



History of St. Louis Gateway Better Marriages A.C.M.E.
Association for Couples In Marriage Enrichment
 by: Dan Mosby

The Vision of Bob and Bess Mosby

Bob and Bess were married in 1950 and raised a family of six children. During the 1960's, as Bob was in graduate school preparing to become a psychologist, they became excited about the possibilities of applying the communication skills Bob was learning for professional application to help them solve problems within their own marriage. They developed techniques for active listening and guidelines for expression that they felt profoundly enriched their relationship. Wanting to share what they had discovered for themselves, they initiated communication skills classes and retreats which they offered through local churches and the School of Continuing Education of Washington University. Some of the couples continued meeting in a monthly support group to practice communication skills.

In 1979, Bob and Bess met David and Vera Mace, international leaders in the nascent marriage enrichment movement, at a Kansas City conference. The Mace's vision of "better marriages beginning with our own" guided their efforts to build an organization which they called the Association of Couples in Marriage Enrichment (ACME). It was a perfect match with the Mosby's desire to share the communication skills they had developed with others. The Gateway Chapter of ACME was formally established in 1983.



The Gateway Model Develops

Bob and Bess began the business of turning the Gateway ACME Chapter into a growing organization. Several of the couples who had participated in the communication skills trainings became inspired by the vision and took on unpaid leadership roles. The original Steering Committee, including Bill and Mary Gentry, DeeJay and Audrey Hubbard, Anne and Rod Johnson, Terry and Jill Jordan, and Stan and Ranka Goldman, established the precedent for saturating the mission of organization-building with elements of fun and camaraderie. When Bob had a heart attack in 1983 that temporarily slowed his activities, Bill and Mary Gentry took over as chair-couple. Under their

leadership, the Chapter developed a constitution and matured into an organization that could thrive independent from the Mosby's sustaining efforts.

an early steering committee meeting





*The
Hearing
Marriage
(MEG) in*



*Aides, the
Enrichment Group
which Bob and Bess*

were members

Marriage Enrichment Groups (MEGs), several couples that met monthly to practice communication skills, became the building blocks of the Gateway Chapter. Bob and Bess trained couples in weekend retreats or alternatively in a series of six sessions that met weekly in the Mosby's home. After the training experiences, couples were eligible to enter enrichment groups. Unique to the Gateway model, most communications between couples in group sessions followed the "dialogue" format. Couples used "I messages" which identified their feelings as they expressed and their spouses reflected their meaning back with active listening techniques. These skills were incorporated into a conflict resolution process which the Mosbys labeled the Double V.

ACME offered a leadership certification process to which the Chapter added dialoguing skills training as a requirement. All the members of the Steering Committee became certified ACME leaders who could teach dialoguing skills. They offered communication skills retreats to churches and sometimes those groups coalesced as enrichment groups. "Basic Skills Trainings" were offered by leader couples in weekend retreats several times per year so that new couples who wished to get involved were trained and then could join enrichment groups. Word-of-mouth became the major referral route to those events. The chapter also grew with couples "graduating" from Bob Mosby's private practice in marriage counseling. After couples healed in therapy utilizing the communication skills that Bob taught, they could continue practicing those skills by joining on-going MEG's.



The Gateway Chapter sponsored general meetings four times per year to present a speaker or activity. Valentine's Day retreats, chapter-wide dinners and other social events fostered excitement in the mission of building the marriage enrichment community. At various points in time, as many as twenty-five enrichment groups have flourished. The Gateway Chapter has allowed over 300 married couples to share the vision of enriching marriages beginning with their own.

In a new millennium the vision of Bob and Bess continues. Bess has died and Bob is remarried, happily to Ruth. The St. Louis Gateway Chapter is strong with trained leader couples who facilitate Couple Communication Workshops. Educational events

and social activities continue to add zest to the lives of interested couples. The Mosby's activity of honing dialoguing skills and building Marriage Enrichment Groups remains a focus of this chapter.

No words can thank Bob and Bess enough for their commitment to creating a place where couples can learn to fully know and deeply love each other. We honor their work by carrying on their dream for better marriages beginning with our own.

