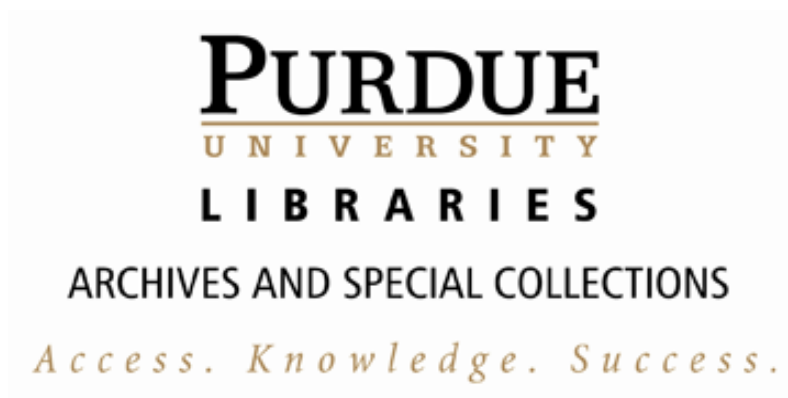


Stanislav Grof Interview

Conducted by Katherine Markee on September 4, 2009



The following interview was conducted with Stanislav Grof, professor of psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies at the Institute of Psychology Conscience in San Francisco for the Purdue University Oral History Program. It took place on Friday, September 4, 2009 at Purdue in the TV studio. The interviewer is Katherine Markee, the oral history librarian.

KM: Welcome and good morning --

SG: -- Thank you for having me. It's a pleasure to be here.

KM: OK. Thank you. Tell us a little bit about where you were born and your parents and siblings and early years.

SG: Well, I was born in Prague on the first of July 1931. I have a younger brother four and-a-half years younger.

KM: OK. What was -- tell us a little bit about grade school and high school and some of the --

SG: -- Well, I studied what would be the equivalent of high school. We call it, actually, gymnasium. Yeah, it has a somewhat different meaning and then I studied medicine in Prague at Charles University School of Medicine and did psychiatric residency and then later I also got a Ph.D. degree, which was called doctor of philosophy and medicine and that was from the Czechoslovakian Academy of Sciences.

KM: OK. Let's back up to high school. Were there any activities that you were in -- then you went from high school right into medical school?

SG: Yes.

KM: OK.

SG: Yeah, we don't have college. We don't have --

KM: You didn't -- you didn't -- you didn't have pre-med then, right?

SG: We don't have college, no, you start -- you start medicine when you are 18 years old.

KM: OK. All right.

SG: And it's six years study.

KM: Is this also in Prague?

SG: This was in Prague, yes.

KM: OK. Did you live on -- on campus when you were going to school?

SG: No, no, I lived at home and there was a walking distance to the university.

KM: OK. What about high school? Was that close and so were there any --

SG: -- This was also -- it was basically around the corner, yeah.

KM: OK. How large a school was it?

SG: You mean how --

KM: -- Well, were there quite a few students in there?

SG: Quite a few, yeah.

KM: Yeah. OK. That's good.

SG: But I can't give you the number.

KM: That's OK. That's fine. And then you did some -- got a fellowship from the Soviet Ministry of Public Health. Did you... afterwards?

SG: That was when I already was a psychiatrist. It was an exchange program, so I spent a couple of months in the Soviet Union and I was working in Leningrad at the Beck Institute. Then there was a visit to some of the major institutes in Moscow and then I spent several weeks in Sukhumi, which was in Georgia on the Black Sea, which was a very interesting place with the study of monkeys. They experiment in (inaudible) is in monkeys, baboon, (inaudible) baboon, yeah.

KM: OK. But you started earlier than you were with the Psychiatric Research Institute in Prague. Is that what you did after you got your degree? Your M.D.?

SG: No, I first went for three years in a --

KM: -- After you got your M.D.? --

SG: -- this was like a residency in a state mental hospital.

KM: OK. It was in Prague?

SG: But, yeah, I already started doing research while I was working there. I was commuting between Prague and this place, which was about 60 miles from Prague.

