

VIRGINIA SATIR; CREATIVE DEVELOPER OF FAMILY THERAPY

CHRONOLOGY

- 1890 Minnie Wilke born
- 1893 Reinhold Pagenkopf born- youngest of 13 children (9 survived)
- 1900 Henrietta Simon Wilke had serious illness and family became Christian scientists when bro in law who had met Mary Baker Eddy suggested it
- 1915 Oct 15- Minnie Wilke married Reinhold Pagenkopf
- 1916 Jan 3- Minnie Wilke's father died- to whom she was very close
- 1916 Jun 26- Ginnie Mildred/ Virginia Satir (VS) born.
- 1917 Dec 31- Twins Russell & Roger are born
- 1921 VS- appendicitis- almost died. Mother as Christian Scientist didn't want Doctor called. VS got peritonitis. Father finally rushed her to Hospital and pressed doctors that it wasn't too late, so they operated. She was in hospital for several months. Father, in anger at mother, burned all her Christian Science books. In Retaliation mother cut off her beautiful red hair.
- 1921 Dec 14. Younger sister Edith born (very close to the time of Virginia's crisis).
- 1924 Youngest child, Ray, born. After which Minnie, VS's mother, depressed
- 1927 Satir's mother was ill physically and emotionally for next 10 years.
- 1929 Family lost their farm and moved to Milwaukee.
- 1932 VS graduated HS Milwaukee (at 16)
- 1936 VS graduated teacher's college (age 20) and began teaching at Williams Bay, Wisconsin.
- 1937 Began part time study of social work at Northwestern
- 1937 Satir's mother began Vocational School- won state prize.
- 1938 Satir taught 2 more years at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin and at the Jones School in Ann Arbor
- 1939 Satir taught in Shreveport Louisiana
- 1941 VS entered SSA at U Chicago as part time student (was judged a failure and advised to drop out by a supervisor who committed suicide the next year!
- 1941 August 30. Sister Edith married Reuben Hardel. (For the next 7 years the Hardels & Satir & her husband Gordon Rogers would socialize together.)
- 1941 Nov 8. Brother Roger married Enid.
- 1941 Dec 10. VS married Gordon Rogers after knowing him 1 month.
- 1941 Switched to U Chicago SSA because Northwestern ended its part time program in social work. Psychotic teacher gave her failing grade. When she protested they told her she should leave
- 1941 Worked at Chicago Home for Girls.
- 1942 Thanksgiving. With sister Edith. 13 year old girl, Mary, from Chicago home for girls and her sister Ruth, a year younger, who came from an abusive home elsewhere in Illinois, moved in.
- 1943 June. Satir became very ill with an ectopic pregnancy and was told she could not have children.
- 1945~ Satir was placed at the Institute for Juvenile Research, one of the best facilities in Chicago.

- 1948 Satir got MA in Social Work from SSA, U Chicago
- 1948 The couple moved to Dallas with the foster daughters Mary & Ruth
- 1949-50 Satir Worked at Dallas Child Guidance Center
- 1949 Satir's youngest brother Ray wrote to her for financial help to finish college and was very disappointed she did not even reply, but it is possible she did not even receive the letter. It was a distressing time for her in any case as her estrangement from Gordon Rogers was very painful to her.
- 1950 January. Satir & Rogers separated. Conflicts related to Rogers closeness to the stepdaughters, the older of whom got pregnant. Satir returned to Chicago with the daughters, who wanted to stay with Gordon, who was apparently broken up by the divorce.
- 1951 Gets Masters at SSA finally.
- 1951 Married Norman Satir
- 1951 Began private practice- inventing family therapy as she went.
- 1955-58 Worked at Illinois St. Psychiatric Institute
- 1955 Instructor in Family Dynamics Residency Training Program at Illinois St Psychiatric Inst.
- 1958 Virginia & Norman Satir moved to San Francisco.
- 1959 March. Began working with Don Jackson, who soon asked her to help him found the Mental Research Institute (MRI) To Palo Alto with others including Jules Riskin. & Gregory Bateson
- 1959 Became training director for MRI.
- 1959 Separated from Satir. Was depressed
- 1964 Published *Conjoint Family Therapy*
- 1965~ Dir. Training Esalen Inst.
- 1970 First International Human Learning Resources Network (IHLRN).
- 1971 Bought house in Columbia, MD, hoping to work with NIMH and Johns Hopkins.
- 1972 Moved back to California.
- 1972 Published *Peoplemaking* which made her idea of therapy as educational process more explicit.
- 1973 Honorary Doctorate from U. Wisconsin
- 1979 June- Brother Roger committed suicide.
- 1982-3 President Association for Humanistic Psychology
- 1983 Named one of the 100 most influential women in US by Ladies Home Journal
- 1986 1st Family Therapy Symposium in Prague.
- 1980s Was spending time in Eastern Europe, Germany, Central America, USSR, Taught at Social Work program, Univ. Alberta, Calgary, Canada, Manitoba Health Commission
- 1988 Published *New Peoplemaking*
- 1988 Sept 10- VS died of pancreatic CA.

