

## **OD Network 2006 Conference**

October 22 - 25, 2006

San Francisco Bay Area, California

Matt Minahan, Ed.D., keeps us up to date on Conference happenings.

### **Day 1: Saturday, October 21**

There aren't many things that can out run you at 35,000 feet of altitude and 650 miles per hour of speed But it's sure fun trying, when you're chasing the sunset toward an evening landing here in San Francisco. Flying in over the Rockies, the Great Salt Lake, the Sierra Nevadas, then bearing down on San Francisco's Candlestick Park the busy 101, the Oakland Bay Bridge, and bringing a big 757 to a gentle glide on the peninsula between SF and Palo Alto.

There's nothing like all day, cross country travel and a beautiful sunset landing to build up the interest and anticipation of an event like this year's OD Networks Conference 2006.

But we're past the anticipation now. We're here at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport, with just a few of the 850 people we expect to see this week.

I've gotta say its great being back here, seeing scads of old friends and colleagues who live here, reconnecting to the city by the Bay... where I, too, left my heart once . . .

But the anticipation has been building for a long while.

One of our business school students at Johns Hopkins, Melanie Goods, and I are presenting a day-long pre conference video lab on group development theories on Saturday, so we've been thinking and designing and preparing for several weeks. The last few days have been a frenzy of handout development, calls and trips to Kinkos making sure that the camcorder we're using can playback through the hotel's monitor, selecting just the right simulations and activities, etc..

I knew I was in the right place in my home for learning and networking when I saw Maggie Hoyer, the OD Networks Executive Director, at the front desk when I arrived. She, and Linda Sherman the conference director, and Linda Taylor the conference assistant, were huddled with a clip board and schedule, diligently managing the last minute minutia that make things seem so effortless for those of us who are attending..

A small but hardy band of folks has been presenting and participating in the two pre conference workshops that began today, Friday. The Gestalt Gang John Carter, Marcella Benson-Quaziana, Brenda Jones, Michael Rynex, and Frances Johnston have been working with 20.participants on Becoming a Better Intervener this afternoon..

And, the OD Network is launching a new venture, a Netform Certification Program, with Karen Stephenson's "Decoding Culture with Social Networks" in the other pre-conference workshop that began today.

Our session tomorrow is one of 9 one day workshops being offered. It is so totally humbling to be presenting right next door to friends and colleagues Geoff Bellman, and Dorothy Siminovich, and Barry Oshry, and Glenda Eoyang, and others!.

So, we'll grow from about 50 people here on Friday, to about 250 people on Saturday, to about 650 people on Sunday, and then beyond 800 by Monday. That seems like just the right size for learning and networking!

If you're here, be sure and come up and say hello, and be sure and write back to the list to share your own perceptions and experiences of the conference..

Matt.

## Day 2: Sunday, October 22

OK, I'm officially beat!

My Johns Hopkins colleague Melanie Goods and I presented the group development video lab today. We had a great group of fun-loving participants, eager to learn in a laboratory setting, honoring the work of Will Schutz, and Wilfried Bion, and Warren Bennis, and Herb Shepard, and Alan Drexler and David Sibbet. What great company to spend a day with!

For as much fun as we were having in our session, I had a severe case of workshop envy with all of the other 1 day workshops at the same time as ours. Down the hall from us was a neat AI workshop . . . next door to us, there was a human systems dynamics workshop with Glenda Eoyang who was so fabulous at last year's conference in Minneapolis . . . Barry Oshry offering a one day version of the Power Lab . . . the wise and gentle Geoff Bellman had a full house on renewing ourselves as consultants . . . there was a project management workshop, and one on Gestalt Coaching with friend and colleague Dorothy Siminovich.

Continuing a conversation that Bill LeGray and Stan Herman and Karl Albrecht and I have been having on our odnet email discussion list, it's thrilling to me to see all of the workshops related to systems theory and systems thinking in our conferences of late. I think it's a sign of the maturing of our field . . . growing from the potential of human interaction, to the potential of human and organization systems. And, I say that sitting in the shadow of Esalen and the lively ghost of Will Schutz still haunting these parts!

It's as if our field itself has been reframed . . . just as we help our clients reframe and see the larger picture. Our work in T groups, and then on human potential, and then team building were all necessary steps for our field. But I think they are part of our legacy now.

Today's OD students and scholars are learning about David Bohm, and Mary O'Hara Devereaux, and Buckminster Fuller, and Etienne Wenger, and Fritzof Capra, and Arthur M. Young, and Karen Stephenson, and Glenda Eoyang.

