

# Massage

M A G A Z I N E

*Exclusive Interview*  
**Dr. Milton Trager**

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## Exclusive Interview with DR. MILTON TRAGER

### Introduction

The name Trager is well known throughout the massage and bodywork industry. It is best known and commonly referred to as Trager Therapy. Officially, the phrase Trager Therapy is not accepted by The Trager Institute. They prefer the term Trager® work, a trademarked name. Dr. Trager is the embodiment of Trager work. In the following interview you will come to know Dr. Trager the man. In the series *The Modern Body Therapies*, beginning on page 52 of this issue you will learn more about Trager work.

This interview took place on Dr. Trager's 80th birthday this past April in Los Angeles, California. Dr. Trager was giving a demonstration of his work to the annual convention of the California Massage Therapy Association. We were fortunate that he granted us permission to talk with him for three hours during his short stay there. The interview was conducted by Publisher/Editor Robert Calvert. Also attending the interview were Judi Heyamoto and Jeffrey Low. We culled this interview from over fifty pages of transcript and present here the best of the three hours. This interview has been read by the Trager Institute with no changes made. These are the words of Dr. Trager as spoken on that day. Our sincere thanks to Dr. Trager, his lovely wife Emily and The Trager Institute for their cooperation in making this exclusive interview possible for our readers.

by Robert Calvert



Dr. Milton Trager and wife Emily on his 80th birthday in Los Angeles, California in April 1988

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## The Body is Dumb

**MMag:** Do you have a concept of the body/mind? And if you do, what is it?

**Dr. Trager:** I don't divide it, number one. It is one. Let me relate something to you that is happening deeper and deeper. It started four or five years ago. I would be working on a body and all of a sudden there was a big resolve. I'd look at the person. I didn't work that hard physically for this to have happened. All of a sudden there was a big resolve. Is it impossible for this to have happened with me working physically? There are only two things in this room that are of any meaning at all and that is two minds. Reaching the unconscious mind is the whole thing.

I kept saying, it is the mind, it is the mind. That went on and on for four years. Finally, I am to a point that whenever I am working, I am working with the mind. Not the body. The body is dumb. I said that many, many years ago. I don't know if that completes what you want for a concept.

**MMag:** What you are saying is that the body is an instrument and the mind is the conductor?

**Dr. Trager:** That's right. The body is dumb. My hands are dumb. Maybe that will help.

**MMag:** In other words, the mind rules the body?

**Dr. Trager:** The body is dumb. Just take it from there. It is just dumb.

**MMag:** What about a feedback loop from the body back to the mind?

**Dr. Trager:** The body picks up feeling. No, I take that back. The mind picks up feeling. The body is dumb and I know where I am at every moment of the treatment. I know where the mind is. It is almost as if I can feel the mind working. You can feel it picking up, feeling and of course, feeling the response of the tissues themselves. It is in the book (*Mentastics*). I am not the therapist. I am the instigator. That is the big point. The subject picks up the feeling of what I want and starts the therapy. The client/patient is the therapist. I am not. That is a very important point. That helps my students to stay out of it. When I am doing a class and I find them not getting it, they are there (pointing to his head). They are not staying out of there.

**MMag:** It sounds like the body is a vacant docile vehicle that the mind controls.

**Dr. Trager:** I don't carry the docile vehicle.

**MMag:** Is it an active participant with the mind?

**Dr. Trager:** It has to be. It is so minute, in the gross form it is so

minute. How can we affect it instantly? It is all there, but it is at the development of the unconscious that we affect it.

**MMag:** When you develop your unconscious mind, does that mean you bring your unconscious to awareness?

**Dr. Trager:** To me it is just there. I am lucky. It is just there. I don't know anything about it.

**MMag:** There are a great deal of writings today founded on the belief that the body stores emotions.

**Dr. Trager:** The mind stores emotions, not the body. The body's very dumb.

**MMag:** You said that the body can hold the tension.

**Dr. Trager:** The muscular body.

**MMag:** The muscular body can hold the tension. When the muscle releases does that trigger the mind to release, or is it the other way around?

**Dr. Trager:** The block has been broken. It doesn't have to come back. You could bring it back by recall, how it felt when it was released and say, "Well, Milt (or whoever it was) was working on me, and boy I really let go." How did that feel when it let go? "It felt something like, well . . ."

It's your ability of recall. You can bring the tensions back from the mind. The mind releases and the tissue lets go.

**MMag:** Does the tissue always release with the mind?

**Dr. Trager:** Yes. At the same moment. With some people not completely, depending on how much of a block there is.

**MMag:** Is there a direct relationship between the mind and the body?

**Dr. Trager:** Only to the degree that the person has been reached. A very broad statement — but it covers it.

**MMag:** To summarize then, you don't separate the mind and the body. You see the mind as basically giving orders to the body. And the body, being dumb, follows the direction of the mind. Right?

