

A Memory of Monte

by Janet Wahl

I participated in Monte's dream groups for about fifteen years. During this time, he was training us and sharing his past with us. He was an accomplished psychiatrist, neurologist, parapsychologist, researcher, and academician.

Sometimes when the group had extra time, Monte regaled us with stories of his paranormal interests, attempting to explain them through the current principles of quantum physics, which he had learned from personal conversations with David Bohm. Other times, he told us about his dream lab and the telepathic dream studies of the 1960s and 1970s. Over the years, the group gained much personal information and hard copies of his published articles. However, his most memorable stories were of his personal life.

Monte grew up in Washington Heights and on the Upper West Side of Manhattan with conservative parents who held high expectations for their children. Monte and his friends graduated from high school at fifteen and sixteen and enrolled in City College. One friend, Len, had read a lot about psychic phenomena after another friend, Gil, had described the poltergeist that had plagued his apartment. This entity threw hairpins at the walls and oatmeal over the carpet. Monte, fascinated and curious, joined his friends for séances to contact this entity.

From 1932 to 1934, a group of seven boys, sometimes with girlfriends, held regular Saturday night "sittings." The boys gathered in one apartment, darkened the room, and sat around a table with hands lightly touching on the tabletop. These "sitters" concentrated their energy and focused on raising the table. After a few sessions, the table tipped more and more and finally levitated so high that one member had to grab a leg. To make sure no one

was lifting it, the boys switched from a bridge table to a forty- or fifty-pound table. Elated with the results, they pushed the envelope further by making psychic photos in 1933. They placed their hands and objects, such as keys and bottles, on top of a box containing a sealed, non-exposed plate. When they developed the plate in the bathroom, out came the objects as images on the plate!

Ever the explorers, they moved to thought photography. When a sitter visualized a page from a book, the image of a newspaper column appeared on the non-exposed plate; a picture of a girl's face in the mind of another sitter produced an "Indian idol." A stepsister of one of the sitters saw the photo of the "Indian idol," which reminded her of an object she had brought home from a trip out West. Despite searching everywhere, the object was not located until housecleaning the next spring: it was behind a book cabinet. Thrilling successes and invitations by respected psychic groups continued to excite and inspire them.

The group then decided to contact the "force" that appeared to be moving the table and making the photos. Their questions ready, the sitters gathered, concentrated their energy, and contacted the entity. Dr. Bindelof appeared. They received several messages from him over the next few years, which Monte, the group's secretary, carefully recorded. Years later, by his own admission, Monte did not want to publicize the Bindelof experience. As a Freudian-trained psychiatrist in the 1950s, Monte was establishing credibility with colleagues unlikely to be receptive to psi phenomena. The fear of ridicule prevailed. However, the desire to publish was never extinguished.

Monte gathered his compatriots for reunions in 1966, 1969, and 1971 to help recall these psi phenomena and to learn of the impact they had had on each of them. He collected written accounts and documents of the séances and taped interviews, intending to publish in the future. Yet this information rested in the closet as members of the Bindelof Sitters passed away one by one. Finally, in 2001, Monte published the accounts.

We, as members of his dream group, heard these fascinating tales in installments, not necessarily in chronological order. The vignettes came when we finished early with a dream, when we were having coffee and pastry during break, or just when Monte got the urge.

Not until after Monte had passed in June 2008 did I realize the extent to which the Bindelof experience had shaped his career. I dug into my files and read Monte's commemorative website.^[i] He trained in neurology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis and went into private practice from 1946 to 1974. During this time, he founded and directed the first community mental health center in New York City at Maimonides Medical Center. He also directed a sleep laboratory to study dreams and telepathy, which resulted in one of his books, *Dream Telepathy*.

In 1974, after many academic publications and years of serving as president of numerous professional organizations, Monte resigned from Maimonides Medical Center. This allowed him time to develop his ideas of his dream group process. Not only did he develop the very structured, safe approach to exploring dreams but he also trained people in his technique in the United States, Sweden, and Finland. As I looked back during the years of participation in Monte's dream groups, I realized I had not appreciated him for his innumerable accomplishments.

On one level, I knew he was an academic giant, but his demeanor, compassion, and healing statements made me realize he was a very able, ordinary giant—an ordinary giant, but elfish and with a sense of humor at the same time. Although small in stature, he let us know who was boss now and again to protect the psychological safety of the dreamer. At the beginning of each session, he told us who had "priority" because he kept track of who had shared dreams and on what dates. If two people wanted to share, he encouraged each person to explain the urgency of his or her dream. The dreamers themselves decided. This step allowed the dreamer to establish control, which enhanced safety. To further protect the sharing dreamer, Monte was quick to stop anyone from asking leading questions. When in

doubt, I did not ask a question for fear of being called out. He reminded me of my father: better to be right than wrong! When no one responded to the question, “Who has a short, recent dream to share?” and someone squeaked, “I have a dream, but it’s very small and not so important,” Monte would say, “*There’s no such thing as an unimportant dream!*” He was a friendly little giant!

After Monte’s beloved wife, Janet, died in 2001, the dream group did not meet. Imagining the enormity of his grief, I wondered if Monte would ever resume the group. Finally I called him. He gave me the date of the next meeting. We group members approached his house with trepidation and were rather subdued as we entered Monte’s living room. After we had settled into our usual seats, Monte inquired, as usual, “Who has a dream to share?”

No one responded. Total silence.

“Does anyone have a dream to share?” More silence.

“Well, if no one has a dream, I have one, but it’s only a fragment.”

At last! The group replied gently, “There’s no such thing as a small, unimportant dream, Monte.” The dream was a fragment, not even a whole sentence. We processed that fragment for nearly two hours. It was healing for Monte and the group. We now knew that the dream group would continue even though Janet was no longer on the earth.

Something important happened during that session: Monte revealed more of his vulnerabilities and his regrets, presenting himself as a “real” human, more than an academic who needed scientific proof to present to the world. It taught me that regardless of the public stature of the person, we meet on the level playing field of the dream world. He gave us a way to appreciate the messages from dream feelings and metaphors that promote personal growth and increase compassion. After all, how can you be angry with someone who shares a dream? That is Monte’s true gift to the world—and to himself.

(from Janet's book [*Discovering the Messages in Your Dreams with the Ullman Method*](#))