



MAGPS NEWS

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Volume 13, Issue 2

Fall 2005

MAGPS 2005 Fall Conference November 4, 5 & 6, 2005

WHO ARE WE, REALLY? A SPIRITUAL APPROACH TO GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY

WITH **KENNETH PORTER, M.D.**

RAMADA ON THE BEACH HOTEL, VIRGINIA BEACH, VA



PHOTO BY MOLLY DONOVAN

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Kenneth Porter, M.D. is our presenter for our Fall 2005 Conference to be held in Virginia Beach November 4th - 6th. Dr. Porter, a psychiatrist, psychoanalyst and group therapist, has been exploring the interface between spirituality and psychotherapy for the last 20 years. He will be challenging us to ask and find some answers to the question, "Who are we, really?" Conference chair, Lenore Pomerance spoke with him about the spiritual orientation to his work, and what we can expect from our experience with him.

LP: So, what is this all about?

KP: When we're born, we all receive a manual of instruction for life which tells us what to do in order to become happy. We get this manual from our families, culture and society. It basically says: be good, do whatever you can to become beautiful, successful, wealthy, powerful, sexy, do good work and develop good loving relationships. If we can do all or most of that, we'll be happy.

Most people who are reasonably successful follow that manual, and it works for most of us with one qualification. Between the ages of 40-60, we get to the last page of the manual realizing there's something missing. We don't feel fulfilled, there's something missing. That is when we start the search for important things in life that weren't in the manual. Many call this search "entering upon the spiritual path."

Continued on Page 3

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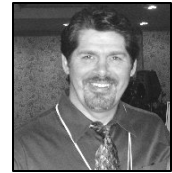
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Dear Colleagues,

The newly elected Board of Directors held their first official meeting this past June at the home of Barry Wepman. We have a dynamic mix of veterans and new members, all with many years of experience as group therapists, community organizers and organizational leaders. I'm confident this group will distinguish itself over the next two years. We're off to a good start.

Board action taken this summer included a \$1000 donation to the Group Psychotherapy Foundation's "Fulfilling the Promise: Capital Campaign". (See *Trish Cleary's article on page 7*) The board of directors also voted to make MAGPS available to serve as host affiliate for a future AGPA Annual Meeting. If MAGPS is selected by AGPA to serve in this capacity, a separate announcement will be forwarded to the membership with full details.

Outreach efforts continue to attract interest in MAPGS. Thirty first-time attendees participated in the 2005 Spring Institute and Conference, including 15 students from various training programs and universities attending on fully funded scholarships. The collaborative efforts of Institute Chair Venus Masselam, SOAR Chair Cheryl Poe, Conference Chair Lenore Pomerance and Co-Chair Molly Donovan, Scholarship Coordinator Barry Wepman and committee members resulted in a remarkable achievement. Congratulations! I was delighted to receive an e-mail inquiry from a director of a children's clinic in Maryland who 'heard about us' and wanted to take advantage of our training opportunities for his staff. A well-deserved reputation precedes us.

Last year's board decision to establish separate fall and spring conference chair positions is fully implemented and already reaping dividends. Fresh and focused, each respective chair now has a full twelve-month cycle to conceive and execute a weekend conference.

Newly appointed Spring 2006 Conference Chair, Venus Masselam, is off to a great start, initiating a partnership with conference co-sponsor the Johns Hopkins University, Department of Counseling and Human Resources. The Rockville campus is modern, intimate and accessible with beautiful meeting space provided gratis by the university. CEU sponsorship will cover psychologists, social workers and counselors. The Counseling Department's leadership is committed to excellence in continuing education, and we're fortunate to be joining with them in presenting the 2006 MAGPS Spring Conference featuring our very own Nina Brown EdD - kudos to Venus for her pioneering efforts.

The upcoming Fall 2005 conference is beautifully profiled in Lenore's interview of Kenneth Porter, M.D. and her conference preview article. Those of us who didn't make it to the beach this summer still have a chance to feel the sand between our toes and hear the waves reach the shore. Virginia Beach is beautiful in the fall. I hope to see you there.!

With Gratitude, Bob



Interview continued from Page 1

LP: Is this search only for middle aged people?

KP: Some people are at one end or another of the bell curve, and some get interested in spirituality when they're six. But more often it occurs at mid-life. Jung also said this about first and second half of lives – outer and then inner.

