

April 28, 1963

To:

Albert Kandelin, M.D., Chairman
The History Committee

From:

Ernst Lowy, M.D.

Re:

Seminars for Movie Writers (1945-1946)

Last Wednesday, April 24, I attended a lecture sponsored by the Extension Division of the Institute. There were a number of actors in the audience, and probably some other people connected with the theatre or the movies who were interested in the subject: "Freud and Stanislavski". Somebody expressed the wish for more lectures related to psychoanalysis and the theatre because, he said, he thought more knowledge of psychoanalysis would help them to be better actors, etc. This brought to mind something I forgot up to now to include in my contributions to the history of psychoanalytic activities in Southern California that might be of interest, so I shall briefly relate it.

Soon after I came to Los Angeles, which was in July, 1945, probably around the fall of 1945, a group got together informally every Sunday afternoon (evening?) that consisted, besides me, of J.F. Brown, Ph.D. and a number of moving picture writers. The reason was that those writers were very much interested in learning all about psychoanalysis because they had the same notion as expressed by the man in the audience mentioned above, that a good knowledge of psychoanalysis would enable them to do

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a better job in writing. The liaison man was probably J. F. Brown and his wife of that time, who very likely is known to a good number of analysts here as Rosabel Brown. I had known J. F. in Kansas, where he had been for a number of years head of the Psychology Department of The Manning Clinic in Topeka, but mainly held the position of Professor of Psychology at Kansas University in Lawrence, Kansas. He was a brilliant man, though, as it turned out, rather disturbed. He was psychoanalytically oriented, had written the book, "The Psychodynamics of Abnormal Behavior". I have for years lost track of him. J. F. Brown had had some analysis with Alexander in Chicago, which he apparently understood to have been a training analysis and seemed to consider sufficient qualification to practice analysis.

Among the writers were the, at that time or soon after, big time movie writers Frank and Panama and Leonard (?) Barcovici. There were others I unfortunately do not remember, also some people who were not writers. We must have been a group of about ten or twelve who met rotatingly at the homes of some of the participants. The discussions ranged rather far and wide. I recall that among others anthropological topics were discussed, too. But the main concern was the above mentioned notion which seems to appeal very much to some people, and comes up again and again. I personally am convinced that good and talented writing has nothing to gain from the "knowledge" of psychoanalysis and tried to convey and to explain this again and again to the group. I pointed to Shakespeare and to Dostoyewski, and went into detail about Freud's "Gratification" and its author's negative reaction to whatever belated contact with psychoanalysis

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he had, but without being able to convince the hearers, I am afraid. In spite of this these meetings were very interesting and stimulating to me, and lasted through most of the winter of 1945-1946.

It may be of interest to know that, besides the "official" teaching, etc. activities in Los Angeles there were some other related things going on.