**Dr. Trager:** It follows the direction of the mind, yes.

**MMag:** There really isn't much of a feedback between the mind and the body, it is one system.

**Dr. Trager:** I think there's a very subtle feedback. Otherwise you wouldn't know where you were. This is subtleness, nothing else.

## Hook-up

**MMag:** I especially like the part in your book *Mentastics* concerning children raised in a family where there is a hook-up experience. It states they can express more open love and communication and their positive vibrations will attract the

positive vibration of others.

**Dr. Trager:** All we are talking about are vibratory forces that the parents are projecting without trying to project to the children. I keep telling those with problem children, paralysis or something like that, that every time you pass that crib touch it, move it, play with it, whatever you feel will help. Don't get fancy. Don't get technical. Just touch.

**MMag:** Is there some kind of universal connection between my mind and yours?

**Dr. Trager:** If I am working on you, yes.

**MMag:** Do you get into that connection through hook-up?

**Dr. Trager:** Yes, I get into that connection with everyone I work on. That is hook-up. It is available to everybody, it just has to be found and brought out.

**MMag:** The term hook-up, do you use it synonymously with the word meditate?

**Dr. Trager:** I find no difference between hook-up and meditation, none.

**MMag:** You facilitate a person into hook-up with you. Is that right?

**Dr. Trager:** There is another word to explain what it is all about. What it is all about is the mind. If I feel something wrong, I feel it in the tissue. I ask, how about that? I don't like that. How should it be, comes the next question. It comes just like that. I find it and I say well how should it be? My hands will go to the part. Most times they are not even moving, they are just there, which is not the laying on of hands. This is a transference from my unconscious mind which has developed to this point to theirs at their point.

**MMag:** To where that knowing is conscious for you?

**Dr. Trager:** I hardly ever use the word conscious. It is a little confusing if you switch back and forth.

**MMag:** It is knowing then?

**Dr. Trager:** It is a positive knowing. I do it and it happens.

**MMag:** You almost said, an affirmation, didn't you?

**Dr. Trager:** The affirmation is the result. That is the first time for that expression. I feel the change in the tissue that is in the direction that I am going anyway and I will say, "Hello there", something like that.

**MMag:** It is something you recognize.

**Dr. Trager:** I recognize the positive.

**MMag:** That is a highly skilled intuitive art.

**Dr. Trager:** Highly skilled.

**MMag:** If you teach me to move a certain way or to touch someone a certain way, how do you know that I've gotten it?

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## Trager Interview

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**Dr. Trager:** I know. That is all that I can say. I know.

**MMag:** It is strictly intuitive?

**Dr. Trager:** Yes, it is strictly intuitive. Thank you for that.

**MMag:** You mentioned results earlier. Is that how you know?

**Dr. Trager:** There is a happening. Why do I do the work? Because of what I get out of the results, the tissue response from the person. That is my big gain. With each one of those, I grow and develop. Development is my main thing in life. As long as I am developing, fine.

**MMag:** You make an assumption that being in hook-up will automatically develop you. Is that right? It is something you don't do, you're just there?

**Dr. Trager:** Hook-up will keep you from making all the errors that you would be making otherwise.

**MMag:** Because of awareness? The awareness that you gained from being in hook-up?

**Dr. Trager:** Hook-up is a state of awareness. I don't think I've said that before.

**MMag:** You are saying to get into hook-up as much as you can. Meditate as much as you can.

**Dr. Trager:** I'll add something to that. In hook-up is the place I develop. That's why everybody would get a guaranteed great treatment. Excuse me for using the word great. I will not short change myself because I would be cheating myself on development. I have to be there in the best manner and best feeling that I can. So it won't interfere with my development. When a patient is receiving it, is when I develop it. It is that deep. We are using so little of ourselves. You have no conception. Even sitting there interviewing me, you have no conception of how little we use ourselves and how little we develop because we are not using ourselves right. Yes, this work, this philosophy is a new revelation. I have gone far in my mind. Worthy of a Nobel Prize eventually, maybe when I am old. It is a new science to me. It is a science of such a natural thing that you don't want to call it science and label it. That is for sure. It is an aspect that is scientific, yes. Although I haven't used that word. It is scientific in a very subtle manner. In this subtle manner, it is a science. It is as effective as any of it, there is nothing more effective in my mind than this, as far as medicine is concerned. It works. Oh god the stories that I could tell you.

**MMag:** Please do.

**Dr. Trager:** I was doing a session just a few days ago. I started by sitting on the table working the neck with my hands over the shoulder and I had a shock. This woman, she was 56 and a little on the heavy side. I had a shock when I felt her shoulders. I asked her, "what happened when you were 8 years old?" It was just as if something happened where she stopped developing, the process just stopped. She wasn't like she was without it. The crazy thing is I've seen this same thing in the shoulder two times in the last two months. The other one, a man, was in class. He looked as if he was chopped off, just like that. That was at 7 years of age. So these things happen psychologically and mentally. It causes a physical involvement that can cause that deformity. They never come out of it until the block is broken, that is the big point.

