Matter of ...</u> Summary of the Bandler Lawsuit.

Bailey, Rodger C. (1991). *Anchor Point,* <u>Is It Time to Restructure NLP?,</u> Oct. 1991, p. 20.

Goleman, Daniel (1979). *Psychology Today,* <u>"The People who Read People."</u>

Gordon, Oakley. (1995). *Anchor Point,* <u>"What is NLP? A brief History"</u> (May and July 1995).

Lewis, Bryron; Pucelik, Frank. (1980). *Meta-Principles of Communication and Change: A Model for a process theory of Personality.* (Revised title: *The Magic of NLP Demystified.*) Portland OR: Metamorphous Press.

Merlevede, Patrick E. (1998, 1999). Volume 5, No. 1. <u>Reframing the Roots of NLP.</u>

Merlevede, Patrick E. (2000). Volume 7, No. 1. NLP World, Switzerland. pp. <u>The Story of David [Gordon].</u> pp. 61-64.

O'Connor, Joseph. (1997). <u>"Shoddy Epistemology!" Speculation on Bateson's Last Theorem"</u> *Anchor Point, September 1997.* Pp. 3-8.

Pfalzgraf, Rene. (1977). Bandler Lawsuit, Parts I and II. *Bandler Vs. Tad James, Circa 1990.*
The NLP Connection, Journal of the International Association of NLP. AZ: Scottsdale.

Spitzer, Robert S. (1992). Virginia Satir and the Origins of NLP. *Anchor Point.* July, 1992, pp.
40-44.