Praise for *The Origins of Neuro-Linguistic Programming*

Finally! Forty-two years later the true origins of NLP are revealed which up to now have only been the subject of mystery and legend. This is a must-read book for any student of NLP. In it we learn what actually happened during the first nine years of NLP and which set the stage for everything that has followed.

Today everyone claims to be one of the developers of NLP. Now we learn who the real developers actually were. Further, we are reminded that the Meta Model is the genuine heart of NLP and that it can only be mastered through ongoing practice. We learn that there were three and not two creators of NLP and are introduced to Frank Pucelik, who tragically many people in NLP have never heard of. Frank lives in Odessa in the Ukraine and continues to pioneer developments in NLP for business and works with at-risk young people.

John Grinder makes several points that the NLP world today desperately needs to hear and apply. He warns of the danger of content, categories, and pre-mature labeling and redirects us to focus on process. He also emphasizes the power of patterning, modeling, and testing in the creation of new applications.

In short, devour this book, imitate the same rigorous methods that were used by the developers, and bring this rigor to develop the next generation of NLP.

Wyatt L. Woodsmall, PhD,
NLP Master Trainer and Master Modeler

Different voices, different histories … this multiplicity of sometimes conflicting perspectives is a salutary reminder that, as NLP has been at pains to point out, we each have our own map. Or as Robin Williams once said, "Reality – what a concept!"

Ian McDermott, founder of International Teaching Seminars

This is a big important book for the distinct and radical field of NLP, its trainers, practitioners, and critics. With contributions from a core of the original developers from the 1970s, here is an inspiring, sometimes contradictory, multilayered account of the cultural and intellectual background, the key colorful characters, the playful collaborations, the role of artistry and the creative unconscious, the adventures in modeling, research, and rigorous testing as well as some fine examples of early successful NLP applications.

This book sets the scene for the real questions being posed: What really is NLP? Where is it going? Is it now merely a set of techniques you can learn by rote in a few days? Or does NLP still offer a subtle, skills-based, and fundamental opportunity to further expand and deepen our knowledge and practice of the arts of human communication, learning, and change?

The Origins of Neuro-Linguistic Programming is an exceptional and essential read for everyone involved in NLP and interested in contributing to its future.

Judith Lowe, MD and Principal Trainer of NLP Training Institute/PPD Learning Ltd

Thank you John Grinder and Frank Pucelik for your work in providing us with an account of how neuro-linguistic programming began as a seed and grew rapidly during the 1970s. NLP is now in its fifth decade and for the first time we have a reliable book that offers a history of NLP.

The Origins of Neuro-Linguistic Programming is both a story and collection of stories. The theme of the main narrative is the creation of NLP; the collection of stories is a rich anthology from the people who were there at the beginning and others who came along after the foundation was in place. The accounts in this book capture the commitment of Grinder, Bandler, and Pucelik as well as the spirited people they attracted to radically experiment with patterns of human excellence.

What makes this book exciting are the multiple voices narrating their personal experience of NLP during the heady days of 1970s. However, there is much more than history in these pages. If you focus at a deeper level you will find something very rich which is often missing in modern NLP – the fearlessness, the radicalism, the desire to experiment, the commitment to model, and the willingness to undertake thousands of hours of practice. Without these elements we would not have NLP today.

As you read and enjoy the voices from these pages, you may want to consider how NLP would be more colorful in the current age if we embraced the attitude of the individuals who gave us so much in inspiring and creating the field of neuro-linguistic programming.

**Michael Carroll, founder of the NLP Academy and
co-founder of the International Trainers Academy of NLP**

An enjoyable, exciting, and informative adventure through the brilliant and quirky origins of NLP. This book is a hymn to the spirit of curiosity, creativity, collaboration, and adventure.

**Julian Russell, Executive Coach and
Director of The Life Talent Programme**

We have been waiting almost 40 years for this book – a first-hand account by some of the people who were there at the beginning at one of the most creative times in history. *The Origins of Neuro-Linguistic Programming* can be enjoyed as several interwoven narratives, and you can model the modelers for their process of discovery, testing, trial, and feedback. Whichever filter you choose, this engaging book will provide more about the original spirit of NLP.

