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# FROM THE ARCHIVES

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EDITOR: STEVE STOCKDALE

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## *SNOOPING AROUND THE TIME-BINDING ATTIC, Part 3*

*Bob Kenyon, O. R. Bontrager, Dick Brenneman,  
Gwenn Hermann, Stanley Rittenoure,  
and Bucky Fuller*

COMPILED AND EDITED BY STEVE STOCKDALE\*

THIS STUDENT-PRODUCED ‘diary’ provides a record of the 1950 Summer Seminar-Workshop conducted by the Institute of General Semantics. Held at The Barrington School in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, from August 14th to September 5th, this seminar is noteworthy as the first after Alfred Korzybski’s sudden death six months earlier. The original manuscript, found recently among the Institute’s archives, contains more than 40 photographs and roughly twice as much material as that edited and excerpted here. All of these photos can be viewed online at: <http://www.dfwcgs.net/etc/1950.html>. The contributing authors are credited as: *Diary Editor*: Bob Kenyon; *Contributors*: O. R. Bontrager, Ph.D., Dick Brenneman, Gwenn Hermann, Stanley Rittenoure.

— STEVE STOCKDALE

\* Steve Stockdale serves as Director for Programs and Archivist for the Institute of General Semantics. He has established The Dallas-Fort Worth Center for General Semantics ([www.dfwcgs.net](http://www.dfwcgs.net)), which houses the Alfred Korzybski Research and Study Center. In this series of articles, he relates some of his ‘discoveries’ with hopes that students of general semantics might find in them something informative, interesting, applicable, etc.



1950 Seminar-Workshop Photo, Barrington School

*Back Row (L-R):* Bob Redpath III, Bob Zitter, Al Walton, Russell Cox, George Hronek, John Liebert, Rodgers Wheeler, Chuck Moore, John Teunisson, Werner Keugelgen

*4th Row (L-R):* Lynn Gates, Dr. Sam Stein, Warner Clements, Dick Brenneman, Albert Diaz, Len Gutttersen, Dave Levine, Stanley Rittenoure, Bob Barone

*3rd Row (L-R):* Bev McGee, Lloyd Gilden, Harry Holtzman, M. Kendig, Ray Bontrager, Charlotte Schuchardt, Sam Bois, Bill Pemberton, Dr. Wolf, Bob Rea

*2nd Row (L-R):* Dot Holtzman, Mrs. Stein, Gwenn Hermann, Gerry Jackson, Luella Dunning, Pat Fordyce, Esther Milner, Sonia Leskow

*Front Row (L-R):* Mel Jones, Warren Robbins, John Kern, Bob Kenyon, Evalyn Segal, Alf Hermann, Hal Lester, Wayne Thieme

## DIARY EDITOR'S STATEMENT

(by Bob Kenyon)

This first summer seminar-workshop after the death of Alfred Korzybski had been anticipated by students and members of the Institute with somewhat of a wary attitude — how might this seminar without Korzybski turn out? Certainly there must have been a number who, in the past, gathered to Korzybski in the cultish way they would have gathered to anyone who sym-

bolized some certain something-or-other to them. I think, rather, that the major portion of his students felt important and valuable implications in their study of general semantics.

However, I have learned to extensionalize and shall do so in terms of this particular seminar-workshop. I observed, during the first day or so, an atmosphere of questioning and speculation as to just how effective this seminar would be without AK, who had formulated general semantics and introduced the notion of non-Aristotelian systems.

The man chosen to present the seminar was Dr. J. S. A. Bois, a clinical psychologist of Montreal. Dr. Bois attended several of Korzybski's seminars and has been applying the principles of general semantics professionally for the last four years. As I saw it, after the first day the students began to warm to Dr. Bois, with his French-Canadian mannerisms and expressive gesticulations. The students seemed to get the idea, after a while, that Bois could not attempt to teach general semantics as Korzybski had; he must give them his own brand simply because Bois is not Korzybski is not Kendig is not Bontrager, etc. This critical point, I believe, was passed during the first week, because at the first Saturday night party a characterization of Bois was given and received with apparent delight by the whole crowd.