**MMag:** Does the body help to reinforce that mental pattern?

**Dr. Trager:** It is a result of the mental pattern.

**MMag:** So you don't agree that it offers a feedback to reinforce that pattern.

**Dr. Trager:** Feedback only in the way that it is helping to hold that particular pattern.

**MMag:** You keep saying that hook-up gives positive messages to the psyche.



*Dr. Trager demonstrating his technique at the C.M.T.A. Convention in Los Angeles. Notice the audience. Most of them seem to be in the state of hook-up with him during the session.*

Basically, meditation heals, despite whatever else we do, right?

**Dr. Trager:** Meditation puts one into a condition where healing can take place.

**MMag:** What is the healing agent?

**Dr. Trager:** Vibratory forces that are released from the psyche. Universal forces that we all share.

**MMag:** The feedback that the body gives to the mind only helps to hold it in some physical....

**Dr. Trager:** In that particular pattern.

**MMag:** Can you go in and shake the body up and help, or are you shaking the mind?

**Dr. Trager:** Yes, the mind. I can bring the feeling experience necessary to the unconscious mind to where it will have a positive effect on the physical body.

**MMag:** Is it necessary to work on the physical body. If it is only a mind problem? How about verbal therapy?

**Dr. Trager:** I cannot give the picture pattern of what I want to the mind by verbal therapy.

**MMag:** It is done by touch?

**Dr. Trager:** By mind touch. We have a neurological connection with every part of our body. If the pattern didn't exist in the mind or the possibility that it didn't exist there, the hand would be meaningless.

**MMag:** If I reach over and touch your hand, we are touching minds, aren't we?

**Dr. Trager:** Our minds know that we are touching hands. Thank you God. It isn't me. I have a lot of help.

**MMag:** When you touch someone

and receive information, you are sharing something. We are connecting, hooking-up. If I don't trust that small still place or that deep sense of something or other, if I don't trust that, then I am not in hook-up?

**Dr. Trager:** You are not in business. You should step back from the table.

**MMag:** That is really the key isn't it? You've learned to trust what happens in that experience. You just let go don't you?

**Dr. Trager:** I've completely let go.

**MMag:** You are not thinking about much.

**Dr. Trager:** Zero.

**MMag:** You are in a meditative state?

**Dr. Trager:** Lucky.

**MMag:** How has it affected your own health being in hook-up so many times?

**Dr. Trager:** I know that when I am in deep, very deep, which I am sometimes more than others, I have to rest after. I can't just take off some place and do my usual thing with shopping. It demands that I rest.

**MMag:** Why is that?

**Dr. Trager:** It is the depth of being there. It is so deep that you are not hooked up again with the work-a-day world. There is a price. We know that it isn't for free, the price you pay. Not being with it for awhile with the material world.

**MMag:** From one existence or reality to another? It has nothing to do with being tired or worn out?

**Dr. Trager:** It doesn't mean worn out, no.

**MMag:** When I read your book (*Mentastics*), I said to my staff, "This is not

an ordinary book. This is not a book about bodywork at all."

**Dr. Trager:** That's why it's selling.

**MMag:** This is a spiritual philosophy.

**Dr. Trager:** Which I said all along. I think this is what's coming over to other people. They're picking up the clearness, the positiveness of all of these things that will help them to get better. I told Cathy Guadagno, who helped me to put it together, "I don't want you to put a line down unless it's going to turn somebody on." That's what happened. We went over it several times. If we found something that didn't turn somebody on — out.

**MMag:** Who did you write this book for?

**Dr. Trager:** I didn't write it for others. I wrote it for myself. I didn't write it for those that might read it. I wrote it for myself in the true sense of what it's all about. My father always told me, "Always tell the truth." And it seems that this stuck.

**MMag:** There is an industry of "touch therapy" out there.

**Dr. Trager:** Yes, I know.

**MMag:** When did you recognize that there was a body therapy industry?

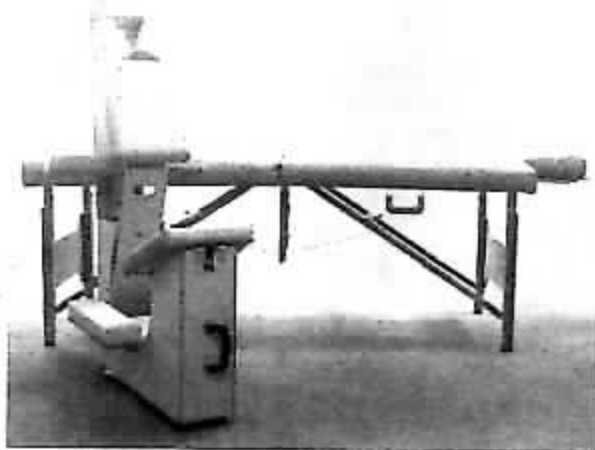
**Dr. Trager:** Well, it was quite late. We started hearing about it at Esalen. Oh, I didn't know a damn thing about it until we got to Esalen. That was in uh. . .

