

Brief Encounters with the Taos Institute

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By Harlene Anderson, Ph.D.
Taos Institute Co-Founder and Board of
Directors

Appreciating and Honoring Bob Cottor, M.D.

Taos Institute Friend, Colleague and Advisor

Bob Cottor, reminiscing on his career and future, emphatically said, “I will not stop talking...maybe less doing.” We are pleased that the Taos Institute Community is one place where he will not stop talking.



Since the completion of his child psychiatric training in 1966, Bob always wanted to make a difference, “to create increasingly more effective change in psychotherapy and psychiatric treatment.” He passionately, irreverently, and innovatively pursued that mission as he challenged and contributed to medicine, psychiatry, family therapy, and relational practices. Over the years, Bob, while mostly maintaining a soft steadfast voice, has made a difference in the lives of people and institutions. He does, however, tell stories of his irreverent adventures such as having adolescents enter his county hospital program for drug abuse treatment via the fire escape so they wouldn’t be trapped by a negative intake process when they entered the hospital and of standing up to the chief pediatric heart surgeons when he firmly believed their postoperative actions with their child patients were very harmful emotionally during their recovery. The surgeons soon changed their post-op protocols and the children thrived.

Bob began his career in Minnesota and then worked in San Francisco during the late 60’s. Bob and his wife and practice partner, Sharon, soon moved to Phoenix where they were the first family therapists in Arizona. In 1980, they founded the Institute for Creative Change to create a forum to learn, promote, and enhance creative change strategies for mental health, education and organization development. In 1998 the Institute for Creative Change co-hosted the Taos Institute conference ‘Change Practices: Constructing the Future Through Relational Inquiry.’



In 1993 Bob and Sharon saw an announcement for a conference on social construction in psychotherapy and organizations in Taos, New Mexico: “We had never heard of social construction but the description of ‘collaborating’ caught our attention.” They attended the conference and ever since Bob has accompanied us on our journey to “changing the world one conversation at a time”. Bob became one of the first Taos Associates in 1996; was appointed as an Advisor to the Board of Directors in 1999,

and then joined the Board of Directors as a member in 2003. He recently transitioned to Taos's newly refashioned Board of Advisors. Bob's current passion is change healthcare policy and practice.

The Taos Institute Board of Directors generously expresses its gratitude to Bob for his steadfast voice and positive attitude, and for his sound engagement, support, and counsel over the years. Please join us as we express our appreciation and honor Bob Cottor for his years of friendship, collegueship, and service and in wishing him the best as he continues with his mission and ours for the years ahead.