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*A group of forty people lived together for  
three weeks with a common bond.*

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Toward the end of the seminar-workshop I heard a number of people comment to the effect that the seminar hadn't collapsed without Korzybski after all; they seemed quite satisfied with the activities of the three-week period. I would say there was a structural similarity to be seen in comparing Korzybski's "Theory of Happiness" ["Happiness = Minimum Expectations + Maximum Motivation"] and the semantic reactions of the students toward events related to the seminar. Coming to the first seminar after the 'coagulation' of Korzybski induced a sort of automatic 'minimum expectation' such that there was a high probability the seminar would turn out effectively.

At any rate, what has happened has happened. A group of forty people lived together for three weeks with a common bond. We studied a non-Aristotelian system for evaluation that promises much toward future successes in all areas of our life-efforts. I overheard several students remark that this was one of the most intellectually stimulating sessions of their lives. We

each met people from all parts of the country who were curious, who liked to think and who felt that general semantics might provide them with a valuable tool for evaluation and adjustment in life.

Now we've returned to our own fields. Many of us will contribute, in our capacity as Time-binders, to the growth and development of general semantics and its applications to the welfare of people. I have heard people say that general semantics is now only in its adolescence. I have come to think, in reference to my experience at this particular seminar, that general semantics has only now become 'weaned' from the 'mother' who bore it. This (diary, chronicle, brochure, or whatever you care to call it) is not for the purpose of presenting the formulations of general semantics, nor to give rigorous treatment to any of the studies of the seminar. We have learned to think of individuals and groups as ascending, widening, spiraling process-bundles — as one might think of a developing stream. Try to see in these random 'slices' an assembled complex from that process stream. Let this 'diary,' then, represent a structure of 'frozen moments' similar to that of the group-of-students-living-together-at-Barrington-School-at-the-Summer-Seminar-Workshop-of-August 1950.

### **Barrington School and Daily Activities**

The students found the school an interesting place. Within its 98 acres the estate has a golf course, tennis courts and a lagoon in which the students spent a lot of time swimming. Girl students had no cause to complain for they were much in demand on those beautiful evenings when a low ground mist rolled across the golf course and the moon glow created an especially picturesque wonderland. The veranda and terraces were popular places for homework, reading, non-verbal exercises, or just plain basking in the sun. Some students found an appropriate background for meditation down at "Aristotle's Temple," a facade at the far end of the lagoon.

Classes at the seminar came three times a day — one in the morning, one in the afternoon and one in the evening. The six to nine hours of class each day were interspersed with discussion periods, special classes in semantic relaxation, and plenty of time for homework, reading, and such activities as swimming, tennis, and golf. During sunny days, the students preferred the veranda and terraces to staying inside the 'old barn.' Someone was heard to remark that Raymond, host of the "Inner Sanctum" radio show, must have gotten his idea for the squeaking door from the glass door in the lecture hall at Barrington School.

Evening classes usually concluded about 9:30, after which the evening activities began. Charlotte Schuchardt saw to it that there were always refreshments on hand — beer, cokes, potato chips, pretzels, etc. This was the time of day when the students had completed their studies, their nervous systems were boiling over with newly installed relationships, and they were just itching to communicate with someone. So after the evening class came the time for the ‘mellowest’ bull sessions, etc. There was usually some dancing, record playing, and a group gathered around the speaker of the evening for post-lecture discussions.

The custom of bringing wine bottles to the supper tables became a fairly constant practice among the students and people at the seminar. One student was heard to remark that from the standpoint of homogeneity he felt this well-knit group might get to be a “well-lit” group. I don’t remember whether he was the same wit who fabricated the classic, “Let’s bind a little time.”