**Emily Trager:** 1975.

**Dr. Trager:** Then all I heard was "energy, energy, energy. . ." Finally I was asked, while giving a treatment, I

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## Trager Interview

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was doing a demonstration. "Dr. Trager, where do you get your energy from?" I said, "I'm surrounded by it." I went into "hook-up".

**MMag:** Since 1975, at Esalen, you knew there was a movement occurring.

**Dr. Trager:** That was the main spot for it.

**MMag:** It seems your work is very spiritual. Maybe more so than most body therapies.

**Dr. Trager:** I would say that it is more spiritual. It happens to be more spiritual because of the work they are doing, because of hook-up.

**MMag:** The longer the person is able to be in that state the more they can transmit to somebody else?

**Dr. Trager:** The whole thing is not trying to transmit. To try is to fail. That's one of my first lessons in my very first class. To try is to fail. You're talking about skill, which is no special point. It's a constant state of development.

**MMag:** The only reason why you might be more effective than I might be is because you've been out there longer?

**Dr. Trager:** I follow the same routine the early students follow. I start here and I do this and I go over there and I do that. It's the very same thing that all of the students are doing.

**MMag:** The treatment pattern itself does have a specific sequence?

**Dr. Trager:** It has a form. I'll buy all of this . . . a specific sequence.

**MMag:** But it is the hook-up that empowers the movements?

**Dr. Trager:** It's the hook-up power that develops the individual more deeply and brings them further along with better results.

**MMag:** If somebody were to do the movements or the techniques without being in hook-up what would be the effect?

**Dr. Trager:** It would be just the same thing as if I took all my movement, put it in a book and called it, "Trager Massage". It would just be a book.

**MMag:** When there is a source person who intuitively knows what they're doing the question becomes one of reproducibility. Can your students do it again and again and get similar results?

**Dr. Trager:** Once you have this feeling of doing it, you step out of it. It's not you in there doing it. The person has to step out of it. I don't want to make it seem, "Oh, O.K., I'm ready now. I'll step out." It's an automatic thing.

I don't teach anybody. It's a happening. The thing that I was thinking

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about is that if they didn't have a sequence then they would be doing something else. Well, I've got them doing hands or doing feet or something. They're all doing the same thing, practically, without trying to time themselves.

**MMag:** When you are talking about hook-up you are really talking about a mind phenomena or a psychic phenomena, right?

**Dr. Trager:** Yes.

**MMag:** You are not talking about spirituality at all?

**Dr. Trager:** Not at all. It works for me too. I am very easily satisfied. I am in there directing it so it happens the way I want it to happen. It's a happening.

**MMag:** Do you have a mental picture of that tissue in your mind?

**Dr. Trager:** No. I can feel them. I can tell you how big it is. I can tell you if it's a broad tissue thing or a thin tissue thing. Just by one touch.

**MMag:** When you get into hook-up, do you feel a direction?

**Dr. Trager:** No . . . no.

**MMag:** O.K., do you feel a movement of direction?

**Dr. Trager:** In my class I take them before they start and we all go into hook-up. I go into hook-up. And . . . they're influenced by my going into hook-up. It makes their going into hook-up easier.

**MMag:** How do you think the mind is structured?

**Dr. Trager:** I don't think on it at all. It doesn't enter, for me. It's just out there.

**MMag:** When you go into hook-up you must have some kind of an experience?

**Dr. Trager:** Everything is outside of myself. Hook-up . . . it's not me at all. From there I work.

**MMag:** How about right now, when you're not into hook-up?

**Dr. Trager:** I would say I'm partially in hook-up now.

**MMag:** It really doesn't matter to you what the concept of the mind is?

**Dr. Trager:** It doesn't matter at all. This is too scientific and too far out. I don't think anybody has come up with any of the answers for me to be concerned with.

**MMag:** How do you teach intuitive skills to other people?

**Dr. Trager:** I teach them awareness, number one. Mentastics is a key to getting them into a higher state of awareness. This brings them into greater sensitivity when they are with the body. By learning this, you quickly become a very good practitioner.

**MMag:** You discovered all this intuitively yourself?

**Dr. Trager:** I never knew that I had it until I was about 19.

**MMag:** When you developed the Mentastics, did they come from your thinking or from your own movements?

**Dr. Trager:** From myself. My own moves. That was on the beach in Miami, Florida. There was a certain time when the people left the beach. It got to be 5 o'clock or so and I got down to the hard sand and I'd commune. I don't like these words. I'd commune with myself and the ocean, the wind and whatever was there, and I would do these movements. They would start coming and coming to me. I had a whole flock of moves. But I never knew that I would have a book on it, be teaching it or anything else. It was just for me.

**MMag:** How do you feel about sharing all that? Something that was very

bodywork where you teach movements and particular techniques for hooking up with the clients?