**James Lawley and Penny Tompkins, authors of
*Metaphors in Mind: Transformation through Symbolic Modelling***

The Origins of Neuro-Linguistic Programming

edited by
John Grinder and R. Frank Pucelik

Prologue and Epilogue by
Carmen Bostic-St. Clair

To Richard Bandler

Your voice is not here, only echoes of it. Your intelligence, your fear-lessness, and your presence are apparent in many of the narratives. We formed a team, the three of us, then the two of us, and against all odds, we succeeded in creating something distinct and radical and set it free in the world.

It was a great adventure!

<div align="right">

John Grinder
Frank Pucelik

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A Suggestion to the Reader

Carmen Bostic-St. Clair

Welcome to the *process* of discovery. This book is a step back in time, composed of a series of articles written today, some 40 years later, by individuals who came together in Santa Cruz, California during the years 1971–1979.

A time when the Dow Jones Industrial Average was still under 1000 points, a new car cost less than $4,000, and the kidnappers of Patricia Hearst were demanding $70 of food be given to every needy Californian. The time is 1970s, an era of change and protest. Bob Marley's song, "I Shot the Sheriff," along with songs by Paul McCartney and the Rolling Stones, could be heard blasting from the radios of brightly decorated VW vans; *Jesus Christ Superstar* was playing at the single screen cinema crowded with long-haired men and women wearing fringes, bell bottoms, and fatigue boots – smells of clove, tobacco, and other substances filled the turbulent air.

We ask you to enjoy the process of experiencing the discoveries as they unfold in the vivid and animated descriptions by some of the individuals who have written articles for this book; as you enjoy, we ask you to engage in a process that is congruent and consistent with the experiential teaching practices which were utilized by Richard Bandler, Frank Pucelik, and John Grinder during trainings on or near the University of California at Santa Cruz.

Words on paper do not really capture the full impact of a brief moment in time, so we are suggesting as you read that you utilize some of the well-known original processes of the field. We ask you to set the stage – to set your computer, television, or whatever device on which you listen to music and tune it to the sounds of the 70s. While enveloped by these

sounds, we invite you to transport yourself to the campus as described through the eyes of the writers; to gaze through the redwood forests and capture glints of the shimmering Pacific Ocean melding with the horizon; while you are observing the gentle movement of the deer, listen for the call of the red tail hawk as you briskly rub your arms to ease the chill and become aware that the cool breeze carries the fresh scent and taste of salt. You have arrived at the campus – step lightly into the shoes of these young, eager individuals as the adventure unfolds.

The stories that you will read here are descriptions of experiences as remembered by the students and participants at training events that occurred during the creation by three men of the field known today as neuro-linguistic programming (NLP). The *field was created*, the original patterns known as Classic Code NLP were largely *not created;* rather the preponderance of these patterns were *uncovered, assimilated*, and *explicated* through the process of NLP modeling. These are patterns which you and I perform unconsciously hundreds of times during a day. To provide you with a way of thinking about these unconsciously performed processes, we ask you now, in this moment, to think about instances during your day when you replay the sound of someone's voice and immediately recall their image. How frequently do you realize that you have unconsciously noted the posture, gestures, and general physiology of an acquaintance and find yourself surprised that you are able to anticipate what they are about to say and/or do? How many times a day do you spontaneously ask for specificity of a noun or verb? How often in a business context, or when speaking to a detail-oriented person, do you find yourself asking to see or hear an example of the bigger picture?

The genius of creating a structure from these random natural intuitive processes and presenting them as explicit patterns, was first published in the *Structure of Magic, Volume I* by Bandler and Grinder. The impact of this work is captured by Virginia Satir, as she writes in the Foreword to that book:

> Knowing what these elements are makes it possible to use them consciously and, thus, to have useful methods for inducing change.

One way to look at these explicit patterns is to view them as a coded keypad that can be used to open an on-demand system to use when and where we chose.

If, at any point, while reading these articles you become puzzled by conflicting dates, processes, naming, or connections, relax, enjoy your read. In the Epilogue I pull together such loose strands and braid them into a continuity to provide an integrated description and possibly will solve some of those puzzles.

We *could* assume that you have had some introduction, experience, or background in Neuro-Linguistic Programming, and therefore, have an interest in the creation of the field; this is one possible assumption, among many available. We have not made that assumption; experience in NLP is not a prerequisite. This book is a drama about human beings who came together to make something new in the world.

As I remind participants in my seminars, "a pattern discovered is a pattern owned by the discoverer." Notice within these articles which writers seem to own their discovery. They were treated to excellent teachers who utilized the inductive method of teaching; each of whom, I hope, embodied that process and transferred it, in turn to you – their own students.

