

## *Once Upon an Alp: Remembering our Beginnings*

By Paul D. Huss

C.G. Jung, in his autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections*, recounts the story of his first visit to the top of Mount Rigi in his native land of Switzerland. He says his father drove him to the base of the Rigi, but was able to afford only one ticket for the cog railway trip to the top. The young Carl, upon surveying the breath-taking alpine vista, felt he could say nothing, for as he recounts; “This is God’s world!” That was the Rigi experience of his adolescence. The story of this Center has some of its seeds on that same mountain.

The year was 1987 and I was leading a travel group to the C.G. Jung Institute-Zurich for two weeks of seminars. As was our custom, we began our program in the village of Wegis on the Lake of Luzern. The first days were set apart for rest, relaxation, introductory lectures, and getting to know one another. One day a group of us decided to go to the top of the Rigi. We took the cog railway to the top, and as we were taking in the incredible views, Brad Pusey called me aside. I had known Brad at Andover Newton Theological School where it had been my privilege to serve as his doctoral advisor in the Department of Psychology and Clinical Studies. On that day, which I shall never forget, Brad said: “Paul, there is a wonderful woman who lives in New York City and summers in Brooklin, Maine, that you absolutely must meet. Her name is Mildred Harris.

He went on to say that Mildred, who was then in her eighties, really wanted to do something in Maine as a way of expressing thanks for the role that Jungian psychology had played in the healing of her epilepsy. He said that Mildred owned a painting by Hans Hoffman, entitled “The Source,” that she would be willing to sell in order to provide funding for some kind of Jungian activity. I experienced instant excitement! It was for me a serendipitous event. Something was crossing my path that was going to heavily influence my life and provide me with an opportunity to contribute to the unfolding of a gift that would prove to be of real value to the lives of many. That is why I call the story of our beginnings “Once Upon an Alp.”

In the course of our discussion we agreed to get together with Mildred. I explained to Brad that I knew of some of the Jungian activities in Maine, but being new to the state recommended that we invite Dr. Walter Christie to come along. I noted that Walt was a psychiatrist at Maine Medical Center, that he was a serious student of Jung, and that he knew a great deal about psychological offerings around the state.

On an absolutely glorious fall day, Walt and I drove up to Blue Hill and met Brad. We then followed him to Brooklin and to “Hideaway”, Mildred’s summer home. As we were getting out of the car, Mildred came out to greet us. The feature about Mildred that most struck me was her eyes. They were so alert, intelligent, compassionate, and warm. I instantly fell in love with her.

We were ushered into the house, and before sitting down to talk were taken to the living room to see the Hoffman painting. Brad, Walt, and I knew very little about abstract art and so felt like the three stooges as Mildred “walked” us through it. “See how this green relates to this red!” We tried to look intelligent but could only nod “uh huh.” Mildred talked lovingly and appreciatively about the picture for forty-five minutes that passed by as if five.

We then went to the kitchen area and sat down to talk. Walt and I shared with Mildred what we knew about Jungian groups in Maine. We told her about Michael Dwinell and Roger Smith and the kinds of events that they had offered in Portland. We described the Bowdoin College Jung Seminar being conducted every Tuesday afternoon at the college under the leadership of Bill Geoghegan and Bruce Riegel. We also noted that Bill was a Jung scholar and had introduced the work of Jung in many of his courses in the religion department. We told her about the late Heinz Westman and a study group meeting on Sundays at the home of Ilsa Westman in Readfield near Augusta. Mildred was both surprised and delighted to learn that there was so much interest in Jungian studies in Maine.

We began to wonder aloud where a learning center might be located. Portland, Brunswick, and Augusta all offered promise. However, the more we discussed the matter, the more it became clear that Brunswick would provide an ideal location. It was located on the coast and situated roughly equidistant between Augusta and Portland. Another major plus was the presence of Bowdoin College and Walt and I both expressed the feeling, without committing him, that Bill would be supportive in any way possible.

Next we discussed what kind of learning center might be offered. Mildred clearly did not want to found an institute. Boston was filling that need quite well. She preferred a center that would be available to the general public and would attract people who were interested in Jungian thought. What unfolded was the model of a liberal arts perspective that treasured learning for the sheer love of learning.

We took a break for lunch. As we were eating, Mildred turned to Brad and said: "Brad, I think we need to get in touch with Sotheby's and arrange for the sale of the painting." It was awhile before Walt and I could speak. Something was going to happen! It was in fact going to happen and happen soon! This lunch stands out clearly as one of the most memorable moments of my life.

When lunch was completed we moved to the sitting area adjacent to the kitchen and discussed the formation of a board of directors. Brad, Walt, and I agreed to serve on the board and Mildred agreed to be an honorary member. For the fourth member, Walt and I both recommended Bill Furber, who was a serious student of Jungian thought and also an attorney. Incidentally, Bill has since left that profession and is studying to become an analyst at the C.G. Jung Institute-Boston. Our first step would be to investigate what needed to be done to become a not-for-profit organization.

After several conference calls among us, we felt that we had an adequate sense of what we wanted to do in order to go forward and complete the founding board. It was felt that Bill Geoghegan should be approached because of his scholarly pursuits as a religion professor at the college and his enthusiasm. It was also felt that Bruce Riegel, who was then practicing as a Jungian oriented therapist and co-leader with Bill of the Bowdoin College Jung Seminar, should also be invited. We also felt we needed a woman with some experience with Jungian organizations. Ruth Hoffman, known to many as Tiny, was the obvious choice in that she had been active with the Cambridge Jungian group that later founded the Boston Jung Institute. Each was approached and each graciously consented.

A few weeks later, all of us made the journey to Brooklin to meet with Mildred and to see the painting before it left for Sotheby's. This gathering was primarily a social occasion for the purpose of allowing all of us to be with Mildred and for her to experience the enthusiasm of all of us in bringing her dream, now our dream as well, to reality.



## Maine Jung Center

During the months that followed, the painting went to Sotheby's and we worked on strategic planning for the center that was to become known as the C.G. Jung Center for Studies in Analytical Psychology. Though this is the official name, most refer to it as the Brunswick Jung Center. With Bill Geoghegan's assistance we continued to formulate the teaching goals of the center in the spirit of the liberal arts. We would offer courses on Jungian psychology and on topics which would appeal to our understanding of Jung's interests.

With time, the painting was sold at auction and Mildred made a gift of half the proceeds to create the Center. By now I was serving as President of the board, and Bill Furber and I were charged to open the bank account. Neither of us had ever walked around with a check for such a large amount in our pockets and we were, to say the least, a bit giddy when we entered the bank.

As the center continued to evolve, it was felt that we needed further legal expertise. Michael Mastronardi, likewise a serious student of Jung, immediately came to mind. It was through his expertise, his enthusiasm, and his energy that the center got its legal standing as a not-for-profit organization.

On September 17, 1988, less than a year since that first meeting at "Hideaway", the Brunswick Jung Center celebrated its official opening at a noon luncheon given at Cram Alumni House at Bowdoin College. There were approximately one hundred people present. The highlight of the occasion was an address given by Mildred. Her presentation was recorded on video and is now on file at the Jung Center under the title: "A Star is Born".

Since those memorable beginnings, the Jung Center has proven to be an invaluable resource to so many of the people who have availed themselves of its high quality of programs. I think Mildred would be proud of the way we have all kept to her vision, and in so doing, we have expressed our undying gratitude for what she inspirited, inspired, and made possible.