**Dr. Trager:** I still say that there is no system.

**MMag:** You wouldn't call Mentastics a system either? Are the movements, suggestions of how . . .

**Dr. Trager:** Of how to work. A major component of the work is not trying to accomplish anything.

**MMag:** Yet you do have a teaching system?

**Dr. Trager:** Yes, we do have a way of teaching. There has to be some order of things. Otherwise one would be doing one thing and another something else.

**MMag:** When you approach a person do you read that body in a certain way, when you are looking at it?



*"The difference between my work and massage is the mind. Every move I make is regulated toward the mind, to reach the mind." Dr. Trager*

personal to you and now . . .

**Dr. Trager:** Sharing it, it is there. If they want to learn it, fine. I have no secrets. I am not holding anything back that they are not capable of learning. It is not for me. I'm not going to take it with me. I'm not hiding it. I am putting it out to where everybody can get a hold of it. There is a charge for the book, I can't help that.

**MMag:** How did the term Tragering come about?

**Dr. Trager:** It is called psychophysical integration and Mentastics. That is a big mouthful. I started hearing the name kicked around. Have you been Traggered? Like, have you been Rolfed. Same difference. It is just easier for them to say. Nothing I invented. It was a little embarrassing at first. Didn't bother me but I wasn't used to it. It kind of got to me a little bit. It quickly passed though.

**MMag:** Your work is a system of

**Dr. Trager:** No.

**MMag:** How is that?

**Dr. Trager:** It just happens. I have nothing to do with it. I don't do it. It is there. I am able to find it. I have no qualms about ever not being able to find it.

**MMag:** Have you read about body language?

**Dr. Trager:** Never. It doesn't make you smart.

**MMag:** So there is no formal body reading system that you teach?

**Dr. Trager:** I don't. Trager is just what comes out. No class is ever the same. No body that I treat is ever the same, nor am I ever the same with the body. It is all new.

**MMag:** You are Trager therapy. It is unique among other therapies. It's the only one that shakes, rattles and rolls?

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## Trager Interview

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**Dr. Trager:** The appearance of it does, yes. It was real easy for me to rock the body. I still rock the body for some folks. The shake, rattle and roll. That's a, "Oh, I do that!", therapy with people. So they started doing it and saying, "I'm doing Trager." Well, it's not Trager.

**MMag:** What's the difference, what is it then?

**Dr. Trager:** The difference between my work and massage is the mind. Every move I make is regulated toward the mind, to reach the mind.

**MMag:** Your intention is to reach their unconscious mind?

**Dr. Trager:** Yes, every move, every touch, every thought is to reach the unconscious.

**MMag:** Have you ever had a massage? A Swedish massage, for instance.

**Dr. Trager:** No, but I'll be getting one pretty soon, because Emily's mind is set.

**MMag:** Do you have any perspective to offer about the rest of the body therapy industry?

**Dr. Trager:** I don't have one. I have my own thing. I know it's selfish but it is my thing that I love. It develops.

**MMag:** Earlier you said that when you work on someone that you do it for your own development.

**Dr. Trager:** My own development happens when I totally go into hook-up with the person I'm working on. Yeah. Definitely. I don't think that I am consciously working with their mind. I am feeling something in the body that I don't quite like. I'm playing with what I don't like and it reaches the mind. Let's put it that way.

**MMag:** Do you ever feel pain, if they're carrying pain in their body? What do you do with that?

**Dr. Trager:** I don't, it's a funny darn thing — I feel pain in their body. I automatically know how much to work; how deep to go into the pain that they supposedly have.

**MMag:** Do you feel their pain?

**Dr. Trager:** I don't feel it.

**MMag:** What do you mean, "supposedly"?

**Dr. Trager:** I thought you'd pick that up. Well, there's psychosomatic pain, too. It's not really a tissue pathology. It's still a psychic phenomena. Pain is psychic phenomena. Since I'm working with the psyche, I can keep them out of pain.

**MMag:** How do you do that?

**Dr. Trager:** I don't know how I do it. It happens. It's a subtlety far beyond what you would know as subtle. Way

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beyond a nothingness. The work, while doing the work, the results of the work is a Zenism. There's no tension. It's a happening.

**MMag:** It seems to me that one way of putting it is that you are Trager. It's not something you do, it's something you are. But it may be something that students do. They're imitating the master at some level of . . .

**Dr. Trager:** We try to avoid imitating. It's something that personally must come from the individual that's doing it. Not that they're copying me.

**MMag:** If you simply teach hook-up to people — like teaching meditation — that can take a long time to learn to be in that space?

**Dr. Trager:** Not that long anymore. It's quite fast.

**MMag:** For you, even after fifty years, you're still getting deeper and deeper?

**Dr. Trager:** Always.

**MMag:** Is there a minimum level that somebody has to reach?

**Dr. Trager:** There's no minimum. There's no maximum.

**MMag:** Well, is there a minimum they have to reach to be effective?

**Dr. Trager:** Those that have had a beginner's class will go out and do as good a treatment as anybody doing massage who's been doing it for years. This has been proven. The very first thing that I tell anybody, any student, the first thing you must forget is trying. Just stop trying. That's the thing that's causing you not to develop. Stop trying. Just be.