KM: OK. All right. But where did you -- and you got your Ph.D. also there in -- in -- in medicine, is that right?

SG: That was called doctor of philosophy in medicine, yeah.

KM: OK. OK. And then -- then what came after that -- after you got that you came to the United --

SG: -- Well, I did the -- I did the residency and then there was a newly built Psychiatric Research Institute in Prague, so I was one of the -- one of the early members of that and that's where I started really the systematic psychedelic research.

KM: OK. OK. All right. Then from the '60s and then was the next stage when you came to the United States or how did that come about?

SG: Yeah, I worked in the Psychiatric Research Center in Prague between '60 and '67 and then I got the scholarship. I went to the United States '65. I travelled around. I gave a talk at, among others, at Yale and I was offered to come back on a scholarship to come back for a year --

KM: -- At Yale? --

SG: -- it was a scholarship from the foundation's fund of research in psychiatry in New Haven. So I came back for a year and then it was extended for another year and then during the second year the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia, you know, the [liberalization?] got so far that the Russians felt they couldn't control

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the country politically anymore and, so we were all asked to come back immediately and I refused to go back. I stayed.

KM: OK. All right. Then after the two years at Yale what came next then. Tell us the threads that came after that --

SG: -- No, it wasn't -- the scholarship was from Yale, but it was actually to John's Hopkins. So I was for two years at John's Hopkins as a fellow -- as a research fellow and then after that I became an assistant professor of psychiatry at John's Hopkins and also chief of psychiatric research at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center.

KM: OK. Well, tell us a little about that, about your teaching. Did you do some teaching as well?

SG: Yes, I was -- I was basically working part-time in this research at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center and I was also teaching at Johns Hopkins.

KM: OK. Can you -- want to talk a little bit about the research that you were involved in there or the researchers?

SG: It was very interesting because I was invited by Dr. Joel Alchy* actually to start another psychedelic research program at Johns Hopkins and I arrived in Baltimore and it was a week after this very alarming paper was published by Mabel Cohen*, who found some changes in the lymphocytes when he added LSD to the lymphocytes in a test tube and that created this kind of hysteria about possible impact on heredity and so on. So Dr. Alchy didn't want to start a new

research project until this would be cleared and it just happened that there was the last surviving psychedelic research project was in Baltimore in the same city, so then I got this arrangement when I was teaching half-time at John's Hopkins and joined this group, which was already doing research. So this was basically the last surviving government sponsored research of psychedelics and it was very, very interesting. Several groups of people. One was chronic alcoholics from the alcohol rehabilitation unit, the second was a group of heroin addicts taken from prison. We had a large group with -- of neurotic patients and then the two most interesting projects were -- one was the possibility of giving training sessions to professional psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, ministers who did pastoral counseling, so on, and probably the most interesting was the work with terminal cancer patients, trying to find out if mystical experiences induced by psychedelics would take away the fear of death and change the experience of dying.

KM: You had quite a different -- different groups who you were working with then.

SG: Yes. Yeah.

KM: OK. Did -- and at the same time was it this time you were also that scholar-in-residence at the Esalen Institute, or was that afterwards --

SG: -- No, that was -- that was afterwards. Just like in 1973 it became increasingly difficult to get funds for this kind of research and by that time I had a very large amount of research material and I was contacted in a month by 12 publishers to

write a book on LSD, so I decided to take a year off and go, you know, to write a couple of books.

KM: Do the book, right.

SG: And I went to a party in New York City and I met there Michael Murphy, who was the co-founder of Esalen, whom I had met, actually, in '65 during my first visit at Esalen and we started talking and I told him that I got this advance from Viking Press and that I am going to work on a couple of books and he says, "Why don't you come to Esalen, you know, Esalen is a beautiful place to write books." It's a beautiful property, which is on the West coast, you know, between Monterey and Los Angeles and it's between the mountains and the Pacific Ocean, old Indian grounds. Esalen is the name of the tribe that was there, so those were sacred grounds that the Indians -- they have hot springs. It's a very beautiful place.