Spirituality is a seeking to know the answers to certain questions which constitute the hallmarks of the spiritual path. Posing questions and seeking their answers is what gets us on that path. Rilke says there are many questions in life we cannot receive the answers to because we are not ready for them. The point is to live the questions, not believing that we need to know the answers. The most important answers cannot be found in the way we usually think to find them, i.e. thinking. We ask them at 3 am when we cannot sleep, when we're drunk and depressed, in a fight with our love partner, when all our role-playing falls away. That is when we are left in front of these questions which start to burn. Most us take a pill and go back to sleep; patch up the argument, but maybe that's not enough.

These questions include: What is it that really leads to happiness in life? What is it that is most real? Who are we, really? What is the meaning of life?

As therapists, we have to teach our patients how to fully be their true selves. It's not so simple to teach that. Learning to be who we really are requires more discipline, will and wisdom than being spontaneous or infantile.

LP: How should we prepare for this week-end with you? What should we bring and leave behind both practically and metaphorically?

KP: Don't leave anything behind – manuals, preconceptions, fears, doubts, bring them all. Be open to the possibility that we really do not know how psychotherapy works, the possibility that we really don't know how to do psychotherapy, and that fundamentally the possibility what we think we know about life might not be true. Be open to that and you'll be off to a good start. You should also bring a willingness to completely challenge the leader. Oh, and bring plenty of chocolate.

LP: So how does this relate to group therapy?

KP: I'm continually evolving the answer to that question. Assume for the moment that we might conceptualize the purpose of spiritually oriented group psychotherapy helping us all contact and identify with a level of experience inside us that is more real and more fulfilling than the everyday way in which we experience our lives.

If that were to be the case, we might ask why bother to do it in groups? In a way that question overlaps with the question of why group therapy? It's an interesting fact of the history of our species (200,000 years ago) that we have congregated together in groups, tribes, football teams, Jesus the Apostles, the president and his cabinet, etc. Slavson, a group pioneer, said that when we meet together in groups something magical happens that group therapists have been trying to define for the past 70 years. It is interesting to note that all great spiritual teachers have always taught in groups. There's something about being in a group that facilitates our contacting a deeper level of truth and realness insides ourselves. †

FALL 2005 CONFERENCE PREVIEW*by Lenore Pomerance, Fall Conference Chair*

Our Fall 2005 Conference features Kenneth Porter, MD presenting “*Who Are We, Really? A Spiritual Approach to Group Psychotherapy.*” We’ll be meeting at the Ramada On the Beach Hotel, in Virginia Beach, Virginia, Friday through Sunday, November 4-6.

Dr. Porter is a spiritually-oriented psychiatrist, psychoanalyst and group therapist. His study of a variety of spiritual paths for the last twenty years has infused his clinical practice of psychotherapy. We will be working in our familiar large and small group format with demonstration groups as part of the large group experience. On Saturday night there will be a screening of a film relevant to the conference theme.

Small group leaders include: Barbara Cristy, MSW; Mary Dluhy, MSW; Laura June, Ph.D; Jeff Price, MA, CGP from Colorado; Rosemary Segalla, Ph.D.; John Rhead, Ph.D; and H. Cooke Read, MSW.

The Ramada On the Beach, at 615 Atlantic Avenue (not to be confused with the Ramada Plaza Resort and Conference Center which is further down the beach) has direct access to Virginia Beach’s boardwalk. We can stroll on the beach or boardwalk on our breaks. It is also surrounded by shops and restaurants on Atlantic Avenue. All of our meeting rooms look out on the ocean. All of the guest rooms have ocean views with private balconies. There is a lively seafood restaurant with a full sushi bar in the hotel. Check it out and make your reservation online at: www.virginiabeachramada.com or call: 1-800-888-4111.

Getting there may not be half the fun, but with planning you could reduce the stress level. There are transportation options for people coming from the Washington/Baltimore corridor. Driving from Washington/Baltimore can be between 3.5 and 4.5 hours, depending on your departure location and time of day. Route 95 and getting through Norfolk, VA on Friday afternoons can be congested. Allow yourselves plenty of time.