**MMag:** Where do you see your work going in the next ten years?

**Dr. Trager:** Just in the same manner. The book is out. There'll be tapes out. This is just a fraction, as our students have been with it a long time they'll get better. They're writing to their local press. They're on T.V. They're on radio. It's getting to be such a conglomeration of many people that are boosting this thing. I do my little thing.

**MMag:** How do you feel about practitioners if they want to combine Trager work with other therapies?

**Dr. Trager:** I don't approve of it. I think the more you get away from Trager, the less you are going to develop in Trager. It's not a selfish thing.

**MMag:** How do you think Trager works? On paralysis, for instance.

**Dr. Trager:** That is a very deep tech-

nical question. I feel that if there is true pathological tissue damage, hemorrhage in the brain, that part is dead. Other areas can be trained to take on the functions of cells that have not died. We can do that. Then there is the psychic thing. Is it that way because of the psychic influence or just paralyzed by hysterical paralysis? It comes out very quickly, in moments.

**MMag:** How does your work effect that?

**Dr. Trager:** I think it reaches the unconscious mind and doesn't effect it through the body. As you work, let me see your hand. Let's say that this



Above, Dr. Trager demonstrating "shaking it out", a method he uses on the client and himself for helping the mind to let go.

function, I can't push it back, I can't push it back because of the paralysis. I am not just going to do what the usual therapist does by stretching dumb muscles. I am only interested in what is happening upstairs. I would just reach in and .....there is our contact there.

**MMag:** I felt that.

**Dr. Trager:** That is our contact. That pressure here. I am in the unconscious causing you to.....

**MMag:** I felt that. I felt that immediately.

**Dr. Trager:** It is subtle. That is how we do it. It reached the unconscious. It started the process. No muscle is going to bring that back for you. It started the process. We did only that, but it started.

**MMag:** You are planting a seed.

**Dr. Trager:** If you want to use that expression. That is reflex response. This is an advancement of Trager. This is the additional class, for those

who want work in paralysis or similar areas.

**MMag:** I felt that it was very directed. Very intentional.

**Dr. Trager:** Yes. That proves it stimulates the area in the brain that has to do with that particular function. I've never said that before.

**MMag:** So the shaking?

**Dr. Trager:** The shaking is just shaking. Go shake, what the hell.

**MMag:** Is knowledge good?

**Dr. Trager:** I would be very wrong if I said it wasn't. For you it is good. For me, there are all kinds of knowledge that I don't need. I don't block what I have. I don't accumulate a lot of stuff I am never going to use. I am satisfied. I've got what I want. I'm lucky.

**MMag:** You are able to tap into your tremendous experience in each moment that you are working?

**Dr. Trager:** Every second and to the degree necessary at the moment to accomplish what I want to accomplish.

**MMag:** Do you visualize?

**Dr. Trager:** I will find an area of congestion or restriction and my very next question is how should it be? It should be more like this. I step out of the picture completely. My hands take over. I have nothing to do with it from that moment on.

**MMag:** But you know that there's something that's not the way it ought to be?

**Dr. Trager:** That's right. My mind unconsciously directs my hands. I may not be doing any more than that. They're sending messages to the unconscious. Breaking up the old pattern. It happens very quickly.

**MMag:** Is it important for the practitioners to have a good grounding in anatomy and physiology?

**Dr. Trager:** I would say, no. Offhand. **Emily Trager:** But you are encouraging them to take that training?

**Dr. Trager:** I'm encouraging it. But I don't make a big deal out of it. If they want to study anatomy, fine.

**MMag:** Are you still doing Mentastics?

**Dr. Trager:** Yes. Oh, I'm doing it. For a regular period of at least thirty minutes a day, besides when I get up out of a chair. You'll never see me get up out of a chair, you can bet on it, without doing mentastics.

**Emily Trager:** He also walks two miles a day.

**Dr. Trager:** And while walking I do Mentastics.

**MMag:** How do you train students to deal with the emotional release that can occur in a session?

**Dr. Trager:** I don't do anything. It just happens. They get to a point in the

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## Trager Interview

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treatment to where they're neither here nor there and that's in a very odd place, a horrible place for anyone to be. They can't be what they were before the treatment, nor can they be what they would like to be at that moment that they broke. If they break down, they cry, they scream, they yell, beat the table and everything else. I console them until they come out of it. They come out of it nice and bright and light. This is what we find.

**MMag:** Do you see those emotions being locked in the body?

**Dr. Trager:** They're locked in the mind, not in the body. You'll have manifestations of tension in the body. Definitely, yes. But that's all. Because of the mind, there's tension.

**Emily Trager:** Share that story of how you came into awareness. Remember the time you saw that patient come out of anesthesia and you were there with him. That's how you discovered the mind/body.