Every Saturday night during the seminar a group party was held. Students were encouraged to bring their musical instruments, and as much as possible was done at these parties to increase the effective inter-relatedness of the students. High point of the first Saturday night party came when Dick Brenne- man presented a characterization of Dr. Bois, complete with his French-Canadian accent and gesticulations.

Charlotte showed up with part of an album of western square dance records, and a bunch of people learned to square dance for an exhibition to be given on party night.

A little later that evening, a barbershop quartet murdered several songs until they came to “Alouette.” Dr. Bois then jumped up and vowed he’d not let that one be murdered, so he led the whole crowd in singing “Alouette” as he said it should be sung. We all enjoyed it very much.

Warren Robbins acted as emcee at the parties and did a great job. We’ll never know where he collected all those puns, but he was full of them. Bob Rea, through a new system of musical notation, learned several classic pieces in a very short period of days.

Toward the end of the workshop some of AK’s lectures were played from a tape recorder on the veranda. This took place in the evenings after lectures, so that the full moon added to the enjoyable situation, and also sometimes in the mornings when the group could listen and soak up the warm sun. Near the end of the three-week period came some coolish rainy weather. So the course was concluded, you might say, in front of the roaring fireplace in the main hall of the ‘old barn.’ Beer, songs, and opinions were consumed by all. Common talk indicated that the students felt momentarily ‘isolated’ from the

world, in an environment conducive to GS-ers savoring their attempts to live GS-ly.

### DR. BOIS

(by Dick Brenneman)

[Bois' opening remarks at the seminar, as noted by Dick Brenneman, were included in the "Time-Binding Attic" feature in the Fall 2002 *ETC*, and are not repeated here. Below are Brenneman's concluding comments concerning Bois. — Ed.]

One of the most enchanting episodes of the whole seminar came during one of Dr. Bois' lectures in which he was telling of the process of abstraction carried on by all living organisms. His personal aptitude for 'manner-ismic' expressiveness reached a point of perfection when he stood up and with circling arms and gulping mouth tried to make like an amoeba. The lights and shadows were just right and the effect was, well — unspeakable. He received an ovation on that one.

During his lecture on non-allness and the use of the *et cetera*, Dr. Bois told us this story. There was a fellow from Canada who went to France for a time and took the opportunity to acquire a mistress. After awhile he developed a bad skin condition after each time that he visited his mistress. He went to a doctor who, unable to diagnose it, and responding to the latest trend in medicine, referred the patient to a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist diagnosed it as a neurodermatitis resulting from feelings of guilt associated with the new mistress. This made the fellow feel pretty bad and he paid out a lot of money to get analyzed. However the skin condition still appeared after each visit with his mistress. There seemed to be no way to account for it. Then one time he spent a weekend at his mistress' apartment while she was out of town, and the rash occurred again. The fellow decided he must have a look around the apartment and upon doing so found that there were bedbugs in the girl's bed! Just *shows to go ya* that you'd better check your assumptions.

His amoeba imitation; his references to the "big executives;" the violin-playing gesture admonishing us to "tune our fiddles;" the disconsolate expression when ruffling through our homework exercises; the poised, satirical erectness when exclaiming "I cut a pretty nice figure in the pulpit;" the animalistic gesture used to communicate the word sex; the wry, explanatory

smile; and the belly-shaking, foot-stomping laughter of party nights .... this is what I'll remember of Sam Bois.

And I'll remember the sincere testimonial offered at the conclusion of the seminar by Dr. Stein. Being close enough to overhear Sam Bois' response to the many compliments directed his way, I report it as exactly this: "Sometimes it's great to be alive."

But more yet will I keep. There is the *et cetera* which, to borrow Bucky Fuller's language, "goes out the window and over the hill." For me, Sam Bois opened that window. And the hill, which is in effect the exponential curve, shall find us climbing rapidly ... and together.