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KM: Nice place to do some writing and research, right?

SG: Yeah. So he says, "Why don't you come and, you know, we'll give you a house and basically room and board and you will do some workshops. It will be a trade-off." So I spent a year there and by the time, I was so hooked on Big Sur and California that I couldn't imagine going back to Baltimore. You know, it was not a very -- not the most beautiful city and here was a situation where you, you know, every morning and evening you can go take a bath in the hot springs. You watch the whales to go by and the monarch butterflies.

KM: For researchers what sort of -- just clarify what type of institute that is? I'm thinking of some people that might read the transcript, just for clarification.

SG: It -- originally it was actually a motel, which was -- which was built at the time when Highway 1 was opened. The scenic highway along the Pacific coast. It was -- the property was owned by Dr. Murphy. We actually bought it at the time when you had to use mules to get there. There was no highway yet. But when the highway opened they built a motel, which -- for people traveling up and down the coast and a special kind of fringe benefit were the hot springs that people, you know, people could have a bath and get a massage and so on and then when the time when Dr. Murphy died, Michael Murphy, his son, was in Auroville in the Aurobindo ashram in India meditating and he got the, you know, report from California that his father died and that he inherited the motel and he says, "Well, I really don't want to run a motel." So he was thinking what to do with that beautiful property and he connected with Dick Price and they decided to create a kind of a human potential center where people who developed some methods that are too revolutionary for universities or research institutes or some more traditional places could go and give workshops and, you know, and experiment with these new methods. So it was basically like the first human potential center. It's quite, quite extraordinary because it's just a small strip of land between the mountains and at the same time it contributed more to psychology, you know, since the '60s than any university I know.

KM: (inaudible) doing in a research institute, right?

SG: Basically, you know, Virginia Satir* was associated with us. The one who developed family therapy. Will Schultz*, who was very instrumental in group

therapy movement. Fritz Perls*, who developed Gestalt therapy. (inaudible)
developed (inaudible) and so on. So it was a very, very exciting --

KM: -- Sounds like quite an active operation you had out there.

SG: People are basically -- interesting people were coming from all over the world.

KM: Sure. OK. And you got your books written while you were out there?

SG: I wrote a couple of books and then, you know, and then I stayed and wrote more, yeah.

KM: Right. Well, that brings it up to that California Institute of Integral Studies and the Institute of Psychology and that's where you're currently affiliated?

SG: Yes, yes.

KM: Could you talk a little bit about that? About your responsibilities and your research interests (inaudible)?

SG: Well, I'm, you know, I'm not really on the staff there. I didn't want the responsibility of going to staff meetings and so on, so it's more or less like a contractual thing. I just come and do -- teach the courses, but I don't have any --

KM: -- What -- what type of facility? What sort of things does -- I'm thinking of research (Overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

SG: It started, actually, as the California Institute of Asian Studies. It was -- it started by Haridas Chaudhuri, who was an Aurobindo scholar and so they were doing a lot of courses related to Asian religions and spiritual systems and so on and then

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it became California Institute of Integral systems when it started including consciousness research, new paradigm, and so on. Very, very kind of avant-garde school.

KM: OK. And it's located in San Francisco then?

SG: It is offering -- it's accredited -- it's offering Ph.D.s and MAs.

KM: OK. Is it primarily graduate work that they do there?

SG: Yes, yeah.

KM: OK. Let's talk a little bit -- when -- talk a little bit about your research, what you're currently involved in and some other aspects that you've done over time that researchers could benefit by?

