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## WHAT ABOUT FRANK PUCELIK?

In J. Grinder's impossible-to-read mismatching book criticizing almost everything happening in the field of NLP that didn't come from him (!) called *Whispering in the Wind*, John described Frank Pucelik as one of the co-founders of NLP.

Frank Pucelik was “third man in the initial modeling and testing of patterning in NLP.” (p. 126)  
“Richard Bandler and Frank Pucelik, were doing a Gestalt therapy group nearby and he [Frank] was inviting me to come along.” (p. 143)

“Pucelik, Bandler, and Grinder had sorted out unconsciously the most effective of the verbal patterns used by Perls and Satir through the process of unconscious editing during imitation. Grinder a professional syntactician. The patterns were already very familiar to him.” (p. 151)

When I first read this in 2002 about Frank Pucelik, I was shocked. First I hardly even had heard about Frank and second, this was now 30 years *after* the very beginnings of NLP and this was the first time that a “third” co-founder had ever been presented. So lots of questions assaulted my mind:

- Was there a third co-founder of NLP?
- Was Frank Pucelik one of the founders of NLP?
- Was John writing to reduce the position and role of Richard Bandler by making him “just one of two persons” who were doing the original Gestalt processes thereby exalting his position?
- How come no one else ever spoke of Frank in these terms?

Several more years passed and in 2010, Frank Pucelik responded to these questions on an NLP blog site and wrote saying that yes he was a co-founder. A few months later at the NLP Conference in London (Nov. 13-14, 2010) I meet Frank for the first time and we spent a delightful evening talking as I interviewed him about the early days of NLP and his role in its formation. I found him a charming and gracious man, intelligent, well informed about NLP, and that he could easily be provoked into making some very reactive judgments against some of the other NLP founders and developers. The next day I had the opportunity to sit in his presentation and see him present to a group, he was not only knowledgeable and skilled in NLP but he was an entertaining and engaging speaker.

So what is the scoop? Frank dated “NLP” back to 1971, rather than 1972 as Terry McClendon (*Wild Days of NLP: 1972-1975*). He claims that the first group of people — before Terry McClendon, Robert Dilts, David Gordon, Judith DeLozier, Leslie Cameron, etc., there was a group of 7 others:

“The ‘real’ originators never get the credit for what they have done. Their names are; Marilyn Moskowitz, Ilene McCloud, Trevelyan Houck, Patrick Rooney, Terry Rooney, Jeff Paris, Lisa Kiarra [not sure of last name here], Devra Canter, myself, and a couple more I will remember soon, I hope. None of the people known as originators are among this group. If you doubt my memory, ask John. Richard’s memories serve his intentions a bit more creatively than John or myself. John has no concern or personal agendas about the facts and is perfectly comfortable with the truth. If he can remember, he will tell you.”

When I asked about these people and what happened to them, Frank said that they were students and after the “classes” with him and Richard, and later John, they just moved out with their lives and never got involved with NLP. Strange. They just moved on?! So I asked, “Did they not know what they had; what was going on?” Apparently not. What this original Meta-Model group found and experienced before the Mission Street Group somehow didn’t make enough of an impression so that most of them never became part of what was later called NLP. Of course, they were just working things out at that time, doing Gestalt (not NLP) and didn’t have any of the models. So those who could have become leaders in the movement *did not, they just moved on and apparently didn’t get involved later when NLP did emerge.*

By contrast, the Mission Street group, which was the second group, did continue on and did become the Leaders to this day of the movement that we call NLP. And that is pretty obviously why we look to the second group, rather than the first, as the true source of NLP today. That group groomed the leaders who gave NLP its form and structure and who, to this very day, remain leaders.

Now Frank gets pretty animated when people talk about who was part of the original group and really dislikes it when members of the second group (Dilts, Gordon, etc.) are described as part of the original group. But “NLP” didn’t exist when the first ones were doing Gestalt practices and didn’t continue. The term “NLP” came about in 1977 or 1978.

Now it is obvious from the history of NLP that Frank did play a significant role. Terry McClendon indicated this in the book, *The Wild Days*. Frank, having served in Vietnam as a corpsman, returned and was studying Gestalt Therapy when he somehow got connected with Richard Bandler. That’s when they began “teaching” those unofficial Gestalt Classes. Frank says he was able to make that happen because he was a student at Southern California University at Santa Cruz and Richard was not. So Frank could get access to the classrooms to use whereas Richard could not. Now in McClendon’s history, John came in because Richard needed a faculty supervisor, but Frank says that was not so due to the nature of the *avant garde* experiment called Kresge College.

So Frank says this group of 7 people with him and Richard learned the Gestalt patterns. Then later John started coming in, sitting in the back and noticing some of the linguistic patterns that were being demonstrated. That must have been late 1971 and/or early 1972. Then someone else strange happened. As Frank puts it, “Richard started to slowly favoring John over me and so I took more and more of a backseat and became the third man.”

But he did not take a backseat entirely. He got connected with Judith DeLozier and married her, they having a son together, Eric. Then he got connected with Leslie Cameron and they lived together before she and Richard got met and married for one year (1977-78). Frank also said during 1973 and 1974 Bateson would begin coming around, popping into the Meta-Model groups and observing.

The Meta-Model became a two-volume book in 1975 and 1976, *The Structure of Magic*. John and Richard's names are on the book, but not Frank's, nor is his on *Hypnotic Patterns of Milton H. Erickson* (1976, 1977). Then Frank said that in 1977 Richard "asked" him to leave. In the blog, he wrote the following:

"I was forced out of the 'group' in late 1976, but actually left in 1978, by Richard for his own personal reasons. At that time I took several of the 'meta' guys to San Diego with me and we formed 'Meta Institute'. This organization continued with the development and training in NLP for several years until 1983, when I moved to Oklahoma. I then opened 'Meta International' and continued the work with NLP. I was also a professor at the University of Oklahoma for 4 years and supervised 2 treatment centers for young drug addicts and alcoholics. In 1987 I was invited to visit Moscow, went several times over the next 4 years, and by 1991 I was living and working in Russia. Now I live in Odessa, Ukraine, work all over the CIS and love it here. I do mostly business consulting here but keep my hand in the NLP market a bit as well."

So what about Frank Pucelik? Well, here is another chapter in the history of NLP, and one not well known. I was pleased that David Bowman invited Frank to the NLP Conference at London, that Frank came from the Ukraine to make an appearance and that I got a chance to speak with him about all of this. For a long time Frank has been out of the field and community and doing really significant work with drug addicts and alcoholics. He spoke about the centers that he has in the Ukraine and Russia and is obviously a tremendous contribution that he is making to the field. And, I don't think we have heard the last from him!