VIRGINIA SATIR

"If I should go tomorrow, I would like you and the rest of my family to meet have a party, being more glad that I lived than sorry that I died." Letter from Virginia Satir to her brother Russell, 1988 (Brothers, 2000, p. 6)

Known as the Mother of Family Therapy, Virginia Satir was one of the most creative developers of the family therapy field. Having been disgusted by the negativity of the psychoanalytic approach in its view of human nature, she set out to transform the field, creating theory and methods based on empowering people and bringing forth their potential for connection and hope, rather than competition and control. She wanted to draw out people's positive energy, never their negative energy, which she had found so devastating in her own psychoanalytic therapy. She had an absolute conviction in



people's ability to change and in their deserving respect from their therapists, convictions which made her stand apart from most of the dominant therapists of the time. She saw her role as a therapist as helping people go to whatever scary places they might have often made her able to help clients change whom others would have been convinced would never do it.

She was one of the strongest advocates for changing the locus of diagnosis from the individual to the family. In one of her earliest training papers she put her position strongly: *"The basic assumption underlying our diagnostic and treatment efforts is that since the symptom relates to a sick family situation, rather than only to it's "sick" member, the diagnosis and treatment then must include a thorough study of the whole family. This means that the family, rather than the individual member or members, is the unit of treatment."* (Satir, 1963, p. 33).

She realized from early on that she was not like the other children she grew up with. From childhood on Satir was a larger than life character, becoming almost 6 feet tall by the time she was 11! She was much bigger, smarter, and more keenly aware than the other children around her, beginning college after only 7 ½ years of formal education. Though she missed a good deal of school because of illness, she could read by 3, even though her father seems never to have mastered English (He went to German school in Wisconsin), and her mother, though very bright, had what would probably now be diagnosed as dyslexia, and did not master her education until midlife. Virginia was extremely bright, capable, and hardworking, and was expected especially by her mother to take care of everyone else from earliest childhood, rather than to expect to be cared for herself.

Satir focused all her creative life on human connectedness and authenticity, while having great difficulty developing emotional closeness in her personal relationships, but at the same time had a her network of students and followers.

Though one of the best connectors of other people's families said *"Too often families are strangers, burdens, or enemies to one another"* (Satir, 1968, cited in Brothers, 2000, p. 47), Satir did not appear to have had close relationships with anyone in her own family for most of her adult life and she seems to have felt alienated even as

a child, telling her siblings she felt her family “had kicked her out.” (Brothers, 2000, p. 46). She once described that she had a 20 year cutoff from her father from the day after she finished college at 18, and long cutoffs from most of her other family members over the years. She had felt from early childhood a strong tug to protect her parents from each other, and a strong responsibility to take care of everyone. It led her apparently to a decision to work hard and protect herself instead of engaging emotionally with her family (Brothers, 2000, p. 25).

Apparently there were many cutoffs in Satir’s family and much that went unspoken. Her family’s history in general seems to have been characterized by emotional distancing, cutoff, longing, loss, abandonment, and mis-match, especially of spouses, with women generally marrying down.