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Carmen Bostic-St. Clair
San Francisco, California
October 2012

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Reflections on *The Origins of Neuro-Linguistic Programming*

John Grinder

This book has as its purpose a description of the origins of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). Note, please the use of the indefinite article *a* in the phrase, *a description o*f *Neuro-Linguistic Programming.* The co-editors of this book, Frank Pucelik and John Grinder, were two of the three prime movers in the creation of NLP and one or both of them were present at the majority of the events described herein that define the origins of NLP. A third voice, that of Richard Bandler, is not present in this book as he elected not to participate.

The presentation of the origins of a field presents an interesting challenge for a number of reasons – among them, the fact that memory is reconstructive.

Here is easily the most responsible act I, as an author and a co-editor, can offer you as the reader of this book. It takes the form of a warning. In approaching what you are about to read, keep in mind the following three points in what you encounter in this volume:

1. *A significant portion of what is described never happened!*

    According the latest models of memory processes, memories are *not* stored as intact units to be retrieved and displayed. They are stored in distinct physical locations (the primary cortical areas for each of the corresponding input channels) of the central nervous system; more specifically in separate representational systems. The connections among them are mediated by synesthesia circuitry.

To *remember*, then, is to reassemble portions of experience stored in separate locations into what appears (in the present) to be a coherent representation of some experience in the past, one that satisfies the present intentions and requirements of the person doing the remembering. Such present intentions and requirements of the person remembering operate as filters on the search mechanisms that reconstitute the *memory*.

Thus, all such representations are ultimately, and profoundly, works of fiction. By the way, the fact that they are fiction is NOT a disqualification, simply an epistemological warning about the veracity of what you are reading.

So, what do you suppose is the probability of getting these pieces reassembled so as to match the archival representation of some omniscient, ever present (and non-existent) audio visual 360 degree recording apparatus in the sky?

2. *Memory is selective and essentially incomplete!*

Thus, *memories* can be expected to vary as a function not only of the state, intentions, and filtering that existed at the time of the actual event but also as a function of state, present intentions, and filtering of the person reconstructing the *memory* in the present. Distinct portions of the reconstruction being reported will be identified and presented and others will not. As the state, intentions, and requirements of the person remembering shift, so will the representations of what occurred. Some of these differences will depend on the granularity of the representation (its specificity) and whether it is confined to a specific logical type of representation – description, interpretation, and evaluation (assuming that the person making the reconstruction, or indeed the reader, can make the distinction among these varying modes of representation). This is unlikely as the vast majority of the members of the fourth estate have yet to notice or are unable or unwilling to respect.

Test it for yourself – remember the last dinner you ate in a restaurant. OK, ready – make a representation of what occurred … Got it!

Cool, but what about the color of the border of the menu? Did the servers actually present the fresh dishes from one side of the diner and remove the used dishes from the other side? How were the portions of the dinner arranged on the serving platters? Were the chargers color coordinated with the flowers on the sideboard (what sideboard!)? Who spoke first after the ordering was complete? Did the following speakers at the table replicate the rhythm of the first speaker's voice or was there a significant contrast? Did the volume of sound in the restaurant rise and fall with a certain temporal frequency? Did the texture of the side dishes complement the texture of the main dish? How clearly could you hear the sounds of the kitchen where your food was being prepared? How frequently did the people sitting beside each other mirror the others' physical movements as compared with people facing one another either at the same table or the one to your left as you sat at the table? Did the chairs you all sat in make a loud sound when moved during the seating ritual? Was the waiter/waitress right or left handed? Was the tablecloth arranged as a square or a diamond with respect to the table it covered … a flurry of questions, most of little or no interest for most people.

The point here is that in reconstructing a *memory*, you are confronted with the task of selecting from among a very large (although finite) set of possible things to represent. Those things that actually end up in your reconstruction are there as an indicator of your intentions and interests, now, as you reconstruct the *memory*. In the provocations above about your dinner at the restaurant, I confined myself largely to physical aspects of the event. What if we were to venture into the relationships implicit at that table and the complex operations implied by these relationships? Now the situation gets even more complex. If you were able to compare what you reconstructed with respect to the dinner in the restaurant with

this archive, do you suppose that your reconstruction would contain more or less than the archival file referred to above. Surprisingly, the answer is both – you would find a vast array of things that were not reconstructed in your representation and some things in your representation would NOT be present in the archive captured by that ubiquitous recording system in the sky.