USAIR will get you to Norfolk (ORF) from DCA in under an hour for a round-trip ticket of \$138 if purchased 14 days ahead. A taxi to the hotel takes 15-20 minutes. There is a possibility of chartering a bus from the Washington metro area. Lisa Zimmerman is coordinating either charter bus or van transportation. If you are interested contact Lisa Zimmerman at 202-413-0686 or email lisazimmerman@mindspring.com as soon as possible.!

THE INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOTHERAPY & PSYCHOANALYSIS*Presents***DONNELL STERN***author of****Unformulated Experience: From Dissociation to Imagination to Psychoanalysis*****Saturday, December 3, 2005, 8:30am to 12:30pm*****Marriott Residence Hotel, 7335 Wisconsin Avenue, Bethesda, Maryland 20814***

Three (3) CE credit hours will be awarded to participants. This event is **FREE** to members of ICP&P. Non-members may register by sending a check for **\$75**, along with name, email address, postal address, and phone number to: **ICP&P, 3000 Connecticut Ave., NW, #108-A, Washington, DC 20008**

For Information call: **202-686-9300 X 4**



Spring 2005 Remembered

by Molly Donovan

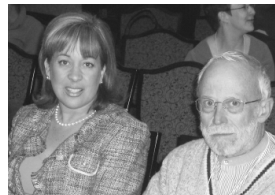
We ask a great deal of our patients – we ask them to join us on a journey into the unknown. They want answers; we try to open up possibilities.

At our Spring Conference at the Holiday Inn in Bethesda, our presenter, Richard Billow, in the true spirit of relational psychotherapy, attempted to open up the group to many possibilities. In the first plenary, Dr. Billow introduced his concept of three fundamentals of group psychotherapy: resistance, rebellion, and refusal. He illustrated these concepts as they arose in the group process and demonstrated how each provides an opportunity for the leader to move the group forward in its development of new modes of relating. He then opened the floor for what was a thoughtful discussion. Dr. Billow conducted a demonstration group in the afternoon and then a debriefing with the entire group.

Sunday morning the group agreed to Dr. Billow's suggestion of holding a large group session. The somewhat spontaneous large group was another way of experiencing the journey into the unknown. This was an experiment that did seem to open up possibilities, as did the slightly different structure of the entire conference. Dr. Billow is the author of many articles on group psychotherapy and is the author of a book *Relational Group Psychotherapy: From Basic Assumptions to Passion* (2003).

Dealing with the limitations of the physical spaces (we used pillars in the middle of the large group room and shifting venues for several of the groups), the conference participants seemed willing to adapt and grow with each "resistance" that occurred. Lenore Pomerance, the Conference Chair, ran interference above and beyond the call of anyone's duty to keep these disruptions to a minimum. There were a hundred people in attendance, with thirty first-time attendees. Eighteen people had been awarded scholarships to attend this Conference. †

Photos that appear in this issue are archived by **Paul Timin**. If you wish a copy of a photo, please e-mail Paul at ptimin1@attglobal.net and he will be glad to email you a copy.



“Hang in There”- Reflections on the MAGPS Spring Conference*by Bernie Stolz*

At the final large group meeting of the April MAGPS conference with Richard Billow, veteran attendees were debating whether new and younger attendees should be given more guidance as to the nature of MAGPS and its membership. At this point, I stood up and said something along the lines of the following:

“MAGPS is comprised of very intelligent psychotherapists who feel the need to show it by using \$2 words. Their powers of intellectualization are only surpassed by their deft use of jargon, and they show a penchant for the dramatic. However, by the end of two days together, they also show an impressive ability to drop their defenses and share their immediate experience with each other. The challenge of these weekends is to get to this point where true experiential learning happens. This capacity for change is what makes me love this quirky group and keep coming back.”

Because it was my third conference, I felt like I had a foot in both camps. On one side, I was proud and happy to dive into the discourse as an experienced member of MAGPS. On the other side, I was a 30-year-old graduate student who was continually being evaluated and feeling like I had a lot to prove to those who were veterans in the field. I also ran into many of my student friends attending their first MAGPS conference. On the first day I told them, “Hang in there for the whole thing. You won’t be disappointed.” By the end of the last day, they were not disappointed.