Fritz Perls referred to her as a restless gypsy: “Virginia, you have my love and my unstinted admiration...Restless Gypsy...You are a big woman with a big heart...you have projected your need for an understanding family, and, correspondingly, are family-phobic yourself. Your dreams to settle down remain dreams” (Perls, 1969, cited in Brothers, 2000, p. 9). She created many different versions of herself to suit different circumstances. She once told a family that she had left home at 12 and that they didn’t find her until a month later, when she was cleaning house for a family 100 miles away!

Satir thought her family expected her to be a Princess and at the same time to be the caretaker for everything that wasn’t working in her family, a Cinderella role. As she once explained to Fred Duhl:

Satir: (It was) a paradox. There was a very strong message in my family that I was supposed to be the queen—but how in the hell can the queen also be the scullery maid? You see—

Duhl: Cinderella—

Satir: Yes, that was one of the ways I did it. One of my early fantasies of how I would get out of all this was, literally a knight would come on a white horse and take me away (cited in Brothers, 2000, pp. 8-9).

Indeed, finding prince charming seems to have been a lifelong fantasy, at which she never succeeded, perhaps because the task as she saw it was more mythological than real. But, according to her close friend Bud Baldwin, she never stopped hoping, dreaming and thinking she had finally found her prince, only to be disappointed.

Born Virginia Mildred Pagenkopf, (called “Ginny” and later “Peggy”) Satir was the oldest of 5 siblings from a family of 4 German immigrant grandparents. She grew up on a farm in Nellsville, in rural Wisconsin. Perhaps the quintessential painful image Satir held of her family, was a recurring dream she had for many years, which she described at a conference in 1983 as one of the most powerful recurring dreams of her life.

I had a recurring dream that was horrible. **I was in a mental hospital because I’d killed somebody, and I’d buried them and couldn’t remember where.** The dream went on and on, until I did my (Family) Reconstruction. And I know, for instance, that my mother and father lived with my grandparents, that was something I knew because my grandmother lived with us when I was born. And I know my mother had twins when I was 18 months old. . . When I put the Reconstruction together, this is what I found: when my twin brothers were 9 months old, I was two and a half, my mother was nursing my 2 brothers; my (paternal) grandfather and grandmother were

living in the house with us. I also knew that my grandfather was put in the mental hospital because he was paranoid.



So here is the picture that I put together. I'm 2 ½, my mother is nursing the twins one at a time, and my grandmother is there with my grandfather chasing her around with a butcher knife wanting to kill her. And my mother, grabbing me. . . and I begin to feel this. . . grabbing me at this point so hard, my twin brothers crying, my grandmother screaming, and my mother helpless to do anything about it. (Satir & Banman, 1983, pp 406-407: cited in Brothers, "Virginia Satir," 2000, pp 10-11)

This "dream" or memory seems to suggest is that somehow even as a small child Virginia felt she did not have parents or even grandparents who could function as adequate protectors. The grandfather was out of control, the grandmother too busy saving herself to protect anyone else, and the mother seems to have been so overwhelmed with the care of the twins and that she was unable to meet Virginia's needs. (Perhaps the saddest part of the dream, is the beginning where she says she was in a mental hospital would seem to for killing someone and burying them, but she couldn't remember where. This perhaps suggest she felt guilt and emotional turmoil for trying to bury the connection to those who hurt her, but then she lost them altogether.) This is not clear.

Paternal Side of the Family



Satir's father, Reinhold Pagenkopf, was the last of 13 children from a family that had immigrated from Germany because of the wife's parents' disapproval of their marriage. The marriage seems to have fallen into a pattern that was common in the

family: women marrying down. The Paternal Grandfather, Ferdinand Pagenkopf, had been a miller. When he got his future wife, Wilhemina Hoppe, pregnant and then married her in 1873, her highborn German military family disowned her. The couple emigrated to Neillsville, Wisconsin, putting thousands of miles of distance between them and Wilhemina's disapproving family. Eventually Satir and her parents would live with these grandparents, activating her most painful dream/memory described above, of her grandfather, Ferdinand, at a time when he was a violent, paranoid man, chasing, his wife, Wilhelmina, the grandmother, with a knife around the kitchen table. Satir's father eventually had to put his father in a mental hospital. Years earlier, perhaps about 1899, the log cabin home the family had built was struck by lightning, tragically killing 3 of their 13 children.

