Memories are often very personal. And so it is difficult and perhaps presumptive to attempt to memorialize an individual who meant so much to so many people both professionally and personally. Erika’s death had come at the end of a long and remarkable career that had witnessed and in important ways influenced many of the significant developments in psychoanalysis, psychotherapy, and experimental and clinical hypnosis in the twentieth century. She was a pioneer in these fields, not only in America but throughout the world, who shaped and refined metapsychological constructs, inspired and participated in a wide range of research, and profoundly influenced clinical practice in numerous areas: from the psychoanalytic theory of dreams, to our understanding of self-hypnosis, to the treatment of borderline psychopathology. Erika was never afraid to challenge established ideas, and her research often changed the course of theory building. Her own theories bridged the paradigm shift from classical psychoanalysis to ego psychology, and finally to object relations theory. In range and scope and significance we are not likely to see another like her.

She was a gifted clinician, a creative thinker, a productive researcher, and a dedicated and sensitive leader in her professional life for over more than 50 years. Her long tenure as Clinical Editor of the International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis not only helped establish that journal as the publication of record in our field, but also shaped clinical thought and writing, the format of case reports in the literature, and the integration of theory with clinical practice in hypnosis in a fashion which profoundly enhanced the conceptional clarity and scientific stature of hypnosis in academia and in the mental health and medical disciplines.

However, I think that Erika will be most remembered and missed for her role as a teacher and mentor. Her dedication to and nurturance of her students at the University of Chicago and to other students and junior colleagues throughout the world is legendary. She supported, demanded, and nurtured productivity and excellence. She could be both warm and stern, providing both the carrot and the stick that shaped intellectual and professional growth in hundreds of colleagues, researchers, and practitioners in hypnosis and hypnotherapy. Even in the last months of her life, Erika sought out students and young colleagues. I can see her at so many meetings surrounded by them, sharing ideas, memories, critiques, encouragement, admonishment, and support. Her financial gifts made it possible for dozens of students to attend hypnosis meetings and to receive training. Her reviews of early presentations and articles were always generous-detailed and cogent. In her regal way, Erika made us feel welcome and found something worthwhile to nourish in our ideas and writings. Most of us are better thinkers, searchers, and clinicians because of her influence.
In Memoriam

I will never forget the first time I met Erika. I had just finished graduate school and had submitted a paper that dealt with the use of hypnosis with severely disturbed patients to the annual meeting of SCEH. When I stood to present, I felt nervous, and even more so when I saw Erika in the second row taking notes. At the end of the session, Erika came up to me with a warm smile and hug. “That was wonderful,” she said. “Your work is important, and you must keep with it.” I beamed and cherished her praise for months. She eventually read, edited, improved, and published that paper. So I was thrilled when she came to my second paper presentation the next fall at the American Psychological Association meeting on hypnosis and transitional object phenomena. After my presentation I approached her to say hello. Again there was a welcoming smile and hug, but this time she took my arm, pulled me aside, and said “Elgan, that was only an adequate paper. You can do better. You must think more clearly. Use less jargon. Make the theory seem alive. Now rewrite that paper, and send it to me to read!” Crestfallen, I did as she instructed. She did help me to make it better and probably improved every paper I have written since. Each time I write I hear her in my head saying “Make it clearer, less jargon, make the theory come alive, you can do better.” And so, like many of you, I try.

The story of Erika’s life has been written elsewhere, so I will not repeat it in detail. She was raised in an affluent Jewish family in Germany but was forced to flee to escape the Nazi regime just after she had completed her doctorate. She found refuge in the Netherlands and began to work as a psychologist there. She was always grateful for the kindness of the Dutch people for whom she always kept a special place in her heart. She immigrated to America, married, and spent her career at the University of Chicago. Her introduction to hypnosis (which she approached as a sceptic) was in a course taught by Jack Watkins who often refers to Erika as “my most famous student.” Perhaps her interest in hypnosis after that was fueled by her having been able to witness the powerful suggestive effect of Hitler’s rhetoric before she left Germany, or possibly by her abiding fascination with the unconscious, or by her curiosity about the trance state which others could experience but which she claimed she could never achieve. But whatever the motivation beyond Jack’s inspiration the rest—as they say—is history. That rich history was celebrated by numerous national and international awards for lifetime achievements from psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and hypnosis societies around the world.

