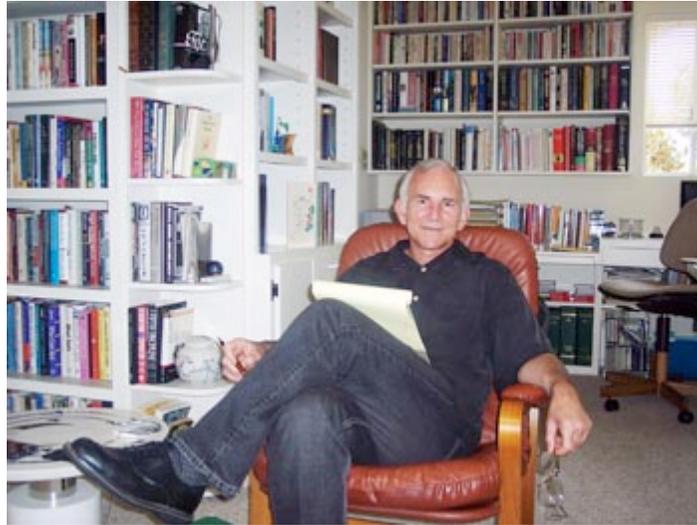


# *Patience and some Hollywood luck pays off for Solana therapist*



**Larry Laveman used Hollywood as a stepping stone in his career.**

***By Diane Welch***

Solana Beach resident Larry Laveman is a patient man. His plan to relocate from his home city of New York to San Diego, to express his passion in the field of counseling families, couples and adults would take him five years of job applications, interviews and disappointments. His timing was unfortunate. During the late 1970s, the fields of psychology and sociology were overflowing with newly licensed graduates.

“I traveled with Joyce, now my wife, from New York to San Diego in 1977,” said Laveman. “I thought the area was idyllic, and it was still considered a small town, but for mental health professionals, nothing was open. I put out hundreds of applications to no avail.”

Laveman, having graduated from Adelphi University in New York in 1975 with a master’s of science in social work, looked to Los Angeles for professional prospects and was hired immediately. “I worked as the team leader for the first poly drug abuse program in the state of California,” he said.

At the time phencyclidine, known largely as PCP, was a major problem. Laveman counseled PCP users as well as heroin users in the program. Then serendipity played a role that would land Laveman into the limelight of movies and the media.

“David Beigleman, who was at that time the head of M.G.M, was undergoing community service following his conviction of a first offense,” said Laveman. “As part of his sentencing, he opted to make a film called “Angel Death” focusing on PCP abuse and he chose our program to feature one of our sessions.”

Beigleman hired Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward to co-narrate the movie, and he filmed Laveman conducting a session.

“I literally had people calling me from all around the world following the broadcast of the film,” Laveman said.

He had gained a reputation as an expert in this field.

In 1978, Laveman was approached by another filmmaker, Chuck Witner, who was also producing work on the problems surrounding the abuse of PCP. Laveman was invited to narrate, act as consultant and take part in post production of the film.

“I was part of a panel of experts who were televised live on air, taking viewers’ calls about the PCP problem,” he said.

After the cameras had left, the attention remained on Laveman. But it wasn’t necessarily what he was hoping for.

“I didn’t identify myself as a drug abuse expert,” he said. “This wasn’t my goal. I wanted to be a therapist helping couples, adults and children.”

He chose to make a change in an attempt to revive the dream of working and raising a family in San Diego County. Laveman made a final effort to secure a professional position in his preferred field of family counseling.

By 1980, the climate was shifting for clinical sociologists, but competition was still fierce. Competing with 250 other applicants, Laveman applied for and was successful in obtaining the position of clinical coordinator and direct service worker with the community based counseling agency, Harmonium, a non-profit organization located in Mira Mesa. His work involved counseling individuals, groups and families and the coordination and supervision of clinical staff and interns.

Twenty-five years later, Laveman is still with Harmonium. His patience paid off. Laveman is now the clinical director for Harmonium, overseeing four clinical directors. Tracy Wutkze is one of them.

“Larry creates an atmosphere that is unconditional and positive to work in. He’s the glue that holds the entire team together,” Wutkze said.

Private practice has also been a passion of Laveman’s. His office in Solana Beach enables him to continue his work with families and individuals, whilst affording time to complete his first book. No newcomer to the world of publishing, Laveman has had several papers published on models of psychotherapy in professional journals. His first book, “Mysticism and Everyday Life,” and subtitled, “How to use ancient principles to transcend personal and marital constraints,” follows the concept of his professional papers which examined ways in which mental health professionals could utilize expanding models.

Laveman argues that therapists should be looking at a bigger picture, expanding the context in which psychotherapeutic issues are examined. Looking for a fall publication, the book focuses on the role that mysticism plays in marriage.

“I’ve taken the idea of being separate yet connected and related it to marriage,” Laveman said.

The awareness of the bigger picture will help couples understand their roles in the marriage and so lead to more successful partnerships according to Laveman. He considers his most significant accomplishment yet ahead of him.

“Just deepening what I am currently doing is my goal,” he said.

But to be able to raise a family here — the Lavemans have two children, Caryn and Evan — and to continue to work for Harmonium prompts Laveman to add: “That in itself is a major accomplishment.”