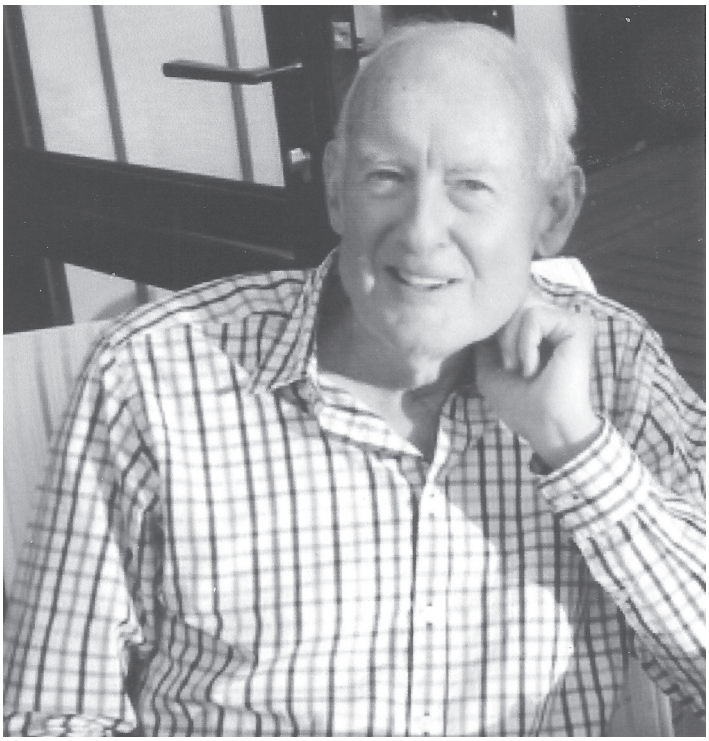


Rev Dr G. Max Clayton
27 January 1935 — 28 March 2013

A Biographical Overview

Compiled by Jenny Hutt,
with special thanks to those who contributed

Some AANZPA members have known Max over four decades, while others have met him more recently. This overview sketches key events in Max's life as a backdrop to the tributes that follow.

Max Clayton lived his first 30 years in Victoria, Australia. He was born in Melbourne in 1935, educated at Scotch College and completed a BA (Hons) in History in 1957 and a Bachelor of Divinity in 1959, both at Melbourne University. He and Lynette married in 1958 and began to raise their family (sons Ian and David) in Orbost Victoria, where Max worked as a Presbyterian minister from 1960.

From 1965 the Clayton family lived in the United States for six years. In Berkeley, California, Max undertook doctoral studies in Pastoral Theology, specialising in counselling criminal offenders. He trained under supervision and worked with patients at the California Medical Facility, Vacaville and provided supervision and staff clinics at Napa State Hospital.

In 1967 the family moved to Washington DC where Max obtained a training residency for two years at the National Institute of Mental Health at St. Elizabeth's Hospital. He was involved in mental health services training and research, supervision, and work with individuals and groups. He undertook psychoanalysis with an eminent psychoanalyst as part of the training. Max began his training in psychodrama with J.L. Moreno and Zerka Moreno at Beacon in the later part of 1967.

During this period Max also worked as a counsellor and psychotherapist, counselling disturbed offenders with the Pastoral Institute in Washington DC. He returned to California in 1970 to complete his doctoral thesis and graduation. There he worked as a licensed marriage, family and child counsellor.