SG: Well, my -- my interest in psychiatry started by reading Freud. I initially wanted to go to animated movies. I liked to paint and draw and I already had my interview. I was accepted. I was supposed to start working in the film studios in Prague and just at that time a friend of mine gave me "Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis" and I read it practically overnight and I decided this is what I am going to do, so I enrolled in the medical school and, you know, became a psychiatrist. And then by the time I became a psychiatrist I was already disenchanted because I realized the limitations of psychoanalysis, how long it takes, how -- how narrow the indication range was, how very special criteria you have to meet and not the last being a lot of money and a lot of time and I realized that the results were not exactly breathtaking, so I got to a point where I started

kind of thinking nostalgically back at the animated movies feeling this was the wrong decision. I should have stayed with my original intention. And we were just finishing a large study of Mallory*, which was one of the early tranquilizers and this was the beginning like of this pharmacological era in -- in psychiatry this early tranquilizers, anti-depressants, and the idea that all problems in psychology would be eventually solved by substances, by drugs and we just finished a large study with Mallory, which was one of the early tranquilizers and this came from Switzerland from -- from Sandoz*, so we had a good working relationship, you know, which means they pay your trip to conferences, they send you some free literature and they also send you samples of some substances that they develop. So as part of this corporation, one day this department where I was working (Overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

KM: (Overlapping dialogue; inaudible) In Prague is it still?

SG: Yeah, this was in Prague. The Psychiatric Clinic in Prague. I got this large box full of ampoules and it says LSD, batch 25, said this was a very interesting investigation in a new substance. The powerful psychoactive effects of this substance were discovered by Dr. Albert Hofmann, who actually accidentally intoxicated himself when he was -- when he was synthesizing this substance and they say Dr. Stahl in Zurich, who was the son of Dr. Albert's boss, did a pilot study and published a paper in '49 that kind of became an overnight sensation because of the incredible efficacy, the incredible power, you know, really micrograms or millionths of a gram can change the functioning of the psyche for six to eight hours, so this Dr. Stahl did a pilot study and now Sandoz* was

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sending samples to different institutions and, you know, it seems like this could be something interesting for psychiatrists, for psychologists, would you work with this substance and let us know if you feel that there is some legitimate use for it. And they gave us two tips, you know, how they felt it could be used. One was to use it as what they called "experimental psychosis" that you could take a group of people, "healthy people," normal people and you would give them the substance, do all kinds of examinations before, during, and after. Biochemical, electrophysiological, psychological tests, and so on. Do it before, during, and after and get some sense of what's happening biochemically, biologically, electrophysiologically and so on when the psyche functions in this very unusual way and the basic idea was that we would get insights into naturally occurring psychosis that, you know, psychosis would not really be mental diseases. They would be aberrations of body chemistry because if a substance in -- in millions of a gram could change the psyche so profoundly, it was conceivable that the body chemistry could produce something like that and actually intoxicate the brain. There would be nothing wrong with the brain itself and so the -- the exciting idea was if that is true, if we could find that substance, then we could also find another substance that would neutralize it, that would sort of counteract the effect of the substance and we would have like a test tube solution for schizophrenia, you know, for psychosis, which is like a holy grail. The holy grail of -- of psychiatry and then they gave also a second tip, which kind of became my destiny or karma, whatever you want to call it. They said that they also felt that this could be a very interesting unconventional educational tool that psychiatrists,

psychologists, nurses, students could take the substance and spend a few hours in a world that seemed to be very much like the world of their patients and that we would learn a lot about this world and that we would be able to understand these patients better. We would be able to communicate with them more effectively and hopefully be more effective in treating them, so I was now experiencing this crisis, you know, and so I got very excited and, you know, became one of the early volunteers in Prague and had just a session that just changed my life and sent my -- my professional life also in a completely different direction.

KM: OK. And you have continued on with this? What are you currently -- next stage --

