

Dr. Shirley Zussman Interviewed by Dr. Erica Goodstone for the 50th Anniversary Timeline

What years have you been associated with AASECT?

- President from 1981 – 1982
- When I reached the age of 100, I threw out anything that didn't have much meaning so I don't have details about dates I was involved with AASECT.

Who do you remember when you think of AASECT?

- **Pat Schiller** ran the organization. The whole field can be attributed to her vision.
 - * She brought a dedicated feeling of making this new field of sexology important.
 - * She collected a group of people who were dedicated.
 - * She was an organizer who attracted people to AASECT and inspired them to work for her.
- **Dorothy and Mike Carrera**
Michael Carrera was a major factor in the organization, an amazingly attractive person
- **William Granzig** was very active. He was an executive at ACOG, American Committee of Gynecologists and Obstetricians.
- **Shere Hite** made a major contribution engaging the female population. I became friendly with her and invited her to speak at AASECT where she did a lot of presentations. Her major point was that women were not orgasmic like men. She got so attacked that she left the U.S. and never lived here again. One incident I remember. On the way to the airport to attend an AASECT meeting, I picked her up in a taxi. When the taxi driver got out of the car to ring her bell and I gave him her name, he said: "My wife will remember this day forever!"
- **William Masters** introduced the idea of focusing on female concerns. He had to leave his hospital because of the negative responses, especially from within his own profession.
- **Helen Singer Kaplan** was a very important figure in the field. She had programs at New York Hospital, Cornell, and was speaking all around the country and the world. She emphasized the desire phase.
- **Michael Perelman** was a major factor in developing interest in the field. He became director of Helen Singer Kaplan's program.
- **Kinsey** made a major contribution to the field of sexology. There were also some doctors before Kinsey.

What is your most important contribution?

- I was one of the very early people who had any contact with Masters and Johnson. I met them in a casual way. They were peripheral figures of AASECT. A friend, a psychiatrist, invited my husband and I to a psychiatric organization meeting in New Jersey where the featured speakers, **completely unknown**, were Masters & Johnson. My husband, an obstetrician/gynecologist and I had an emotional reaction to this. We were fascinated by the dual presentation and later followed their format in our own work. I fell in love with them but didn't remain in love over the years because they were difficult people. They mentioned they were starting a program about treatment of sexual problems. This whole area had been ignored before.

- About Masters and Johnson's early work. They introduced the idea of sexual issues in a hospital setting. He got interested in feminine concerns and was attacked for that interest. Before this, only MD's (who were embarrassed to talk about this) and psychiatrists (who took 10 years to treat someone) would focus on sexual concerns.
- I had this early connection with Masters and Johnson and brought something new and exciting to early AASECT meetings. That's when I met Pat Schiller. My husband and I did a preliminary AASECT presentation with her encouragement. I got informally friendly with her. She kind of adopted me. I was useful to her. I was in Manhattan which was a new area for her since she lived in Washington. I helped send publicity information for meetings.
- My husband, Leon, was an excellent lecturer. Together we were a replica of the Masters and Johnson model. Eventually we became the leaders in New York.
- As President, one of my contributions was an attempt to try to incorporate the contributions of all 3 organizations, AASECT, SSSS, and SSTAR, to coordinate rather than be competitive. The goal was to present ourselves as a united front. But everybody had to be captain

How was AASECT organized during the time you were president, where were the offices, who were the staff, what were their goals and what challenges and cultural attitudes do you remember?

- Major contribution of AASECT in the early days. They took a path that was completely new.
 - * They made sexuality concerns important to different professionals
 - * Before that, mostly psychiatrists worked with sexual problems
 - * Masters and Johnson shook up the problem
- AASECT had a remarkably good organizational plan.
 - * They had chapters all around the country
 - * Periodic times when branches had meetings
 - * We all got information about those chapters. We received a package of all the meetings and when they were taking place
 - * At some point the other organizations were beginning to emerge; AASECT was a model for the others.
- Original goals of AASECT
 - * Emphasis on female issues. Pat Schiller was a feminist.
 - * Sex positivity.