

A Tribute Letter to Dr. Lew Aron written by Ferenczi Center Co-Chair, Dr. Adrienne Harris:

On Thursday, February 28, 2019, our dear colleague and friend and leader and brave man, Lewis Aron, died in New York City. It was the end we had all feared and mostly denied, as we accompanied Lew on a long and courageous voyage fighting and living with a life-threatening cancer.

There is so much to say about Lew's life and work, but I want to begin with his way of combatting and living with his illness. He was brave, but most powerfully, he was generous with family, friends, and colleagues. He has provided an amazing lesson in how to be open and available and at the same time continue to work for health and survival. We badly need, in our field, to be able to face difficulty, support each other as life and work patterns are put in question, and to create a climate of honesty and responsibility.

Yesterday, I taught a class in which we were reading Ghent's great paper on submission and surrender.

I feel such admiration and love for Lew as he went through the health circumstance and death he had been handed. Surrender is not giving up. It is acceptance. It is opening to experience and what it will teach you.

When I think of his work life and when I read the wonderful messages of love and admiration, I am struck by the mixture of pleasure and admiration in so many reminiscences.

He had a rock band. Sig. He could build and maintain a serious psychoanalytic institution. He could work in systems – local and national. He built structures.

Our work together included, the Ferenczi Conferences starting in 1991, the Sandor Ferenczi Center begin in 2008 with Jeremy Safran and me, the Relational Perspectives Book Series, with Steve from the inception, later with

me, and adding Steve Kuchuck and Eyal Rozmarin. That series is closing in on 100 volumes.

The work we did to bring the first conference on Sandor Ferenczi to the US was motivated – dictated one might say – by Steve Mitchell. Cannot speak for Lew, but I had no idea who Ferenczi was. Steve was so amazingly good at empowering people, sending them on various errands, and so we did a conference – held in New York City – and sat in the audience amazed at the European analysts who in so many ways had kept the tradition and writings and work of Ferenczi alive. Judit Meszaros, Andre Heynal. Gyorgy Hidas, Judith Dupont joined with American analysts; Steven Mitchell, Bromberg, Shapiro, Therese Ragen Arnold Rachman, Benjamin Wolstein, Jay Frankel, Christofer Fortune and William Brennan.

For me, it was an astonishing and life-changing introduction to Ferenczi and his work. I know Lew was technically my colleague in that venture, but for me it was so new. I do think of him as also my guide into a new and amazing world. My image for that event is that it was like plate tectonics. Continents that were now far apart had once been joined. I knew my ancestors in psychoanalysis. I knew where object relations came from. Grandfather Ferenczi. Being part of that discovery with Lew was really wonderful, unexpected and surprising. Really so much of his work life and career had that effect and involvement.

In 2009, with Jeremy Safran, Lew Aron and I inaugurated the Sandor Ferenczi Center at the New School. Over a decade, we developed programs, lectures, workshops devoted to Ferenczi's model of interaction, elasticity of technique, trauma-focused treatment and other psychoanalytic projects. We thought of this project as the site of ideals and projects at the heart of the historic mission of the New School and as a site for innovations in psychoanalysis along the lines of Ferenczi. It is shocking beyond measure that both my colleagues died within this past year. Miriam Steele has joined the center representing New School faculty. We have enlarged the board, and we go in remembering Lew and Jeremy and working within their vision. But it has been overwhelming to absorb both these losses. With regard to Lew, I/we are at the beginning.

There is a lot to remember and hold tight to as we register our loss of this amazing person. His career as a psychoanalytic educator, his director of institutions and so many structures: Psychoanalytic Dialogues, Div. 39, IARPP, and for over two decades NYU Postdoc.

His career as a psychoanalytic educator, director of institutions and so many structures: Psychoanalytic Dialogues, Div 39, IARPP and others were handled with efficiency and grace. And of course, there was his ability to take on so much of the continuation of Mitchell's very premature death, through mentorship of students – local, national and international and an astonishing vocation as a teacher of psychoanalysis in a series of study groups which continued to meet right into January of this year.

Talk about playing well with others. He had fun. He was playful and funny, all the while accomplishing a stunning array of tasks, books, and creative endeavors.

We are all wishing that he could have had more time. There was more to do and more love to participate in. I think of the wonderful pleasure of Lew's being with Galit's children, Yali and Emma, at their bar and bat mitzvahs last summer and how much he helped with their preparation. And I know from my last visits with Lew that he was incredibly proud of how deeply his children, Kiara, Raffi and Benjamin, were participating in his care.

We hold him close as we say goodbye. We can only sit with such admiration and care for Galit Atlas who has held so much in these past years AND created with Lew a life of work and love.