SG: You know, I had an experience, which was combined also with exposure to powerful stroboscopic light because my preceptor was very interested in (inaudible), so everybody who wanted to have the experience had to agree that, you know, they would have their EEG done, but he was also specifically interested in what's called in training or driving the brain waves, which is exposing people to stroboscopic light of certain frequencies to find out if the brain waves in the occipital area would pick up the frequency that you are feeding in. If you can basically drive them or and train them, change the functioning of the brain by exposure to these frequencies and he wanted to know how LSD would change that. So we also had to agree to have our brain waves driven as part of that experiment, so what happened practically that when my session was culminating between the second and the third hour, this research assistant came and said, "It was time to -- for the experiment to drive the brain waves." And she

took me to a small cell. I laid down. She put electrodes on my scalp and asked me to close my eyes and then turn on this gigantic stroboscope and in the next moment there was -- although my eyes were closed, there was light like I had never seen. In my life I couldn't even imagine existed, you know. At the time I thought this is what it must have been like in Hiroshima, when the bomb went off. And I sort of thought about the writings of mystics like they talk about millions of suns and so on. Obviously incredible supernatural light and my consciousness was just catapulted out of my body. I lost the research assistant, I lost the clinic, I lost Prague, and I had the feeling that my consciousness had no more boundaries. I had the feeling I became all there was and then coming down I, at one point, in a sense I was in the physical universe. In some sense I had the feeling I was the universe. There were things happening for which I even didn't have names at the time. Later I read about the Big Bang and the black holes and, you know, something in that category. And then she turned the strobe off and my consciousness started shrinking again. I found Prague, I found my body, and for some time I couldn't get consciousness together with my body and it was clear to me that what they taught me in the medical school was not true that consciousness was somehow a product of the brain. It was clear that it could somehow operate independently. We see something similar now in near-death situations, thanatological studies, you know, the consciousness can go out of the body and you can see things in other places or you can watch things from the ceiling and so on. So it was an experience like -- like that coming down before it was really cosmic -- cosmic consciousness. And then finally I managed to get

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the two together and sort of, you know, come landed safely and I was very impressed and I felt, you know, I am already stuck with psychiatry and if you are a psychiatrist this is by far the most interesting thing you can study. So it's now -- this was '56, so it's now well over half a century and I have really done very little professionally that would not be related to these non-ordinary states. About half of the time was the clinical work with psychedelics then when we couldn't do it anymore and when I was at Esalen we didn't have the permission, so my wife and I developed what we called holotropic breathwork.

KM: Yes, that's another thing I was going to (inaudible) about that.

SG: Yeah, you just work with faster breathing and powerful music. No drugs are used and people still have very similar kind of powerful -- powerful experiences and then over the years we also worked with a lot of people who had spontaneous experiences like this and we found out that you can basically work with those states in the same way we did with psychedelics or with the breathwork that, actually, the last thing you would want to do is to suppress those states with tranquilizers because if you can support them properly, they can be transformative, they can be -- they can be healing, so we believe now there is a certain significance, a certain subgroup of states, which are diagonals to psychosis, which are really like crisis of spiritual opening and we call them spiritual emergencies.

KM: Very interesting. You give training with that, don't you? With the breathing or (Overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

SG: You know, my main -- main focus now is on teaching this method to people who become facilitators, so we have trained over a thousand people all over the world to actually practice this, you know, lead the groups with this breathwork.

KM: What -- what are the part -- are participants -- what is the group that you're doing the training for that you provide that --

SG: -- You know, some of them would be psychiatrists, psychologists, but there are also others. Anthropologists come because they want to learn about non-ordinary states. We had clergy who are interested in experiencing spiritual experiences.

KM: So quite a cross-section of various types that could benefit by this. OK. All right. Let's talk a little about family. Your wife helps you with this and -- talk about -- do you have any children?

SG: I don't have children of my own, but I, you know, I basically consider my wife's children to be mine.

KM: OK. Did you meet your wife here in this country?

SG: In -- yeah -- in United States in California. She grew up in Honolulu.

KM: OK. So that's close by, right? [laughter]

SG: And so she already had a, you know, when we -- when we met the daughter was five years and the son was seven, so they are very much like my children.

KM: Yes, absolutely. Does she still have -- do you travel to Hawaii at all? Does she still have family there or relatives?

SG: Well, her mother had a house in Honolulu, so we used to spend a lot of time there on vacations, you know.

KM: Nice spot. [laughter]

SG: Yeah. Beautiful.

KM: Right.

