IN MEMORIAM: HAROLD B. CRASILNECK, Ph.D., ABPH

D. Cory Hammond, PhD, ABPH

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Dr. Harold B. Crasilneck on June 7th, following a 17-day hospitalization. He was 87 years old. Harold was one of the pioneers and at the forefront in the advancement of hypnosis during the past 50 years. He was a student of Dr. Lewis Wolberg, among others. He received national and international recognition for his groundbreaking research in the application of hypnosis in clinical psychology and was legendary among clinicians practicing hypnosis.

Dr. Crasilneck was born in San Antonio, Texas, the son of Kate and John Crasilneck. He grew up hunting, fishing and camping with his many friends in the Texas Hill Country. He attended Beacon Hill Elementary School, Mark Twain Junior High School, and Thomas Jefferson High School. In addition, he was one of the finest musicians to come from San Antonio. His trumpet playing achieved outstanding recognition and he won local, state and national awards. He was awarded a musical scholarship to St. Mary’s University where he distinguished himself as an outstanding student and musician. Dr. Crasilneck attended St. Mary’s for two years and the University of Texas at Austin for six months.

It was then World War II broke out and he enlisted in the armed forces. He joined the United States Marine Corps and based at Camp Pendleton for training before being deployed to New Zealand. He was assigned to the 3rd Marine Division sent to Guadalcanal and Bougainville where he participated in intense jungle combat. Dr. Crasilneck earned the rank of Sergeant. During the campaign
in the Pacific, he became extremely ill with malaria. Following 13 months of recuperation, he was honorably discharged and returned to San Antonio to continue his recovery.

Dr. Crasilneck decided to return to college and entered Trinity University and graduated with the highest honors in 1947. He then attended the University of Texas at Austin in 1948 and nine months later earned his Masters Degree in Psychology. He then returned to Trinity as an instructor. Dr. Crasilneck then attended the University of Houston where he earned his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology in 1954. While at Houston, he was a teaching Fellow. He interned at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School and was asked to join the faculty at the end of his internship. He eventually became Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Psychology and Anesthesiology.

In the late 1950’s, Dr. Crasilneck, in cooperation with the Southwestern Medical School, utilized hypnosis during surgical procedures and for the control of pain. The most significant application of hypnosis in pain control was to treat severe burn patients. Dr. Crasilbeck received many awards for his work in clinical hypnosis and as a medical educator. He was recognized by the American and Texas Medical Associations. Articles about his research were published in the British medical journal *Lancet* as well as *Life* and *Time* magazines. During more than a half century of private practice Dr. Crasilneck impacted many people’s lives, not only his patients, but those within the medical community. He taught hypnosis to thousands of professionals around the world who stood in awe of his clinical skills and how rapidly he worked.

For much of his career Dr. Crasilneck worked non-stop 12 hour days, 5 days a week, beginning at 5:00 a.m. and with most of the appointments lasting 30 minutes. Only in his late 70’s did he stop working on Fridays and cut back to working 11 hour days, Monday through Thursday. He continued actively seeing patients until the age of 86, only finally retiring in October 2007.

His work will particularly be remembered by many of us for his direct approach and his emphasis on eliciting different hypnotic phenomena to facilitate trance ratification. He loved his work and he loved teaching, and continued to teach on the clinical faculty of Southwestern Medical School, an institution he was dedicated to and loved deeply. He held himself and others to the highest of standards, and was a mentor to not only many in the field of hypnosis, but to dozens of us who he tutored and brought into the leadership of ASCH. It was an honor and privilege of many of us to be his house guests and to be invited to his condo in Colorado. He had a deep enduring love and devotion for his colleagues and friends.
Dr. Crasilneck was the first President of both the Society for Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis and the American Society for Clinical Hypnosis, and he was a Fellow of both societies. He was also a Diplomate of the American Board of Psychological Hypnosis and served frequently as an examiner for that board. He was also President of the Dallas Psychological Association and the North Texas Society for Clinical Hypnosis. He received many prestigious awards, including being honored for the Raymond Willie Distinguished Chair, held by Nobel Laureate Alfred Gilman at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School. Other awards included the Morton Prince Award from SCEH for his distinguished contributions to the development of hypnosis in the science and profession of psychology; the Ben Raginsky Award from SCEH for his outstanding leadership and achievement in the field of hypnosis; the Presidential Award of Merit from ASCH; and the Roy M. Dorcus Award from SCEH for clinical research in the use of hypnosis to control smoking. He published at least 3 major papers on the use of hypnosis in the treatment of impotence, with 2 lengthy follow-up papers on these patients, numbering more than 2500 consecutive patients.

Dr. Crasilneck was always surrounded by his loving family. The mutual love and devotion between he and his wife, Sherry, was an example to us all. They were married for 47 years. Sherry served as an editor for Harold’s many papers and for his book (co-authored with James Hall, M.D.), Clinical Hypnosis: Principles and Applications—a book that has become a classic textbook in the field.

He is survived by his wife Sherry, by children Susie and Robert I. Knopf of St. Louis, MO; Leo and Candace E. Hyman of Dallas and Susan and Jonathan C. Knopf of Warren, NJ. Additionally, he is survived by seven grandchildren, Randy Knopf, Brian Rosen, Jennifer Bernstein, Shayna Rosen Taibel, Erin Knopf, Mollie Knopf and Travis Knopf and two great grandchildren Rebecca Knopf and Natalie Taibel.

We will miss you, Harold, but your work and contributions will live on through your writings, through the work of the thousands you have trained, and in the lives of the tens of thousands of patients whose lives you have blessed.