At the end of her life, Erika was concerned with the future of hypnosis and the American societies (ASCH and SCEH). She actively advocated for the re-integration of these groups to enhance their stability and influence. Having been present for the political turmoil and personal conflict that split the societies, she yearned for unity and harmony to bring them back together. When I spoke with her last, about a week before her death, she was concerned if conversations between the groups were progressing. “If we can bring down the Berlin wall and re-unite Germany, surely ASCH and SCEH can come back together,” she remarked with a small laugh, perhaps hinting at the over-determined motivation for her last passion for the field and people who had been an enduring focus for her life.

The observation that we see farther and clearer by standing on the shoulders of our heroes who have come before us has become almost a cliché. Nevertheless, we can all feel grateful for the broad and steady shoulders that Erika Fromm brought to the study and understanding of hypnosis. Generations of colleagues will continue to bear the influence of her dedication to excellence and her vision for our discipline and its application with our patients. Thank you, Erika.
A Personal Tribute and Special Gratitude to Dr. Erika Fromm from the Master’s Level Members of ASCH and SCEH

Jordan I. Zarren, M.S.W., DAHB
West Palm Beach, Florida

It may not be remembered that Dr. Erika Fromm was the first and perhaps the strongest force behind Masters Level Clinical Social Workers and other Masters Level clinicians being able to become members of the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis. This all started twenty-eight years ago.

In 1975 I attended an advanced workshop on Hypnotherapy and Hypnoanalysis presented by Dr. Erika Fromm in New York City at the Institute for Research in Hypnosis. This was during her Presidency of the Society for Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis. During that program I had the opportunity to discuss the admission of Clinical Social Workers into SCEH with her. Social workers had been able to attend workshops sponsored by SCEH, many of which I attended, but we were not allowed membership. Erika’s daughter was a social worker, yet an attempt to include Master’s and Ph.D. social workers into membership had been voted down by the society’s membership. Erika, knowing my background in using hypnosis, asked me to write a statement for the July 30, 1976 SCEH Newsletter putting forth the reason why social workers should be eligible for membership in SCEH.

In the same newsletter her Presidential address, given at the SCEH Annual Meeting on June 12, 1976 was printed. The address included her concern that membership for social workers had been voted down and her decision to present this issue for a vote once again. Apparently, my letter and Erika’s desires (along with much politicking) prevailed, and the social work membership decision was passed during the next election three years later. On May 3, 1980, I and many other social workers received letters from Erika (who was then serving as SCEH Credentials and Membership Committee Chair) that we had been accepted as Associate Members and we were encouraged to achieve Full membership status through scholarship and teaching.

Ten years later after much pressure, from me and many others, ASCH voted in favor of bylaws changes to include those with Master’s degrees in Social Work, Nursing, and Psychology as Affiliate Members. Full Membership status became available a few years later, along with membership for Master’s level Marriage and Family Clinicians. Today, all Master’s level members of ASCH and SCEH are seen as equally competent colleagues in the use of the clinical hypnosis tool. This is mostly due to the interest and support of Dr. Erika Fromm.

My friendship with Erika continued to grow, and her personal mentorship included active teaching and committee chairmanships in SCEH, eventually leading to active teaching and committee work with ASCH, including serving on the ASCH Executive Committee and my being the first social worker and Master’s level member elected to the Presidency of ASCH.
As Erika started to come to the Palm Beach, Florida area for a number of months in the winter some years ago, our friendship became even stronger with frequent dinners and social visits with my wife Lillian and myself. She was a strong support and inspiration for me and many others. We saw her as a loving, always courageous, and ever helpful, important figure in our lives. She is already badly missed, and we will always feel her presence in everything we do hypnotically and personally. Thank you Erika, from all of us.