SG: Right on the ocean overlooking Diamond Head, so it was --

KM: -- Very nice. [laughter] Let's talk -- you have quite a few publications. Do you have anything in the works at the moment that you are working on?

SG: Well, we finally, after using the holotropic breathwork for many years, we finally are writing a handbook on the theory and practice of this holotropic breathwork.

KM: Good. And is it -- when do you expect to have it published? Pretty soon or --

SG: -- Well, the manuscript is going to the publisher within a month or so.

KM: Very good.

SG: So whatever it takes them -- nine months (Overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

KM: I am looking forward to getting a copy.

SG: I'll certainly send a copy.

KM: [laughter]

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SG: I am also writing another book, which is already done. It's being printed and that's on a Swiss painter, Hans Giger*, who you probably know as somebody who got an Oscar, the Academy Award for the art to the movie "Alien" and also -- have you seen the movie?

KM: No, I haven't. But I recognize what you are talking about.

SG: And inspired, actually, there's a whole series of these "Alien" one through five, so he is a, you know, very, very interesting artist and it's very much inspired by the trauma of birth. A lot of his paintings show, you know, scenes of deliveries, babies, and so on. And so I used it to show how you get deeper understanding of art when you use this extended cartography that emerged out of non-ordinary states. Current psychiatry and psychology has this Freudian model, which really is limited to post-natal biography. To what happened during nursing, toilet training, you know, Oedipus problems, Electra problems and so on. So the whole psychological history starts after we are born and this work has shown that there is a powerful record of all the stages of birth that we went through pre-natal, life, and then also kind of a realm that we now call transpersonal. There is a whole, you know, new discipline called transpersonal psychology that I have been very much involved with and so I'm using his art as an example how you get a much deeper understanding of the content of art if you expand the cartography, if you don't try to explain everything just from childhood and infancy.

KM: Sure. All right. I noticed you were a consultant on experimental sequences for that Hollywood science fiction "Brainstorm."

SG: Yes.

KM: Could you tell us a little about how that -- what exactly that we were involved in?

SG: Well, I had a slideshow, which was kind of a death/rebirth slideshow, you know, very, very powerful with music and so on and Doug Trumbull, who was a kind of this special effect genius who did work with Kubrick on "2001" and he also worked on the "Andromeda Strain," "Bladerunner" and other movies, so he was the director of this movie called "Brainstorm." It was very fascinating story of two inventors who invent a helmet and when you experience something you can record the electric potentials and another person can get the helmet and have your experience and what happened in the movie is that one of the researchers who developed it was working late at night and had a heart attack and decided to record that and they came in the morning and she was dead, but the tape was still rolling. So they realized they recorded a death experience. So he heard about this slideshow so he came, watched the slideshow, and then basically invited us to be consultants for the special effects, so he wanted to use the best special effects existing at the time, which was nothing like what they have today with the digital technology, but still pretty good. And he wanted to combine it with what we know about death and actually portray death in a very realistic way, so he brought the crew to Esalen to our five-day workshop and they did the breathwork with us because there was a, you know, tremendous emphasis on

the death experience. Natalie Wood was part of that and Chris Walken, so there was a scene at the end where he is having this experience and she is there as a supporting team, so they wanted us to give these experiences to the whole team so that they knew what they were working. So there was Louise Fletcher was there, you know, she was the --

KM: -- I don't recognize the name.

SG: She was Nurse Ratched in "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest." And then Cliff -- Cliff Robertson was there then John Foreman* was the producer, you know, so -- so they did this breathwork and Natalie didn't want to do the breathwork because she was too big a star. She (inaudible) exposure, so we then later did this work with her privately with Chris Walken when we were in -- in Raleigh in North Carolina on location. We had a chance to spend 10 days at Hollywood when they were -- quite a fascinating experience.

KM: I would imagine. [laughter]

SG: Unfortunately, Natalie Wood drowned while the movie was -- because, you know, they went for this trip on the yacht near Catalina Island and she invited Chris Walken and they were drinking and somehow the men got into a fight and she walked out and also with high level of alcohol, so there was a question whether the movie would be finished at all. MGM wanted to collect \$15 million from Lloyd's of London and Doug Trumbull* convinced them that if they give him \$3 million that he would finish it, but if you watch the movie there is a, you know, that something is missing. It was not really smooth because three scenes were --

KM: -- Because in the finishing part is what you're saying.