We're seeing that reflected in the content of our sessions here at the conference, and I, for one, am thrilled about the future of the field of OD, Warner Burke's book notwithstanding!

Of course, it's easy to be thrilled with so much good stuff going on here. I think there's room for a few more, so come on over to the Hyatt Regency at SFO to join in! And, if you're here already, please add your ideas and reflections here on our odnet email discussion lists.

Matt

### Day 3, Monday, October 23

OK, here's your travel trivia question: what do the airports in San Francisco and Miami have in common? Answer at the end of today's message.

I don't spend many weekends here on the West Coast, so I'm always startled to find Meet the Press and George Stephanopolous on at 8 am, and football on at 10:00! Seems to be a violation of the general good order of things! How're you supposed to have burgers and beer with the game at 10:00 in the morning???

Despite my West Coast disorientation today, I think Sunday is my favorite day at the OD Network conferences, because it's the day that most people arrive and get settled in. We must have had 400 people arrive today, so there was a steady stream of hugs and quick-catch-ups and lunch-date-arranging and phone messages in the community room all day today.

And, that's in addition to all the neat content, and the official opening of the conference this evening. More on that in a moment . . .

But this morning, Michael Broom and Edie Seashore did a 3 hour session that was just dynamite, on the Principles of Powerful Practice. The People of Color and Aboriginal People had their annual day long caucus. And, there was a neat author's conversation with Barbara Bunker and Billie Alban, and Peggy Holman, Tom Devane, and Steve Cady. I think the Godparents meeting was this morning, but despite several invitations to participate, I keep telling myself I'm not old enough for that crowd. Denny Gallagher laughs in my face every time I say it, but I'm happily in denial about such things . . . ;-}

This afternoon, the First-Time Attendees orientation was held at 1:00. Then I participated again this year in the Dick Beckard Mentoring Session. Both Denny Gallagher who has been doing this for about 10 years now, and Stephanie Carroll walked us through a process of matching up mentors and mentees for the duration of the conference. It was great to see so many new and eager entrants to the field, and the spirit of wisdom and generosity that the mentors brought to it.

We had a lovely reception from 5 til 7, and then a lively World Café session this evening on Creating Tomorrow's Organizations Today, with David Isaacs who is so good at the World Café, Billie Alban who is so good as a bottom-line business consultant with an OD heart, and Samantha Tan who is working to bring Asian voices into organizations of the future. They had distributed a survey to the early conference arrivers to get the differing ideas and perceptions across the different generations, and the session was beautifully graphically illustrated by Susan Kelley.

It was a lovely day, full, rich, pure pleasure for the extroverts, and probably pure punishment for our introverts. But they didn't show it. ;-}

Keynotes tomorrow and the first of 75 concurrent sessions, plus the Conference within a Conference as well.

If you're here, please send us a note to your favorite odnet email discussion list, and share your ideas and perceptions, too!

Matt

So, what do the SF and Miami airports have in common? They both have parallel runways, which means that two planes can land side by side at the same time. It's quite a sight the first time you notice it, worrying about optical illusions and mid air collisions! But after that, it's quite cool to watch the 757s and A330s and 737s and Embrairs all pacing each other side by side.

#### Day 4: Tuesday, October 24

So, what's not to like about a place where it's sunny and 73 degrees for 6 days in a row? The climate here is just wonderful. Our hotel is actually in Burlingame, which is across the SF Bay from the airport. So, around here, there are many hotels, airport parking lots, car rental outfits, etc. The hotel is right in between a table tennis club and a contract bridge club, sitting right between Route 101 and San Francisco Bay. BTW, the SF Bay looks to be cleaner and healthier than the east coast's Chesapeake Bay!

There's a lovely hiker/biker path that wanders along the SF Bay across from the hotel here, and it was wonderful to spend a few hours there today, watching the planes land in twos at SFO, dropping in at a girls U-13 soccer game, dodging the elderly men zooming on their recumbent bikes, and watching a few fishermen bait and cast and rebait and recast. And, there is a three screen movie theatre across the street from the Hyatt that looks like it was dropped from a spaceship in 1958.

Back indoors, in previous years we've had 3 keynote sessions at the OD Network conference. However, this year, there are 6 keynote speakers in 5 keynote sessions! And, we had two great ones today!

Stewart Emery, co-author of *Success Built to Last*, got us started with an opening keynote, summarizing the main messages of his book. After interviewing dozens of high profile leaders of organizations that have been successful for at least 20 years, Emery and his co authors drew some conclusions about the definitions of success.