There are higher level differences that emerge in addition to the essentially incomplete and selective nature of your reconstruction of the dinner. Was your representation biased, focusing largely on the visual aspects of that dinner/restaurant event? Was any attention given to the sounds of the environment (the restaurant)? What about the tastes and combinations and sequences of tastes, the developing of various topics in the conversation, and how the feelings of the people at the table shifted with the development of the conversations about these various topics?

3. *Does it really matter what happened historically?*

What *is* the point of examining the historical development of something as complex as the birth of a new field? Are you hoping to catch a glimpse of the processes of discovery, possibly even with the intention of using such processes in making comparable discoveries yourself? Are you so naive as to think that two human beings confronted with the "same" set of stimuli (experiences) will respond in the "same" way? The *same*'s are in quotes to remind you that the same set of stimuli are NOT the same when processed through distinct neurologies. Is it really relevant to you as a researcher to know how someone else with a completely distinct background responded to the stimuli that were available at the origin of NLP? Do you really think that playing the music of and dancing to Congolese traditional rhythms, and training and riding Arabian trail horses ... will assist you in becoming a better modeler? Does having developed a set of effective patterns help guide young people out of the thick jungle of drugs towards a lighted path from which

some of them can then reach back and guide their former mates? Is it really an advantage to speak some eight languages; or have a deep appreciation of battlefield injuries and the corresponding life-saving interventions required; or know how to derail a train with a minimum of plastic explosives; or hit a golf ball 300 yards down the middle of the fairway; or to have a deep computational competency in automata theory; or how to rig a automatic watering system for horse trough; or ...

Personally, I don't think so. But then, it is very dangerous to generalize from a sample of one.

Yet, as I move around the globe offering training, conferences, and demonstrations, one of the most frequent questions is the history question: *What happened at the origin of the field now known as NLP?* and *How did it happen?* What ensues, if the person asked is willing to accept the question, is a series of bedtime stories, meeting the requirements of the speaker's present intentions in presenting themselves to strengthen the image of whoever the speaker is and what s/he wishes the audience to carry away with them.

So, step back a moment here before plunging into this maelstrom and ask yourself the obvious question:

What is the relationship, if any, between the *technology* of modeling and the *history of discovery, assimilation, and coding of patterning in the field now known as NLP?*

Isn't the point of this simple but difficult adventure called the modeling of genius to detect, assimilate unconsciously, code, and disseminate the patterning of geniuses? If this cycle of deep learning has any point, it is to make available the patterning of geniuses in a learnable form that integrates these patterns of genius into the performance of people wishing to achieve higher quality and more effective results in their worlds of application. This results in the raising of the bar in that profession. For example, the modeling of Dr. Milton Erickson required some 10 months or so between first contact and the coding of the patterning (see *Patterns of the Hypnotic Techniques of Milton H. Erickson,*

M.D. Volumes I and *II*).[1] How many people have the time (10 months) as well as the tolerance for the inherent ambiguity of the task of modeling and the competency to code the assimilated patterns into a description that would allow others to gain access to these patterns without this enormous investment of time and talent?

In medieval Europe, the accumulated tacit knowledge of various professions, say, for example, of masonry, was passed from master to apprentice through direct modeling – there were no shortcuts. The apprentice mason prepared the site, carried the materials, did the clean up, and whilst doing all this, if this apprentice were to succeed in becoming a mason, he would notice and mark how, specifically, the master mason approached the various aspects of actually building that structure, setting up that foundation, and executing the plans of the architect.

I recognize that the depth of integration of the patterning is quite distinct (at least initially) as a function of the method of assimilation. If learning the patterning is accomplished inductively and through unconscious assimilation, the patterns belong in a deep sense to the learner. Such a learner then has the leisure to revisit such patterns and may then ferret out the essential elements of the patterns and their sequencing – the formal pattern itself or some functional equivalent.

Those learners following a conscious approach will certainly upgrade their game; whether they ever achieve the depth of integration of patterning arrived at inductively is an open question. In our present context, few people, if anyone, are prepared to enter the strange and disorienting world of deep inductive learning, thus, the niche of modeler emerges.

So, what will you do with these reconstructed tales flowing down through the decades since their actual occurrence, and channeled through the intentions, interests, and self-images of the people offering these representations?

Good question!