SG: -- the three scenes were quite important scenes, so he didn't quite manage to bridge it and the worst thing was that there was not enough money for the special effects that we were working on so something that started as a very exciting project, you know, became kind of (Overlapping dialogue; inaudible) not only frustrating, but it had a tragic end.

KM: Right. OK. Let's --

SG: -- We were then invited to another one. We worked on the "The Millennia," which was not a great movie.

KM: Have you done any lately? (Overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

SG: No, all that, you know, came and went.

KM: [laughter] That was a good opportunity.

SG: It was.

KM: Let's talk --

SG: -- But there was travel through time when we were working on those sequences. We were traveling through time.

KM: Sure. OK. I got a couple of awards I want to ask you about, but let's start with the VISION 97, the Václav and Dagmar Havel Foundation award you got in Prague. Tell us a little about the award and how were you notified that you were going to be receiving it.

SG: Well, I got a phone call. He has a brother who is Ivan Havel, who is a really brilliant researcher in artificial intelligence and we had connection with him and a group of scientists in Prague from the time when we did a large international transpersonal conference in Prague and Václav Havel was -- it was done under his offices. He was supposed to welcome people, but couldn't come to the conference because it was just the day when Czechoslovakia was breaking and they were meeting in the parliament until three o'clock in the morning, but I had the connection with Ivan Havel and so he gave me the call, said that I was nominated and would I be willing to come to, you know, receive the award, which of course I was very excited to do. It's quite, quite remarkable considering that it's still a controversial -- very controversial area and this is quite a prestigious award. It was first -- the first one was given to Václav Havel to -- I'm sorry -- to -- Václav Havel is the one who gave it. Karl Pribram* the neuro-researcher who developed the holographic model of the brain. And there was Umberto Eco* was another one, Philip Zimbardo from Stanford, who did the prison project and that's quite a -- quite a (Overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

KM: They have a big ceremony and where was it held? In one of (Overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

SG: A very, very beautiful ceremony in a church that they have renovated and it is now like a spiritual center in Prague.

KM: Very nice. Very, very nice. You got to spend some time there while you were over there as well?

SG: We spent about a week in Prague, yeah.

KM: That's nice.

SG: And there was a very wonderful award, which is a large staff. It's a copy of the staff of St. Adalbert that was then sent and sort of hanging in our living room, you know.

KM: Sure. OK. Very good. You also got that Association for Transpersonal Psychology an honorary award, too, at one time. And I thought I'd ask you about the International Transpersonal Association. You were the founder and also the president. Talk a little about that association. Are you still participating in it?

SG: Well, transpersonal psychology started like in the late 1960s and the two people who started the Transpersonal Psychology Association were also people who started humanistic psychology, Tony Sutich and Abe Maslow and, although humanistic psychology was very popular, within about 10 years, they themselves got a strong sense that they left out something significant, which was the spiritual dimension, you know, also creativity, meditation research and so on, so they were considering creating yet another psychology and they wanted to call it transhumanistic and this was the time when we connected. I brought in the observations from psychedelic research. Abe Maslow* had done a very large study of hundreds of people who had spontaneous mystical experiences, what he called peak experiences, so we sort of brainstormed that and I became part of the founding group for the Transpersonal Psychology, and Transpersonal Psychology people were meeting every year in Asilimar* and there were people

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from other countries started coming and then we felt that it should actually expand and become an international organization and so this is where I came in and was the founding, you know, founding president of this ITA. We started it in Belo Horizonte in Brazil during one of the transpersonal conferences and then Christina and I organized eight large conferences in different parts of the world.

KM: That's a lot of work.