**Dr. Trager:** Well, if I have to. Didn't I write it up in the book?

**Emily Trager:** You did but...

**Dr. Trager:** Anyway, I was an intern at St. Francis Hospital in Honolulu, back in 1955. They send you through various things, like surgery, pediatrics, so forth and so on. It was surgery for me. I had to write up a case history. It was an indigent patient. The gurney was pushed into the operating room. I gowned for the first procedure. We had to turn him over for a second procedure. He was out cold. It took about eight of us. So we wouldn't dislocate his shoulder or something. I had the job of taking his blood pressure 'til he came out and became conscious. Earlier, as I was taking his history, he was absolutely rigid. If you called him, he'd have to stand up and turn around to see who was calling. As he walked, he walked with great rigidity — arms and everything — great rigidity. As he came out of the anesthesia, from an absolute placid position, he came out of it until he was absolutely rigid again. Eye-balls, everything. That's only because the mind came back. Nothing else.

**MMag:** Under anaesthesia the mind let go?

**Dr. Trager:** Yeah, but the patterns still remained. The consciousness came back, but the patterns still remained and kept him in this condition. It was a big, big thing to me when it happened.

**MMag:** Are you familiar with the cranio-sacral rhythm?

**Dr. Trager:** Yeah, but I personally



Above, Dr. Trager demonstrates his palpation technique. His style differs in that he senses with a light touch as opposed to a more physical probe.

don't see it. It's a pulsing fluid, from that you can even diagnose a treatment. I personally have never felt the fluid pulsing. I've never felt it. Others have. I can't say yes, it works or no, it doesn't work. I'm not acquainted with it, except that I've had it done to me. I couldn't say, "Yeah, that's great!" I can't say that.

**MMag:** What do you think of the phrase, "Doctor heal thyself?"

**Dr. Trager:** I think it is a phrase.

**MMag:** What does it mean to you.

**Dr. Trager:** Doesn't mean a thing. It is just a bunch of words until the doctor can become aware, intimately aware of the physical condition that exists or it can be a mental condition. Until then he can't start in a subtle manner.

**MMag:** Do you have someone you have looked up to in your life?

**Dr. Trager:** As a kid, yes. Bernard Mc Fadden.

**MMag:** Who is he?

**Dr. Trager:** Bernard Mc Fadden is the father of physical culture. As a kid, I looked up to him. There is a course of his books in Anatomy and Physiology that I bought. He was my first contact with that in my life. I was around 16 or 17 when that happened. One day on Miami Beach I was exercising as usual and Bernard Mc Fadden came by. I went over to say hello. It was the Bernard Mc Fadden, except for the hair, that I knew before from his books and his magazine, "Physical Culture Magazine". He was to me in comparison kind of shriveled up. He was in his 70's then. I greeted him and he greeted me. He mentioned something about my body being so nice, he saw that I didn't look at him with disapproval and he said, "Some of my muscles went to brains" that took care of me. Bernard Mc Fadden was the one who influenced me.

**MMag:** You enjoyed studying the physical sciences?

**Dr. Trager:** Well, it was my first

chance to know what the muscles were, the trapezius, this is this, etc. That was what that was.

**MMag:** You have many years of knowledge of the body. Do you think that has helped you?

**Dr. Trager:** Oh yes. I have a perfect feeling of the body. This is good. I don't think any of you have heard this. For instance, in my road back from my accident, I'm finding myself, like the other day in the house, the music was on or something and I started shadow boxing. Emily never saw me shadow box. I was moving around and ducking, moving and shifting. She said that was great. So that was something that I used to do years ago, it was still in my unconscious mind to where suddenly I was doing it almost as good as I used to do it. This is patterning. It helps everybody to come back. Come back if you actually ever had it. So I have had all of these things as a professional acrobat, fighter, things like that, the ability to move. My work in paralysis has helped me tremendously because I could imitate anybody's walk.

**MMag:** What's your favorite thing to do?

**Dr. Trager:** Love my wife. . .

**MMag:** She looks well-loved.

**Dr. Trager:** We have a good thing going.

**MMag:** How long have you been married?

**Dr. Trager:** May the, uh, 1965 . . . May 27th.

**Emily Trager:** We've known each other since 1942.

**MMag:** How much of the success that you have is attributable to your being respected and how much is attributable to your work? Can you measure that?

**Dr. Trager:** I can measure it. I would say that everything is attributable to the work I'm doing. There's a positiveness that is projected, a vibration that's projected. That's what it is. I



assume I know, it comes out of me to where you pick it up. "He knows he's saying it right", that sort of thing.

**MMag:** Well, I trust you—

**Dr. Trager:** So you pay attention to it. There's a higher level of trust. It comes out like that.

**MMag:** It seems to me like you're a bit of a "guru".

**Dr. Trager:** I fought the word for a long time.

**MMag:** When did you stop practicing medicine?

**Dr. Trager:** 1977. I was the Waikiki doctor.

**MMag:** Were you doing bodywork then?

**Dr. Trager:** Doing one treatment in the morning. Much to the perplexity of the nurse. She would have a waiting room full of tourists and I'm busy in there. "I need another five minutes." I'd tell her. She'd open the door and say, "I've got five of 'em out there."