This grandfather, Fred Pagenkopf, was described by the family as ambitious, cruel, mean, cold, tough, a bit uncouth, and feeling he was beneath his wife in spite of his tough exterior (Brothers, 2000, p. 11). The paternal grandmother, Wilhelmina Hoppe, whom Satir said was literally from the Royal family of Germany, was the family member she was closest to. She said both her parents were closest to this grandmother, Minnie, as well. She was the "hearth" and inspiration of the family, the source of emotional warmth and nurturing in the family (Brothers, 2000, p. 12).

Satir used to tell training groups that she was always expecting one of her family members, in particular her uncle Emil, later a horse thief, who had gone to jail for a long time, to show up at one of her trainings. It's possible she just told the story to help her audiences acknowledge their own embarrassing or shameful family skeletons- (Brothers, 2000, p. 12).

Maternal Side of the Family

Satir viewed her maternal grandmother, Henrietta Charlotta Simon very negatively, describing her as "small, nasty, medly, and scared of sex" (cited in Brothers, 2000, p. 13). This grandmother, Henrietta Simon, had survived with her much older half brother Carl Gerch, when their parents died in a cholera epidemic in 1866. A man came to take the corpses and told the brother he could only take his baby sister, who was then put in a foster home with a family named Sangbusche,. Henrietta mourned her brother's loss all her life, and never learned where he had gone until the year after his death (Brothers, 2000, p. 8). She grew up with the Sangbusches, until they left Germany without letting her know where they were going. They then arranged for her to marry Carl Philip Wilke to settle a debt they had (Brothers, 2000, p.8 from a story told by Satir's younger sister, Edith). Although Henrietta's original family had not been poor, her foster parents sent her out to work at age 14. Henrietta was set up, as Satir felt about herself, to be like Cinderella, the poor relation who came from higher status, but lost her family. Virginia spoke of wishing years later that she could have met this maternal grandmother Henrietta as an adult, pondering the possible positive aspects of the woman she had so disliked in childhood (Satir, 1974, cited in Brothers, 2000, p. 14).

Henrietta and Carl had 7 children, of whom the third was Satir's mother, Minnie, born in 1890, after an oldest sister, Elsie and a brother Charles.

Minnie, was apparently close to her father, Carl Wilke, who died only a few months after Minnie's marriage in October, 1915, and a few months before the birth of Virginia, on June 26, 1916, their first child.

Satir spoke of splits in the Wilke family of origin, which her mother, Minnie, had hoped would not be repeated in her own family. But, in fact, there were many conflicts and splits. Satir's youngest brother, Ray, remembered that he would go with his mother, Minnie, to visit the grandmother; but pretty soon there would be a fight, and they would have to leave.

Satir's Immediate Family

Satir's father, the youngest of his family, Reinhold Pagenkopf, eventually married Minnie Wilke, the 3rd of 7 children, 3 years older than he and apparently quite insistent on marrying him. He was handsome, though he had a stutter, had difficult relationships with his parents, and was from a "rougier" family than the Wilkes, (Brothers, 2000, p. 29), but the relationship was not a happy one.



Minnie Wilke Pagenkopf was described by many as a spitfire, a redhead, a hardworker, determined, fair, kind, principled, good all the day through, an expert seamstress who made all family's clothes. She couldn't read until age 47 when she went to Vocational School the same year that Virginia began college, and won a state award for her accomplishments. She had early on struggled in school, being forced to try to write with her right hand, though she was left handed. When she went to Vocational school she excelled. She was obviously very bright, but had not received the opportunity to achieve in school early on.

Reinhold also, though he could not read, but pretended he could, sitting with the newspaper as if he were reading and then casually ask one of his children to read a story to him (Brothers, 2000, p. p. 31). Both he and his wife apparently encouraged their children toward education.