I had not given much thought to why I gave these newcomers that advice. I now realize that the sometimes uncomfortable experiences at an MAGPS conference, fueled by the eccentric humanity of its members, are absolutely necessary to the process. A transformative experience is what makes therapy groups work and it is almost always uncomfortable at some point. Our conferences need to include dissent and discomfort if we are to be able to learn from them. So, perhaps the best advice to newcomers and regulars alike is to be open to the process, despite occasional discomforts. And hang in there. †

***Supervision Group
Georgetown***

An established, ongoing, psychodynamically-oriented supervision group has room for one or two new members. This is an unusual opportunity to work collaboratively with a small group of fully-trained psychotherapists from a range of disciplines and with a range of experience under the guidance of a psychologist with over 25 years of experience supervising clinical work with individuals, couples, and groups.

Meets: Tuesdays 4:30 - 5:45 PM

For Information contact:

Barry Wepman, PhD (202) 337-0705



Spring 2005 Scholarship Awards

At the request of Scholarship Chair, Barry Wepman, those persons who received scholarships to the Spring 2005 conference wrote letters about their experiences.

Below are selections from those letters.

I attended on a "first timer" scholarship and truly enjoyed participating. I learned most from small and large group. I suggest an orientation on what to expect at the beginning of the conference as I didn't know what I was walking into on Saturday and was turned off by the speaker's opening remarks. I was relieved and excited to learn that the speaker often "shapes the weekend" and that society members welcome a variety of perspectives. Thank you for allowing newcomers to share in the experience and for providing a scholarship. It was a valuable experience. *Amy Hemler*

The conference gave me an overview of group psychotherapy and a wonderful opportunity to meet practitioners. Small group was the most valuable experience. I was amazed to see how participants in my group took feedback from their peers and applied it to their behavior. Having never been in a group, I was surprised to see how quickly my own maladaptive behaviors came to the surface, and I was grateful for the opportunity to explore them in such a supportive environment. As a result of this positive experience, I am looking for a group to join and look forward to leading groups as part of my practice. *Cornelia Tietke*

When the weekend started, I was taken aback by the aggressiveness of people. I felt some were trying to prove their knowledge. As the weekend went on, I began to understand what the conference was about, but some people were agitating. Small group was a helpful experience. It brought the intellectualizing done in the big group to life. Overall, it was a good learning experience. I am not sure I will attend another conference but I'm glad I was able to experience one. Thanks. *Shannon Foley*

It was a pleasure participating. Thank you for the opportunity to have a scholarship and to everybody for a wonderful welcoming. This event was meaningful for me because I did not believe in the importance of group psychotherapy. It became clear to me that group as a tool for understanding our different ways of reacting in everyday life is extremely valuable. I believe now that it is an important tool to master in my future career as a psychiatrist. I will be attending future events. *Nesly Hneich* †



Integrative Relational Group Therapy

by Mike Stiers

For the past two years, I have conducted a two day Specific Interest Institute at AGPA entitled "Integrative Relational Group Therapy." Relational group therapy is an application of relational psychoanalysis to group work. The term relational psychoanalysis is attributed to Greenberg and Mitchell (1983) who initially used the notion to bridge the traditions of Interpersonal theory, as developed by Sullivan and his followers with the concepts of British Object relational theorists, Fairbairn in particular. Over the past two decades, relational psychoanalysis has incorporated several contemporary influences, such as attachment theory, intersubjectivity, social constructivism, and perspectivism.

The influence within relational psychoanalysis of concepts such as, intersubjectivity and social constructivism has resulted in a modification of the analyst's stance and her technique. Experience is seen as being co-created. It is accepted that the analyst's participation in the therapeutic dialogue is a function of her own subjective experience. Therefore, the patient's point of view is mediated through analyst's point of view and vice versa.

Seeing the group therapist as a co-participant in a therapy group suggests several modifications of technique, such as:

Establishing a frame of acceptance and safety in the beginning part of treatment in contrast to techniques that accent the role of frustration in the beginning part of treatment.

Striving for mutuality by being authentic.

Making active use of one's own subjectivity to contribute experiential data to the group dialogue.

Accepting transference as more than just a parataxic distortion, but consider transference as offering a different perspective on the intersubjective experience. Also, realize that group members intuit aspects of the therapist's experience that may be outside of the therapist's awareness.

Being open to being studied, affected and analyzed by the group patients.

Accepting that the therapists are likely to participate in enactments in the group, realizing that therapists get induced into enacting complementary roles with group members and also be conscious of the fact that therapists induce patients into enacting complementary roles with them.