He described his interview with John McCain, who said he was actually grateful for his time as a POW in Vietnam, and then Emery showed a videotape of McCain saying that enduring success is defined as being committed to something larger than yourself, in the company of others committed to the same goals.

Emery said that Gordon Moore (Moore's Law) cited a fortune cookie for his philosophy about success. His fortune said, "Whatever you are, be good at it."

In closing, Emery showed a tape of actress Sally Field, saying the real leadership is about achieving excellence at something you love. She said that people don't set out to be leaders . . . that leadership happens after we've become excellent.

The Conference within a Conference got launched today; I'll write more about that tomorrow after I check in with John Adams and Peter Norlin and Marilyn Blair and others who are running it. And there were 15 concurrent sessions, with presenters like Brenda Jones, Barry Oshry, Juanita Brown, Robert Barnet, John Vogelsang, Mary Shawver, Chris Parker, Don Van Eynde, and others. It's hard to imagine more stars, and more big names at concurrent sessions than what we had here, and that was just this morning.

Lunch today was an opportunity for networks to form around specific topics of interest. Some were announced and formed on the bulletin board, and others just emerged in real time. Lots of good energy, and connections got made in the best tradition of a good network! In addition, Marilyn Blair hosted a session among OD Practitioner editors, authors, and people who want to be authors, with about 15 authors and editors in small group conversations with potential authors interested in the publication process.

The p.m. keynoter had no problems with the after-lunch sleepies. A very engaging Donna Latson Gittens spoke about using creative approaches to inspire change, and doing good while doing well. Her firm, causemedia, specializes in reaching and engaging minority populations, and she had some wonderful ideas about the 4 "Ps" of product, price, promotion, and place

And, then there were another 15 concurrent sessions. Too many to list all here, but I had a hard time selecting among Kristine Quade, David Sibbet, Kim Barnes, Glenda Eoyang, NTL colleagues Marcella Benson-Quaziana, Cathy Royal, and Carole Lyles Shaw, World Bank friend and colleague Paul Cadario, Johns Hopkins colleague Rob Pernick. Hmm. How to choose? Friends? Colleagues? People I know? People I don't? Topics I know? Topics I don't?

In the end, no choice was needed, because I had to attend the Student Paper and Presentation Awards session. I was one of the jury members this year, and was blown away at how good these papers are. I said yesterday that I am very optimistic about the future of our field, and that's in part because of what these students are learning about, and what they're writing about in these papers. There is real, serious research going on. They are addressing difficult issues in these papers. And, they are using complexity and systems theory frames. The committee had a hell of a hard time deciding on the winners, and in the end, we didn't really decide. The 3 top papers were so superior and indistinguishable in terms of quality that we gave three awards. Congratulations to the three winners: Janice Hyslip, Pepperdine MSOD, "The Global Relational Leader;" Valerie Wallen, Fielding University, "Transformative Learning: Moving Workplace Diversity Programs Beyond an Illusion of Inclusion;" and Elissa Berrol, Sonoma State University, "Beyond a Shadow of a Doubt: Use of Self as Tool, and Implications for the OD Practitioner" Many, many thanks for all the students who submitted papers, and to the jurors who worked so hard on this year's outstanding entries.

In late afternoon, there was a fireside chat with the winners of the OD Network awards, hosted by Crissa Merron and Jane Hascall. It was just great to publicly acknowledge Chris Argyris and Saul Eisen with the OD Network's Lifetime Achievement Award, Marilyn Blair and Brenda Jones with the Service to the Network Award, Don Cole with the Global Work Award, Carolyn Lukensmeyer and Geoff Bellman with the Sharing the Wealth Award, the San Antonio OD Connection with the Outstanding Regional Award, and the Interaction Institute for Social Change with the Members' Choice Award.

I didn't make that, though, as I was convening the Men in OD for the 10th year. It's never a big crowd, but it's among the best work that I do at the conference, and this year was no exception.

The 6:00 hour was reception hour. There must have been a dozen receptions, held by organizations, schools, interest groups, etc. Some people had 3 and 4 invitations, giving them plenty of time practicing Harrison Owen's "butterfly" concept!

Just a day and half left. Time for bed!

Matt

### Day 5: Wednesday, October 25

The hour was ungodly 7:30 am for an awards ceremony but the presenters and winners were truly heaven sent! We had the presentation of the OD Network's awards this morning, and what a star-studded line up it was!