The couple lived with their children and Reinhold's parents on the Pagenkopf farm, perhaps until 1929 when the farm was lost. But it seems that at times Virginia lived with her youngest aunt Helen, who was only 10 years older than she, and the person on the maternal side she felt closest to.

She appears to have felt she had a mostly unhappy childhood. She always said that from early on she had decided to become a detective regarding families, because she realized that a lot more went on than meets the eye.

Her father became alcoholic, and although he always managed to provide for the family, he never lived up to his potential and was someone she said she was unable to admire.



Her mother became a Christian Scientist in childhood after her own mother had become mortally ill. When Virginia was about 5 she developed appendicitis and almost died, because her mother refused to take her to the doctor. Finally her father grabbed her up and took her to the hospital, barely in time to save her, because peritonitis had set in. Virginia was in the hospital recovering for many months. The father was so angry with his wife for their daughter's near death that he burned all her Christian Science book. In retaliation she cut off her beautiful long red hair. This traumatic experience occurred just around the time of Virginia's younger sister, Edith, was born December 14, 1921. Satir was 5 ½. She later said it was from the point of this trauma that she decided she could not rely on her parents for support and committed herself to hard work and emotional distance from her family.



The mother shortly after appears to have become depressed and possibly had a breakdown for almost 10 years, after the youngest child, Ray was born in 1924.

Virginia's experience was of being squeezed out as the oldest. The mother had five children within a 7-year time span. The twin brothers were born when Virginia was only 18 months old, and were extremely small at birth. Apparently Minnie lived in great fear of their dying for a long while. So perhaps this also contributed to the lack of nurturing Satir felt characterized her childhood.

Satir later described her sense of family estrangement from childhood saying: "For 20 years . . . I was estranged from (my parents) because of terrible messages that I had to take charge, which I couldn't do. . . All I remember is being pushed away. And so, very early there was the feeling that my mother hated me and that my father was weak and ineffectual and I was supposed to be Queen Mary—to carry the honor of the family somehow. " (cited in Brothers, 2000, p. 17). Satir's mother seems always to have been working while her father was at the tavern.

Satir's biographer, Barbara Jo Brothers, quotes Satir's description of the final interaction between her parents as follows: The mother was leaving home for the hospital, where she would die. She asked Virginia to take her into the living room where the father was and she said to him:

"I'd rather die than stay home and live with you." He moved not a muscle. . . I looked at him and the pain came to me--that two people that I knew for years hadn't really connected with one another. And I knew that there had been great hope in the beginning. " (cited in Brothers, 2000, p. 11 from a seminar in 1972).

After her mother died, Satir said, her father recovered "miraculously" from his paranoia, psoriasis, and leukemia! He lived for another 8 years.

Other comments Satir made about her parents show again how painful her sense of them was: "My father was alcoholic for a number of years. He always provided, but his beautiful self never really got manifest." (Brothers, 2000, citing comments from a

few weeks after the father died in 1072). She spoke with Fred Duel about her struggle to make sense of her parents' relationship:

"These two people who were so disappointed in one another. . . I estranged myself from my father for twenty years. I told him when I was age twelve, "I'm leaving when I'm through with college," and the day after graduation from college I left. I didn't go back for twenty years." (cited from Duhl in Brothers, 2000, p. 19).

Relationship With Her Younger Sister

Satir developed a lifelong hatred for her youngest sister, Edith. Even on her death bed she would not relent and open her heart to this sister, who was 5 ½ years younger than she. Satir had left home early, so she hardly lived with this sister past about the age of 16. The two sisters had both married within months of each other (1941) and for the next several years spend much time together as couples. Edith apparently did not have negative memories of Virginia from childhood, remembering her instead as a mentor and caretaker. Edith struggled to make sense of Virginia's aversion to her, saying Virginia "was mad at me because I got all the candy. But there wasn't any candy." (cited in Brothers, 2000, p. 18).