Being willing to acknowledge the patients' impact on you (transparency) and acknowledge your perceived impact on them.

Although heavily experiential, the Institutes at AGPA are educational rather than therapeutic groups. Similar to therapy groups, I believe that it is essential in the early stage of an educational group to establish conditions of safety, and containment. At the same time, I strive to create a contained but free flowing dynamic experience. For me authentic learning challenges the status quo. In a group where interaction is less regulated than in most other places, there is the possibility of breaching static and confining norms. Relational theory suggests that our human world is an ephemeral interplay of perspectives, ideas, prejudices, and styles of relating. If we accept this, then we must also anticipate that individual desires and interests among group members will always at some point collide. I believe that without such conflict there can be no energy for further development. It is within the heat of living where we bump up against each other that repressed emotional material bubbles to the surface. The resulting infusion of new images, dream thoughts, and spontaneous emotions allows the group participants (including the facilitator) to co-create and re-create experience. We shift our preoccupations away from that which is commonly accepted and begin to focus on the extraordinary, the ability to think and act otherwise.†

Reference: Greenberg, J. and Mitchell, S. (1983). *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

AGPA/GPF Capital Campaign Success

by Trish Cleary

In June, I was notified by Marsha Block, AGPA's CEO, and Pat Barth, the Group Psychotherapy Foundation's Chairwoman that the Capital Campaign reached its 2005 goal of \$1.35 million two weeks early than its official deadline. As many of you know, this is a remarkable achievement. Congratulations!!

Many thanks go out to individuals in the MAGPS community who were generous in the support of our parent organization. Appreciation also goes out to the MAGPS membership for their contribution of \$1000 as decided at the Spring 2005 Conference Business Meeting.

The first phase of the Capital Campaign "Fulfilling the Promise" was instrumental in the development of important communications media: a state-of-the-art website **www.agpa.org** and the brochure "Group Works!" which is also available in Spanish "Grupos Ayudan!" Another significant goal of the Capital Campaign was to relieve AGPA of its \$100,000 annual headquarters mortgage expense. The next phase will promote educational programming, outreach services and scholarships for Annual Meetings.

AGPA promotes the healing power of group through education, research and training. Your continued support helps make all our goals achievable.!

A Note From the Mentorship Chair

by Paul Timin

After each MAGPS conference I vow to write this message when memory is fresh. Of course that seldom happens and now I'm left with only an impression of what actually took place at the spring conference. To make matters worse, I lost my notes and lists of mentors and first time attendees. I confess my executive skills are limited. I do know that with the help of Tom Large we recruited close to thirty mentors to host the outpouring of students and first time attendees. Tom and I tip our hats to all of you who responded on short notice. Thanks to your generosity we were able to meet all our needs for mentorship. I know some of you were not connected to your mentees because of late arrivals or cancels. We hope to do better for you in the fall.

I know that to volunteer as a mentor is to give up some of the time you wish to spend with colleagues and friends, but I also know the personal contact you make with each potential new member is rewarding and satisfying. Many of you keep responding each conference which makes the job for Tom and myself much easier. Each year we try to reach out to those members who haven't had a chance to be a mentor. Though we can't thank you individually, we heartily thank you as a group and that is what MAGPS is all about, isn't it? !

MAGPS EVENTS CALENDAR

November 4, 5, 6, 2005 MAGPS Fall Conference

Who Are We, Really?

A Spiritual Approach to Group Psychotherapy

with

Kenneth Porter, M.D.
Virginia Beach, VA

February 20-25, 2006 AGPA Annual Meeting

Bridging Differences: Healing a
House Divided

San Francisco, CA

April 28, 2006 MAGPS Pre-Conference Institute

Campus of Johns Hopkins University
Rockville, MD

April 29, 30, 2006 MAGPS Spring Conference

Topic to be Announced

Nina Brown, EDd.