After Dr. Bois completed the seminar proper, an impressive selection of guest lecturers gave us valuable insights as to the work-a-day applications of general semantics.

## BUCKY FULLER — AN ENERGETIC GEOMETER

(by Stanley Rittenoure)

Buckminster Fuller brought a unique approach to the workshop. His presentations to the students were accompanied by animated gestures in the same manner as a Toscanini who brings out the best from his musicians when conducting a symphony. He began his lecture on "Energetic Geometry" with this introduction to the subject of energy in relationship to universal phenomena:

"Energies go from one impoundment to other impoundments in a continuity of energy behavior. Universal energy may be considered as inherent. Man, as a phenomenon of universal life, becomes characteristic of all life and, as such, gains by systematic applications of energy utilized. This begets industry. Industry, conceived by man, becomes a continuity of the work of all men in all history.

"Man, as a phenomenon in his second derivative span of life, has developed tools to aid industry, and this activity may be referred to as man's extracorporeal process. This process is demonstrated by man's ability to produce and accelerate his own mutations in an ever-increasing upward sweep. Man now becomes a function in the universe and as such is not 'Man as a thing,' but as 'things.'

"Man's progress has the capacity to inhibit all chemical processes or actions, the largest phase of energy improvement, and therefore man may be termed 'the energy impounder.'"

From this introduction, he proceeded to demonstrate his theory with many models, correlating universal structure to man and his ability to better his life and the lives of those to come. Bucky made no claims of GS knowledge. However, he demonstrated thinking parallel to that of Korzybski's notions of man as a 'time-binder' and exponential progress.

In my opinion, our group readily comprehended this 'parallelness,' even though we may not have understood the mathematical text of Energetic Geometry. Also, I think — no, I opine — that Bucky Fuller completely captivated us by his personality and his unique ability to communicate with us from his vast store of technical data — all without the aid of notes.

### SILENT ABSTRACTING, THE HOLTZMAN WAY

(by Gwenn Hermann)

This section of the workshop was 'something' ... but what? Kid's play? Boring? Exhausting? All these and a few more labels could be attached. But why use words? It wasn't that sort of class and, anyway, whatever we said it was ... it wasn't.

The first day we met 'Professor' Holtzman in the lecture hall, he began: "Whatever you say I am, I'm not, and you say I'm an artist so that proves the GS adage. Seeeee?" (Magnanimous smile. He always hoped there would be a toothpaste advertising man at the seminar.)

"Now what do you think of these?" he asked, showing us three works of art by Mondrian. They were an awful mess, but we knew Mr. Mondrian was a good friend of Harry's, so not wishing to offend, we said they were *beee-utiful*. Two hours later, when we left the lecture hall we 'knew' that Harry Holtzman was not an artist and, no matter what we said art *was*, he wasn't doing *that* anyway.

The next day, we were each presented with a pencil, an eraser, a piece of paper and these instructions: "Stay within thirty yards of the building and do something with these." So everyone sat around in the sun and exchanged puzzled glances, finally turning in various sorts of 'pitchers.'

We took our bewilderment with us to the following session, in which we found Harry's lecture slightly improved, and our own artistic productions were more or less on par with each others.' We learned that we each have 'insides,' but some of us experience greater difficulty (or 'blockage') than others in expressing what's 'inside' us on paper. The fact that our mentor seemed a screwball only added to the 'blockages.'



However, by the time we expanded our artistic efforts to ink and pen (some of us “ink and trousers,” others “ink and floor”), we were producing nearly sellable material. We had acquired more than artistic ability — we were courteous, perhaps even appreciative. If you came upon an ‘artist,’ grimacing at his work from all angles, you hastily asked, “Did you do that? It’s most fascinating!”

But verbalism came a dime a ton the day we took off to cut colored paper. Then with our cuttings, with pen and pencil, plus a little household cement, we converted our mirrored hallway to a rogue’s gallery beyond reproach.