- Lifetime Achievement Award: Chris Argyris, Saul Eisen
- Service to the Network Award: Marilyn Blair, Brenda Jones
- Outstanding Regional Network: San Antonio OD Connection
- Global Work Award: Done Cole
- Student Paper Winners: Valerie Wallen (Fielding), Elissa Berrol (Sonoma State), and Janice Hyslip (Pepperdine)
- Sharing the Wealth Award: Geoff Bellman, Carolyn Lukensmeyer
- Member's Choice Award: Interaction Institute for Social Change
- Member's Choice Award, OD Mentore: Winifred deLoayza

The morning keynoters were old friends of the Network, Fred Miller and Corey Jamison, speaking on Passing the Baton: Strategies for Generational Shifts in Leadership. They said that it's time to shift away from a focus on what Gen X, or Y, or Millennials want, and toward an understanding of how to engage all people in a multigenerational dialogue to leverage the experience and perspective of each generation. They invited each person to examine their own support systems, for evidence of multigenerational input and support. They talked us through a matrix laying out the personal, professional and organizational domains, and asking, "Who in your life is helping you with clarifying? Comforting? Confronting? Crisis? And Celebrating?" And, the recommended 5 actions: 1) Examine your own stereotypes, assumptions, and taboos around age and challenge others to do the same; 2) Build a relationship with 2-3 people who are 10-30+ years older AND younger than you 3) Ask others: "What do you see from your generational view that I may not be seeing 4) Bring your "lens" related to age into the room for important conversations and decisions, and 5) When you encounter ageism, speak up and take action.

The 15 concurrent sessions featured Barbara Bunker and Billie Alban, Bob Marshak, Dick and Emily Axelrod, Dave Jamieson and Chris Worley, Therese Yaeger and Peter Sorensen, Elena Feliz, and several others. One of the concurrent sessions was on the Future of the OD Network, which Kristen Donovan and John Vegas facilitated with OD Network ED, Maggie Hoyer. Both Bob Marshak's and Chris Argyris' session were filled to capacity!

Hard as it is to believe, there was another round of concurrent sessions this afternoon, with names a big as this morning's and yesterday's. There was a session on using social network analysis to improve organizational performance, on the passionate organization, the theory that guides coaching, the Opt-Out revolution, the 7 principles of inclusion, Chris Worley and Robert

Barnett on stalled change implementation, Pat Averett from PDI on OD as Decision Science, Al Blixt of DTA on merger integration, and many others

Marcela Perez de Alonso from Hewlett Packard was another standout keynoter this afternoon. She headed straight, head-on, into a topic that we've been circling around for years, What OD Delivers to the Bottom Line.

"Creating the Future" was the theme of tonight's closing party, with loads of food, drink, music, and dancing. It's great to see all of the young folks, and those of us who were once, out dancing together, alone, with men, with women, or just as a group. It was great fun, and totally exhausting . . . and just the right celebration to send us home happy and fulfilled when things end tomorrow.

G'night! Matt

### Day 6: Friday, October 27

So, the last day arrives, wearily, reluctantly, desperately. Gradually, crowds thin out. People head for the airport. Longer lines at checkout. Luggage to the bell stand. Cards exchanged. Hugs exchanged. Relationships temporarily enlivened re-freeze for another year til we meet in Baltimore next year. People we know but see only once a year separate, depart, dissolve into memory and out of consciousness . . . until they re-appear at next year's conference.

It was a bit disconcerting to walk through the main conference area, which just yesterday had been full of people and vendor displays, and which, on Wednesday morning, was mostly empty, despite the coffee, breakfast, and people . . . such a busy hub of interest and activity now just a corridor, for people passing through from here to there . . .

The Conference within a Conference wrapped up Wednesday morning, after 2 and a half days, working together on action recommendations for the OD Network. They've been using an Action Learning approach, as organized by John Adams, Heather Berthoud, Marilyn Blair, Karen James, Bev Scott, and Jason Wolf.

15 more concurrent sessions, including a conversation with Chris Argyris, sessions on positive change, HP's strategic advantage, Joseph George from WIPRO on Leadership Development in India, friends and colleagues Heather Berthoud and Bob Greene on diversity, conference sponsors Jeremy and Samantha Lurey on OD and technology, and many others.

No sooner had the conference ended, than the post conference workshops began. Karen James, graphic facilitator extraordinaire, did an afternoon session on graphic facilitation cleverly called The Writing on the Wall. Sam Kaner did a session on facilitating multi stakeholder collaboration. Shirzad Chamine did a full day session on coaching teams. And, Mike Mitchell and Ann Feyerherm discussed their Four Houses model.

So, it's done.

880 souls all in this space. Down to about 75 within an hour or two. This gathering done. These halls now mostly empty. More hotel staff than Network members.