**MMag:** Did you ever try to introduce the idea of these concepts to the medical community?

**Dr. Trager:** No. To a few of my colleagues, yes. I worked on a few, very few of my colleagues, introduced them to the concept of the work.

**MMag:** The story that you relate about when you were a boxer your trainer was aching a little bit and he said, "How about rubbing my back or something." You did, then he told you you had great hands.

**Dr. Trager:** Yeah.

**MMag:** Was that the time you discovered...?

**Dr. Trager:** That was the first time I ever used my hands.

**MMag:** What exactly did you do to him? Do you remember?

**Dr. Trager:** Well, whatever his body told me to do.

**MMag:** Since 1975 how have you seen your work change? How have you seen it grow?

**Dr. Trager:** Just a constant growth is all. It does go along with mind development. I know, 'cause every class is better! I used to say, this class is softer, this class is freer. Actually, I just developed more to where everything I did was easier.

**MMag:** Following your own advice?

**Dr. Trager:** No, just a happening. I didn't advise it. It's just what happened. That's a good word. It's a happening. I put a lot in that word. It happens. I see Trager definitely expanding and developing all over the world. I see this because the therapist gets so much from it. Seeing students come back for more classes. Seeing the change. The face and bodies of these people it's such a thrill to me. Just such a thrill to see the change in there (pointing to the head). Like the Maharishi was saying, he had X-number of thousands of people

doing TM (transcendental meditation). They would influence the town that they were in, the city they were in when they got up to a certain percentage. Then there'd be less crime and less of this and more of that. As you've read in the book Emily and I were initiated by the Maharishi.

**MMag:** So you subscribe to that belief, then? The hundredth monkey phenomena. That we can change the planet if enough people think the same way, that we can switch the whole energy.

**Dr. Trager:** Yes, I subscribe to that belief.

**MMag:** What do you think of other body therapies that you're familiar with?

**Dr. Trager:** I don't pay any attention to them. It doesn't concern me. I'm not comparing mine with theirs. They are always coming up with new stuff. I'll call it that, stuff. They don't get into the same thing as technology in the finer sense. They try formulating a system to accomplish this. The further they get away from this basic thing which I'm demonstrating to you, the tougher it's going to be to convey to everybody. If you're going to do that it's so hard for the public to pick up—this nothingness. But they were trained to pick up something. They don't want to be left with nothing.

**MMag:** You have an organization formed around you that is carrying you forward through the age that we're living in. Are you leading the way of the Trager Institute?

**Dr. Trager:** I'm not responsible for that. I'm responsible for emanating the core energy of what you're describing as the organization that is beginning to form around what I emanate. You see, I haven't answered the phone now in several years. Emily does all the business that has to be done for me with the institute and with others. I don't want any part of it.

**MMag:** Did you form the Trager Institute?

**Dr. Trager:** No. They came to us wondering if they could meet with us and form an organization. This was Betty Fuller, who is the founding director. She got it all together.

**MMag:** Do you worry or think about folks carrying on your work and remaining true to your vision?

**Dr. Trager:** You mean, those I leave behind?

**MMag:** Yes.

**Dr. Trager:** I shouldn't say that when I die and quit moving I don't give a damn. I do. There are so many great therapists that have been doing great Trager work. So it's going to be carried on by those that are really into it.

**MMag:** Do you make a distinction

between brain and the mind.

**Dr. Trager:** I have no distinction. I call it the mind and leave it at that.

**MMag:** Are you using the words interchangeably?

**Dr. Trager:** I never use the word brain, I always say mind.

**MMag:** Is there a universal mind that you...?

**Dr. Trager:** I don't know what it is.

**MMag:** Do you think there is one?

**Dr. Trager:** I don't know. I don't think about it.

**MMag:** We are definitely connected, aren't we? All of us.

**Dr. Trager:** All of us are connected.

**MMag:** Are we also connected to other objects as well? Or only to other minds?

**Dr. Trager:** You have eyes and if you're going to bump into something you stop before you bump into it. You become aware of dangerous situations to where you will avoid it if you have good sense. All of this is built in. It doesn't work that precise. We expect it to be working exactly.

**MMag:** It is an undulating flow.

**Dr. Trager:** I like your words.

**Judi Heyamoto:** I have a question, Dr. Trager. I'm a therapist. Do you have any suggestions for me in working with my patients to better myself and to help them.

**Dr. Trager:** Learn the feeling. The word for you from now on is feeling. Let it take you. Go with your feelings. Whatever you feel. Be part of your feelings. Don't try to be in a specific area. Let it flow. You limit yourself. If I'm going to go over here by the rib cage, I'm going to go by the rib cage. It's there. If you want to go by the shoulder, it's there. Whatever prompts you. There seems to me a meaning and a reason for me to go wherever I go. Yes, I'm lucky. It's all built in.

**MMag:** Thank you Dr. and Mrs. Trager.