For what purpose did we do this — all this ‘art stuff’? Well, it seems our authoritarians have long told us what to do and how to do it. Then along comes this screwball Harry, who left us with no rules and expected us to play the game. Well, by gosh, we did it, and I don’t know who felt the better for it. Among the students there were various degrees of ‘better-ness.’ I’m writing from my own world and the comparatively small area it overlaps with others’ worlds, but I think there were far fewer ‘raspberries’ for ‘Professor Holtzman’ after the twentieth hour than there were after the fourth.

### ‘Spirally’ Speaking about the Staff

M. Kendig did a very effective job of managing the seminar-workshop. The schedule of daily activities was extremely flexible during the seminar, constantly changing in light of group reactions so that the greatest harmony could be achieved in terms of group dynamics. Miss Kendig said she felt that ‘shaking up their colloids’ was good for the students anyway.

Dr. O. R. (Ray) Bontrager directs the reading clinic at Pennsylvania State Teachers College. He spoke on personal evaluation in our reading and in teaching children how to read. I think many of the students will long remember Dr. Bontrager for his numerous ‘junior seminars.’ He made it a point to be available in the library, around the fireplace, or on the veranda, to stimulate discussions wherever he could. Many of the students evinced delight over trading views with Dr. Bontrager.

Charlotte Schuchardt held several training sessions in semantic relaxation during the course. Miss Schuchardt has become quite skillful in training people in the particular form of relaxation that Korzybski found so useful in alleviating neuro-physiological tensions.

Guthrie Janssen spoke on the problems of interpersonal communication in the Near East, where he taught at an Egyptian University. He told of his use of *Science and Sanity* as a text for his course in communication. Mr. Janssen also compiled the book *Selections from Science and Sanity*.

Lillian Lieber, co-author (with her husband) of *The Education of T.C. Mits and Mits, Wits, and Logic*, spoke on mathematics and logic. Dr. Lieber was quite effective in getting over the nature of logic — no matter whether your premises are consciously chosen or tacit, from them will come consequences. Using examples from our cultural inheritance, she showed how we often agree to one premise and then live by another — as revealed by the resulting consequences, what we do, and how we behave.

Dr. Allen Walker Read spoke on the subject of 'modern linguistics.' He showed how the syntax, or structure, of our verbalisms influences us in projecting meaning into them, such as in, "Twas brillig and the slithy toves ...," etc. He also spoke on the use of contextual meanings and an attitude with which to regard the use of dictionaries.

Robert Redpath, a Trustee of the Institute, spoke on how he applied the formulations of general semantics to training executives in the insurance business. Near the end of the seminar, Mr. Redpath talked to the students about our continuing relationship with the Institute after we go back to our own fields, and how we might apply general semantics in our own lives. He spoke of the growing need for a center of coordination as a sort of clearing house for GS ideas, applications, news of activities, etc., and a center to integrate research and study in general semantics. He emphasized the need for us to support the work of the Institute, and we very much wish to underscore Mr. Redpath's message here.

Other speakers included: Sam Rosen, M.D., who talked about how he applied general semantics to the non-verbal level of surgery; William Exton, who spoke on 'Audio-visual Aids to Education'; Dr. Irving J. Lee, who spoke on 'Communication'; and Dr. William Pemberton, who spoke on 'projection' in reference to studies in psychology.

## Closing

I think everyone enjoyed the parties and evening activities during the seminar. We all carried away memories with us of a period in our lives which will variously affect each of us. The Summer Seminar-Workshop of 1950 lies in the past now, but is not dead because it lives in each of our nervous systems. From the interrelationships formed at the 1950 Seminar will develop attitudes, ways, ideas, and outlooks which will aid us all in realizing more of our individual potentials as time-binders.

Let us close here with a comment we heard often during the closing days of our time together: "Good Luck, and maybe we'll see you at another seminar sometime."