1972 ERIC BERNE MEMORIAL SCIENTIFIC AWARD LECTURE

Stephen B. Karpman, M.D.

ITAA President, Ken Everts, presenting award to Stephen Karpman

Thank you everyone who made this award possible. Particularly I want to thank Eric Berne whose concern and guidance gave me the structure to work in, and thanks to the members of the San Francisco Transactional Analysis Seminar for the movement which helped me feel what I was doing was important, and to the people in the ITAA for all the good strokes they have given me for the triangle, and to the people who came up to me and said the triangle is really good and that all they need is the three circles and the triangle to cure patients, and for all the people who started calling it Karpman's Triangle and I have no idea how it

started but it's a good stroke, and also all the people who use it whom I've never met or heard of. I want to thank you every one.

Traditionally, the award winner gives some background on how the idea came about. For me, the idea was a spin-off of some other ideas, and I had used the triangle in its present form for a couple of years in groups without writing it up or realizing there would be much importance outside of my groups.

I looked up my first notes on the triangle and they were in January, 1965. At the time, I was doodling with some circles and symbols trying to figure out ways that the

quarterback could outsmart the defensive halfback in football. I found the original first diagram which appeared as follows:
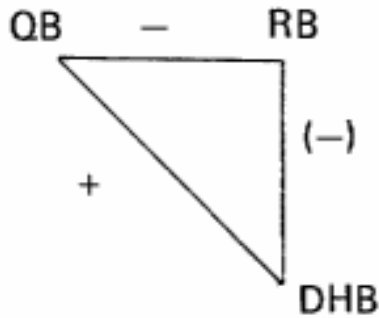
For the people who don't know what the letters mean, the triangle features the quarterback (QB) in one corner, the running back (RB) in the other corner, and the defensive halfback (DHB) in the other corner. I had worked out a code system of zeros, plusses, and minuses that had to do with the manner of faking the defensive halfback into expecting one play, then pulling a switch and giving him another one. There were a series of fake runs and real passes, fake passes and real runs, etc., etc.

One of the first diagrams to appear that used more basic roles was the following:
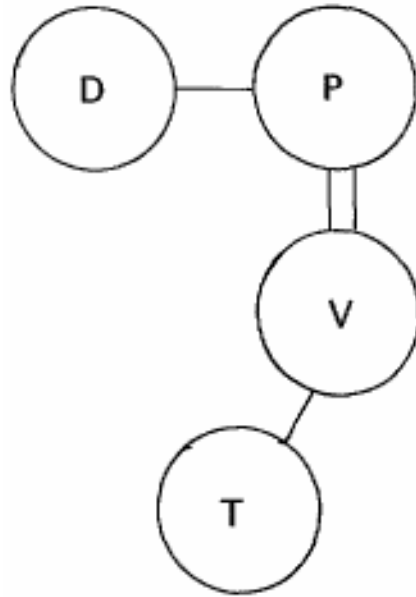
These are the first character roles. The D stands for Dummy, the P stands for Persecutor, the double lines were for primary faking, then a V for Victim, and T for Trickster.

Then I doodled more on it and it got into the basic roles and switches of drama. I tried figuring out ways of writing TV dramas by just doodling with symbols, then translating the action and roles into live settings. I had the triangle then and I once thought of getting a dozen wooden triangular poolball racks, writing the P, R, and V roles into the corners, and spinning them randomly from rows of large wooden pegs, i.e. four rows of pegs for a four act story. Whatever came up was what a particular character would do in the next scene.

And then I had another idea where I'd roll dice on a big board marked for differing locations and settings, like going far away and coming closer. I'd have the characters named

on the six sides of the dice, like persecutor, dummy, trickster, rescuer, and others. Drama would entail switches in location as well as roles. The Location Diagram is in the "Script Drama Analysis" article* that the Drama Triangle appeared in.

And then I worked on another idea where I'd draw on paper rows of squares as on graph paper and then fill them in with a more sophisticated set of symbols I had worked out. Alpha represented the actual beginning, a check mark indicated continuation, an "X" represented a switch, omega indicated the action completed, etc. It sounds complicated but I could sit down and doodle something that could be translated into a story. This was the first time the "X" for switch came up that is now used in the Game Formula.

Now the original article in the Transactional Analysis Bulletin in April, 1968, was an extension of this work I was doing on drama. At the San Francisco Seminars at the time we were working on script theory with Claude Steiner leading the way. But in his injunction matrix I noticed that there wasn't a place for the story line of the script. I had been working on drama right along so I wrote up my article to present a way to analyze the story line in the script. The script work I had been doing with patients in 1966 and 1967 was mostly with fairy tales and drama switches in their lives, rather than with injunctions. I started writing my article after I saw the movie "Valley of the Dolls." In that movie there were all sorts of switches —— someone leaves from New York and goes to Paris and then switches down to Los Angeles and then switch off to being well and switch down to being sick, etc. That was the final thing I needed to start writing on it.

I saw the movie right around the time Eric was talking about fairy tales as he was writing that part in the "Hello" hook —— this was back in 1967. I worked very hard for a month on it, but to make the deadline I sent the first draft to Eric. Now the people who knew Eric knew what he did with first drafts and I promptly had it sent right back to me in the mail and he said on the phone, "People are going to quote you for two hundred years on this so you might as well get it right the first time." The deadline was already past and I didn't want to have to wait another three months because it was quite a bit of work so I typed out a second draft and sent it back to him and he published it.

From there on it spread in ways that I don't know and soon I was getting all sorts of strokes on it at summer conferences. I continued to collect information on it but it was pretty self explanatory. Through popular usage it became used as a game triangle, and its drawing simplified to a clean three line triangle with arrows added in during use. There are several clarifications I worked out on it as illustrated. For Structural Analysis you show that once someone is in the Triangle, they (and others) are all the roles at once. For Transactional Analysis, the transactional arrows are super-

imposed on the Triangle, and for Game Analysis a sweeping curved arrow representing the switch is drawn to the side of the Triangle.
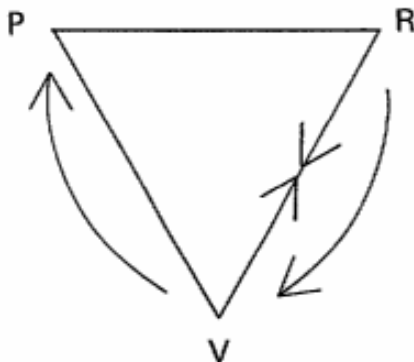
For people interested in the creative process, I'll mention that for me it was the coming together, like river streams, of four main interests in my life, all meeting at that one time. First, I mentioned my interest in sports, which is very much a part of me. Second, I had an interest in drama right along, writing skits, acting in plays or doing the sets, making and acting in movies. Actually, I had started trying to analyze drama ten years before that in London, sitting through many showings of the movie "Wuthering Heights." My third interest was art -- I've exhibited in gallery and museum shows off and on for over fifteen years -- and the Triangle really came from doodling pages and pages of diagrams, about twenty or thirty in all until I finally found the Triangle. I remember liking the diagrams in Organic chemistry The second diagram here looks like molecule if you don't know what the symbols mean. And then my fourth interest was just inventing for inventing sake. I remember my script decision was to be an inventor when I was eight or nine years old, with my script hero Edison, and this was later updated by meeting the inventor Eric Berne.

In closing, in the spirit of the scientific award in Eric's name, I want to encourage the bright Kid of everyone in the ITAA to write up their ideas as I did and good things will happen. Thanks again.