SG: Some -- yeah -- some in the United States, but also in Melbourne, Australia, in the Amazon, in Manaus, in Prague was another one, and there were some other people who were organizing the rest of the conferences. Ralph Metzner* one in Killarney in Ireland and Cecil Burney* in Kyoto. There were 16 conferences. Now the 17th is going to be next year in Moscow.

KM: OK. So plans are underway for that one I imagine.

SG: Yes. We have to start early.

KM: You have to, that's right. And we mentioned before that you were on the Board of Trustees (inaudible) Esalen Institute, but you are not on the board any longer or --

SG: At the time when I was there, yeah. We left in 1987.

KM: OK. OK. How about an outstanding event? Something that comes to mind that you'd like to share with us. Do you have an outstanding event in your life that you'd like to share with us, with the researchers? You can name more than one.

SG: Well, event, I will be going to Moscow at the beginning of November for a week again to do a lot of, to do a large two-day workshop -- theoretical workshop that is going to be about breathwork and then, you know, a lot of television appearances and basically trying to prepare for the next conference. It's like a PR event.

KM: Very good. Well, that will be very nice. Yeah. As you look ahead and look back out, leave us with some closing comments or -- that you'd like to make (inaudible) whatever you'd like to say in closing or wrap-up (Overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

SG: Well, I just, you know, I have been very, very excited to see that every time there is kind of a major breakthrough in science that it's something that's welcomed by the people in the transpersonal circles and somewhat sort of surprising or even embarrassing for the traditional academic circles, so it started with work like (inaudible), you know, the -- the philosophical implications of quantum relativistic science and then Karl Pribram's* holographic model of the brain and David Bohm's* holonomic model, and Rupert Sheldrake's* new biology of life and then the last -- my last hero is Ervin László* with his concept of what he now calls Akashic Field and used to call PSI/Si field. So it has been interesting to see -- I believe that transpersonal psychology at the beginning was considered to be irrational, unscientific, you know, it seems to be becoming part of a comprehensive new worldview, so I just hope that, you know, there will be a way of really bringing it into the academic circles because it's still sort of outside of its -- outside of academia and my own personal ambition would be to continue what we started, you know, in a somewhat frustrating way with "Brainstorm" to actually

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use now the new incredible digital technology to portray mystical experiences. I believe that you can not just portray them, you could induce them in people, you could give them mystical experiences combining what we know about these states and the technology which is available and it has been kind of disappointing to see how they are being used, you know, mostly portraying, in a brilliant way, very destructive scenes. Once it's a dinosaur, the other time it's some kind of villain who is trying to destroy the Earth, and then -- then aliens come and there's a brilliant portrayal of the destruction and then, you know, the danger is overcome and you end up with trashed planet.

KM: Yeah, I see what you are saying.

SG: Some of the chaotic scenes are OK, but they should be sort of brought then to some kind of resolution, you know, spiritual or mystical resolution and they haven't been doing very well in that department.

KM: The psychoactive substances collection, which is here in the archives, do you want to make a comment on that? You've got some materials in there, correct?

SG: Well, it's an effort to, you know, create a really -- create archives and also a library that future researchers could use. I think the very exciting thing is that psychedelic research that kind of basically died for a number of years is coming back, so there are now three major universities, UCLA, John's Hopkins, and Harvard, who are now repeating the work that we did with cancer patients. They are not using LSD, they are using psilocybin, which is a similar substance, you know, the active alkaloid from the magic mushrooms of the Mazatec Indians and

there is now a study going on with MDMA, with post-traumatic syndrome is an area, you know, where basically there is no effective help available at this point. And there are going to be enormous numbers of people needing this kind of help coming from Iraq, from Afghanistan, and so on and so these are very successful studies and I think it's a very promising kind of area. So I hope that this research is going to grow and that this Purdue library is going to become more and more relevant, you know, really as a resource for new researchers.

KM: Right. Good. Good. I want to thank you very much, Dr. Grof. I really appreciate this and I know the researchers will to. Thank you very much.

SG: Again, thank you very much for having me.

KM: My pleasure. [laughter]

End of Interview

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*Proper names may be spelled incorrectly