Could it be that Satir's resentment was actually the fallout of interlocking triangles she experienced in her family, where she came to see needy children as siphoning off parental energy and leaving her in an unsafe situation, always feeling she, Virginia, had to work double-time to cater to the needs of others, and could never get proper attention herself? Frederic La Belle, who worked with Satir for years said she used to describe small children as completely controlling families.

Virginia's years of cutoff from her family was undoubtedly part of a much wider pattern in her family. She did return to help care for the children when her brother Ray's wife died suddenly in 1969 and in 1979 when her brother Roger committed suicide, the day after his retirement.

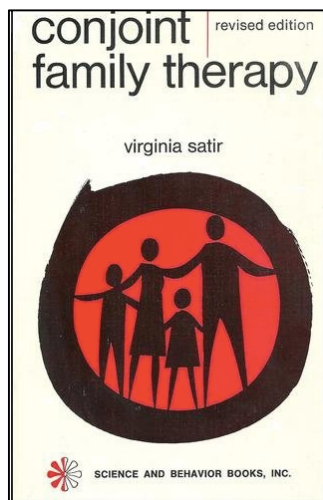
Having begun and finished high school ahead of time, after the family lost their farm in 1929 and moved to Milwaukee, Virginia went to Teachers College, graduated in 1936 at the age of 20. She began teaching, while soon also beginning a social work program at Northwestern, finally transferring to the University of Chicago's SSA program, when Northwestern ended their part time graduate program. At SSA she was told she was a failure and was advised to drop out by a psychotic supervisor, who committed suicide the next year. In the end Satir managed to complete her program successfully, some years later, in 1948.

In 1941 she married Gordon Rogers, whom she had met in a train station only a month before. It was wartime and her younger sister Edith had just married that August, while the youngest brother Ray as well as their brother Roger married that Nov 8. Just the month before. Roger's twin brother Russell married on the same day the following year (Nov 8, 1942).

In 1943 Satir suffered an ectopic pregnancy and had to have a hysterectomy. Her marriage lasted approximately 8 years, during which time Gordon and Virginia, then calling herself "Peggy," moved to Texas. Virginia had met a 10 year old at the Chicago Home for Girls, Mary, and she and her younger sister Ruth ~~and they~~ asked Satir to adopt them, which she did. Soon both girls moved with Virginia and Gordon to Texas. Apparently Gordon and the girls developed close relationships which left Satir on the

outside and then Mary got pregnant by a boy she knew (or could it have been Gordon? In any case she seems not to have had the baby.) The marriage began to fall apart. Virginia had been working at the Dallas Child Guidance Clinic, but when the marriage split up she, Mary and Ruth moved back to the Midwest, and soon the daughters, both now over 18, returned to their own home town.

Unfortunately, Virginia, being depressed by her divorce and situation, began psychoanalytic therapy, which she later realized created a very negative trajectory for someone who was depressed already from her inability to have children, the failure of her marriage, and the professional struggles she experienced. She described the psychoanalytic experience as full of negative labelling, noting that “incidentally, the label-makers were all men” (cited in Brothers, 2000, p. 46). Her eventual work sought always for the hopeful, creative, and connection-creating possibilities. She had come to see the psychoanalytic framework as full of pessimistic, pathologizing connotations for human behavior.



After her divorce, Virginia continued on her professional trajectory. She received her Masters in Social Work in 1948 from The University of Chicago and in 1951 she began a private practice in Chicago with the conscious aim of improving on psychoanalysis. Since Chicago was a psychoanalytic town, she got the people no one wanted and the first thing she did was let go of the rule that the therapist should remain aloof from the patient. The second “violation” was to see the clients’ families together, which was a no-no for psychoanalysts.

By 1962 Virginia had moved to Palo Alto and founded MRI with Don Jackson and Jules Rifkin. By 1964, with the editorial help of Lynn Hoffman, she had written the first major text in family therapy: *Conjoint Family Therapy*, which was the bible for most of us in the 60’s trying to learn to think systems. After that she became a trainer at Esalen and began to develop national and international trainings for the next 2 decades, including her Avanta network.