From these years in the 1960's through until 2013 Max continually refined his practice as a therapist, group worker and trainer which brought new life and interest to all those he was in contact with. He was significantly influenced by the emerging new theories and approaches in the 1960-1970's including the Laboratory Approach, Transactional Analysis and Contractual Group Work as inspired by Eric Berne; Family Therapy and their systems approach; the body psychotherapies such as Bioenergetics as developed by Willhelm Reich; and Gestalt Therapy as developed by Fritz Perls. He was deeply influenced by the works of W.R. Bion, Dorothy Stock Whitaker and Morton A. Lieberman, Victor Frankl, Harry Stack Sullivan, Karen Horney, Kurt Lewin, Andras Angal, Rudolf Ekstein and Robert S. Wallerstein, and William Glasser. It was the psychodrama method that became the greater focus for Max and the one that he devoted a great deal of his life to, as he saw that it was a wonderful method to bring about a sense of freedom and renewal for an individual and a group. It was very apparent that in his outstanding practice as a psychodramatist Max had integrated a wealth of learning from these other fields of personality theory and group work theory. Building on these formative influences, the teachings of Rudolf Steiner further enlarged Max's view of the human being in later decades. Max, like J.L. Moreno, wanted psychodrama to be viewed in the broadest possible context — to be thought of as part of an evolutionary process, something that could assist the

fulfilment of the highest expressions of which a human being is capable.

Max and Lynette returned to Australia in 1971 and established the Psychodrama Institute of WA in Perth. Initially the groups were conducted in the lounge room of their home, but it was later to expand and relocate. Max continued his own training at the Moreno Institute in Beacon, New York where he was accredited as a Director in 1973 and as a TEP by the ASGPP in 1979. He conducted the first psychodrama training in New Zealand in 1974. In 1975, he established and was Director of the Wasley Centre, a Community Health and Training Centre, in Perth. The building included a psychodrama theatre very similar to the theatre at Beacon NY, having a circular stage with three levels, a balcony, and lights. The number of people attending the centre for professional training in psychodrama and group work and for personal development increased to 500 people per week. Max set up the first Clinical Pastoral Training Institute in Western Australia. He was a key figure in the inauguration of the Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association in Canberra in 1980.

Several years after Max and Chris Hosking married in Perth in 1980 they moved to Melbourne and in 1985 Max established the Australian College of Psychodrama which continued on for 28 years.

Max and Chris were based in Melbourne for 26 of the next 30 years (with four years in Wellington between 1998 and 2002). During that time Max conducted psychodrama and group work training in centres across Australia and New Zealand. He travelled to New Zealand and to most centres in Australia at least twice a year for about 34 years, offering training to thousands of trainees. Max also offered regular training in Hungary, Japan, Greece and Holland where a good number of trainees have completed their training. Many of these workshops he co-led with Chris, who also conducted workshops independently in New Zealand, Australia, Vietnam, Hong Kong and Burma. Max presented at international conferences and his workshops at AANZPA conferences were always well attended.

Max wrote a number of chapters, articles and books. Most recently he co-authored *The Living Spirit of the Psychodrama Method* with Dr Philip Carter in 2004 which was translated into Japanese in 2013. Previously Max had co-authored a chapter on psychodrama with Lynnette Clayton in Experiential Psychotherapies in Australia edited by Dick Armstrong and Phillip Boas (1980); he contributed to *Sociodrama: Who's in Your Shoes?* by Patricia Sternberg and Antonia Garcia (1989); and wrote 'Role theory and its application in clinical practice' published in Psychodrama Since Moreno edited by Paul Holmes, Marcia Karp and Michael Watson (1994). Max wrote a series of newsletters to trainees and a series of training booklets: *Directing Psychodrama* (1991), *Enhancing Life and Relationships: Role Training* (1992), *Living Pictures of the Self: Applications of Role Theory* (1993) and *Effective Group Leadership* (1994).

Max was inaugural President of ANZPA from 1980-1984 and in 2004 he completed 24 years as Secretary of the ANZPA Board of Examiners. He was

instrumental in the development of nine training institutes that are now offering regular training programmes in many parts of Australia and New Zealand. Max was honoured as the first Distinguished member of AANZPA .

Max and Chris moved to New Zealand to settle in Kerikeri in October 2012, where Max died at home on March 28, 2013.



Jenny Hutt is a Sociodramatist, TEP, a Director of Psychodrama Australia and a member of the AANZPA Board of Examiners. She is based in Melbourne where she works as a coach, trainer and consultant with individuals and organisations. Jenny can be contacted at jenhutt@netspace.net.au