

On the life and death of Loren Mosher



Dr. Mosher was a very unique individual within the field of psychiatry. Recognizing early on, that the standard treatment for people experiencing extreme states of mind achieved far less than optimal results, he tackled the problem head-on by devising an alternative approach called SOTERIA - named after the Greek goddess of safety and recovery. Soteria provided people in serious emotional crises with a safe-haven unlike any hospital, staffed with people who were able and willing to accompany the residents through their crises, and with a very limited use of psychotropic medications. The

outcomes in the short and long run were superior to hospital care, especially when considering individual recovery parameters and relapse.

Following this groundbreaking experience, Loren was attracted to the newly emerging Italian model of mental health care, which in 1978 introduced a law against treatment in public mental health hospitals, essentially predicated their closure. While on sabbatical in Italy, he was fired from his job at NIMH, where he headed the Schizophrenia Research Division. Clearly no federal institution in the early days of biological psychiatry could support as rebellious a spirit as Loren, who wanted to curtail the use of medications and do away with psychiatric hospitals, substituting them with a psychotherapeutic and social action-oriented community mental health system.

Nevertheless, Loren soldiered on and became county mental health director outside of Washington D.C., where he instituted many reforms, including a set of crisis residences emulating the earlier Soteria model. Secretly, Loren had begun meeting with a group of radical antipsychiatry advocates, mostly former patients who were disgusted and infuriated by the treatment they had been receiving. Tirelessly, Loren continued his advocacy against the big pharmaceutical companies and their hold on mainstream psychiatry and the mega-million hospital industry.

Loren understood that people could go a long way in their recovery, if they were treated with dignity, attention to rights, and a humane interpersonal approach. Loren was a friend to all people who saw mental illness as a human dilemma, and not merely as a collection of misfiring neurons. This included scores of mental health professionals, psychotherapists, community psychiatrists, family members and consumer-survivors.

In spite of his tremendously busy schedule promoting Soteria and human rights around the world, Loren was an important member of the INTAR committee, and gave essential guidance to our group as we planned this event.

— Peter Stastny

<http://www.moshersoteria.com/>

Numerous additional sites available by searching "Loren Mosher" on any online search engine.