Though she did at some point later in her life reconnect with her brother Ray, who had himself become a Social Worker and moved to Canada, they seem never to have sorted through their earlier family cutoff, which had included his pain over never having gotten a response from Virginia for a desperate letter he had written to her in the late 1940s, when he was struggling in his own life. It is unclear whether Satir ever even received his letter, but the lack of connection between them and the other siblings was unfortunately quite lasting.

At the same time, Virginia’s ability to connect with therapists and families nationally and internationally was legendary. Almost a generation after her death, she is still remembered by an enormous number of people around the world whose lives she influenced profoundly, myself included. She was the one who taught me more powerfully than anyone else that I as a woman could find a positive way of conveying the importance of systemic connectedness to families and students. She was a magnificent role model for my generation, especially when there were no other women

of her generation powerful enough and positive enough to be that kind of mentor. I have for many years had a picture of her right outside my doorway.

In 1974 the family process board arranged one of their quadrennial meetings for their advisory editors and held a session entitled "Is Virginia Satir Dangerous for Family Therapy?" The session was set up as a duel between Virginia and Sal Minuchin. Each had a "Second." Satir's was Kitty LaPerriere and Minuchin's was Frank Pittman. I have often wondered at the appalling insensitivity of our field that such a session was held. Could anyone imagine a similar session ever being developed in which the title would have been: Is Sal Minuchin Dangerous for Family Therapy? Is Carl Whitaker Dangerous for Family Therapy? Is Murray Bowen Dangerous for Family Therapy?

From that time on, from what I understand Virginia withdrew from major family therapy meetings and focused her energies on her expanding worldwide training and network from Eastern Europe to Central America, from Canada to the Southwest.

She died in 1988, at the age of 72 of pancreatic cancer. She was the same age and had same illness as her mother when she had died.

Virginia Satir is still in the 21st Century one of the most known family therapists and her legacy continues. Her followers are planning a celebration for her hundredth birthday: June 26, 2016.

Questions About Virginia Satir's Life and Biography As Reflected in Her Genogram:

What happened in her childhood and family background that enabled her to create such a strong positive clinical stance?

Why was she not able to connect this stance to her actual relationships with her own family members?

How did her size, gender, and cultural background influence who she became:

A woman who could stand her own among men.

A woman clear in her thinking.

A woman who created extraordinary enthusiasm for human creativity wherever she went.

How might her traumatic experiences in psychoanalytic therapy have influenced her transformation of the field toward a positive systemic framework?

From what sources may she have contributed to her daring as a woman in a generation where women were very rarely able to succeed among men.

Excerpt from Frederic LaBelle's comments in the AFTA Newsletter when Virginia died:

The title of her 2nd book, *"Peoplemaking"* (1972), sums up clearly both the purpose and the practice of her life; she said what she did, and she did what she said. There was no discrepancy, no contradiction between theory (hypotheses may be more accurate here) and practice. Virginia was a process oriented, experiential, humanistic "hands-on" practitioner. She inspired trust, created a sense of safety, and encouraged risk-taking. The biggest risk for Virginia was taking the risk to be yourself, something she believed in and practiced until the end of her life. To my thinking she personified the term "human" in the human potential movement. Virginia had a wonderful sense of humor and enjoyed a good joke. If it was a bit risqué, even better! She believed that it's

never too late for new learning. A colleague once asked her if she should accept a couple in therapy that were in their eighties. Virginia responded, "I only have one question for you, are they still breathing? If the answer is yes, then yes, you should see them!" For Virginia we were all like her, "slow learners, but educable".

CENSUS INFO

1900 Census has Fred & Minnie with Herman, Emil, Alvin, Emma & Reinhold, immigrated 1877

1910 Census, Reinhold 16; Fred, 59, Minnie, 59- married 30 yrs- had 13 children, 9 still alive; both parents immigrated 1878

1920 Census: Reinhold, 26, owner of farm; Minnie, 29, Virginia, 3 ½ ; Roger & Russell, 2;

1930 census: Reinhold, 36, truck driver for Dairy Co.; Minnie, 39, Virginia 13, Roger & Russell, 12; Ida, 8, Ray, 6

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