Campus of Johns Hopkins University
Rockville, MD

Member Memos

This new feature will be used to highlight the activities and products of MAGPS members. Please send me the events, honors, presentations, promotions, etc. in which you have been involved. - Editor

- * **Tybe Diamond** has joined the faculty of the Couples Program for the Institute of Contemporary Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis.
- * **Trish Cleary** presented an in-staff training at the Vienna Women's Center on June 3, 2005 entitled: "The Impact of Special Circumstances on the Life of the Group: Illness and Other."
- * **Emily Lape** has completed her 3-year term on AGPA's Board of Directors. She received the Affiliate Assembly's Service Award. She also presented in Grand Rounds at the University of Virginia Medical Center on "Assessment, Engagement & the Initial Phase of Eating Disorders Treatment."
- * **Joe Tarantolo** is now the Chairman of the Board of the International Congress for the Study of Psychiatry & Psychology and is pursuing further knowledge in herbal medicine at conferences in North Carolina and at Jim Dayton's famous Pharmacy Garden in Laurel, Maryland.

Therapist-as-person/Client-as-person

A Supervision Group for Psychotherapists Wanting to Thrive Personally and Economically Independent of Managed Care

Having a full and fulfilling practice independent of managed care requires more than clever marketing strategies and the latest therapeutic techniques.

One must cultivate relationships with one's work, one's clients, and one's life. Relationships that are approached personally and authentically are potentially transformative for both client and therapist.

Such an approach, the opposite of what managed care demands of its providers, treats psychotherapy as much more than a job requiring a certain set of skills; it embraces psychotherapy as a calling.

This group, led by two therapists who take such an approach, will be conducted in accordance with these principles. It will take place in Columbia on Monday afternoons, from 1:00 to 2:20 pm starting in the Fall.

Co-therapist pairs welcome

For more information or to schedule a screening interview call:

**John Rhead, PhD, CGP at 410-997-5060 or
Susan Jacobson, LCSW-C, CGP at 410-997-2100**



Cinema Series

By Nancy Swain & Pat McCallum
Co-Chairs

The up-coming movie season offers a selection of diverse and intriguing films. The series, sponsored by MAGPS and the WSP Group Psychotherapy Alumni Association (GPAA), is an opportunity for clinicians and friends to enjoy a film with experienced presenters and follow-up discussion. The evening includes time for socializing and light dining before the film. CEUs are available and admission is free. The event is held at WSP, 5028 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite, 400, Washington, D.C. starting at 5:45. *Due to security procedures please arrive before 6:15.* Reservations in advance are suggested. Call **202-237-2700**.

December 9, 2005

Three Women (1977). Director - Robert Altman. An enigmatic film, which portrays 3 women living in a California desert community. Millie (Shelly Duvall) is a vacuous, gossipy physical therapist who mentors naive, new employee Pinky (Sissy Spacek). The third woman is a mute artist (Janice Rule) who expresses her fears and fantasies through her painted murals. Midway through the film an event occurs which traumatizes Pinky and is followed by the merging of personalities among the three women. While a psychologically charged film, it is also funny and known for its style.

April 7, 2006

The Sweet Hereafter (1997). Canadian, drama, directed by Atom Egoyan. A tragic school bus accident has robbed a remote and rural community of all but one of its children. Grief, anger and guilt consume the community. The film, beautifully performed and shot, shows the community struggling with each other and within themselves in the aftermath of this catastrophic loss. A provocateur with his own heartbreak and agenda is presented in the role of an out-of-town litigation consultant. †



Ron Kimball, PhD, CGP **Y**

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MAGPS NEWS

Ron Kimball, PhD, Newsletter Editor
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www.magps.org

Dear Colleagues:

An incomplete draft of the MAGPS Newsletter was mistakenly submitted to the printer and subsequently sent to the membership earlier this month.

This copy is the fully edited version.
Please accept my apologies.

Ron Kimball, Editor

MAGPS 2005 Fall Conference November 4, 5 & 6, 2005



PHOTO BY MOLLY DONOVAN

MAGPS Spring 2006 Conference & Pre-Conference Institute

April 28, 29 & 30, 2006

with

Nina Brown, EdD

Educator, Author & MAGPS Past-President

Co-Sponsored by the Johns Hopkins University
Department of Counseling & Human Services

Campus of Johns Hopkins University, Rockville, MD

GPAA/MAGPS Cinema Series

Nancy Swain & Pat McCallum, Co-Chairs



December 9, 2005

Three Women (1977)

5:45 to 6:30 PM Light Supper & Wine
6:30 ~ 9:30 PM Feature Film & Discussion
Washington School of Psychiatry

For Reservations—Call 202-237-2700