The Fundamental Strategy

Frank and I have considered how to manage these issues. We have settled on a specific strategy. We have determined to pursue the minimization of these particular classes of distortion by calling upon a large number of people who were physically present and participated in or observed some of the events that are herein described. A few are names that are widely recognized in the present day field of NLP; most are people who are unknown and largely inactive with respect to the patterning of the NLP of today – people who have no particular clear known agenda. Mark carefully what they report.

You will find in this book the voices of people who moved resolutely, wandered, and/or often stumbled (most of all the co-authors of this book) through these events, each of whom carried with them specific personal agendas and perceptual filters which ensured that their perceptions and thus subsequently their reconstructed *memories* of these events would be quite distinct, especially with the passage of time (now some 40 years). Many of these differences arise through the ubiquitous and selective perceptual filtering that necessarily results from the strong limitations of the bandwidth of consciousness (7 + or – chunks of information).

I would venture that few of the distortions that occur in such reconstructions are deliberate. This lack of explicit awareness of the filtering and its consequences, and the unconsciously motivated personal agendas of the people responsible for these deviations from what actually happened (now largely unknowable), makes such distortions all the more problematic, both with respect to the task of discovering what the distortion is/was and what it is/was a distortion of – that is, deviations from what actually happened.

But surely one of the most obvious and powerful conclusions from the development and deployment of patterning over the last four decades in NLP, and easily verified in the reader's own experience, is the astonishing diversity in the descriptions that emerge from any single event when described from the distinct perceptual positions of the people who directly participated in or witnessed the event in question.

Indeed, I would caution the reader to consider the following: the more prominent the name/reputation of the writer of the description, the more likely the distortions (operationally defined as deviations from a correspondence with the record captured by great 360 degree audio/video recorder in the sky – which fortunately or unfortunately does not exist). This is the sense of *unknowable* as in the paragraph two above this one. Note please that this applies with full force to the words that you are presently reading.

This is as accurate a statement for a relatively common event, such as whose idea was it, really, to organize that birthday party for a mutual friend, as it is for that rare event – the creation of a new field of patterning such as NLP. None of it is to be taken at face value.

There are two distinct issues here. First, anyone with an appropriate background and some thought can comment on what they perceive as the predecessors of NLP or any other set of developed patterns. Certainly, practitioners of the Philosophy of Science have done this service for many branches of science (see especially the fine work of Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* on the development of portions of modern physics[2]). Through their research into the birth and development of what later became incorporated into standard models or sets of patterning, these practitioners have succeeded in connecting discrete and heretofore unconnected work, sometimes in a single field, sometimes across fields, that had previously been considered distinct. Such studies can be highly useful and instructive.

This is a distinct issue from what the creator or co-creators of a discipline had access to, what they were aware of at the time and in the context of the creation of that discipline. It is interesting to consider the differences between these two issues as captured by the following two questions.

The first question is:

> *Where did the ideas that turn up in some new model or set of patterns come from historically?*

This is surely an issue worthy of the attention of researchers with a synthetic bent – a history of the development of the ideas involved. As examples of the high value of such work, I cite two cases from Kuhn. The first is from *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*:

> With scientific observation … the scientist can have no recourse above or beyond what he sees with his eyes and instruments. If there were some higher authority by recourse to which his vision might be shown to have shifted, then that authority would itself become the source of his data, and the behavior of his visions would become a source of problems. The period during which light was "sometimes a wave and sometimes a particle" – was a period of crisis, a period where something was wrong – and it ended only with the development of wave mechanics and the realization that light was a self-consistent entity different from both waves and particles. In the sciences, therefore, if perceptual switches accompany paradigm changes, we may not expect scientists to attest to these changes directly. Looking at the moon, the convert to Copernicanism does not say, "I used to see a planet, but now I see a satellite." That locution would imply a sense in which the Ptolemaic system had once been correct. Instead, a convert to the new astronomy says, "I once took the moon to be (or saw the moon as) a planet, but I was mistaken." That sort of statement does occur in the aftermath of scientific revolution. If it ordinarily disguises a shift of scientific visions or some other mental transformation with the same effect, we may not expect direct testimony about that shift. Rather we must look for indirect and behavioral evidence that the scientist with a new paradigm sees differently from the way he had seen before.

> Let us then return to the data and ask what sorts of transformations in the scientists' world the historian who believes in such changes can discover. Sir William Herschel's discovery of Uranus provides a first example. On at least seventeen different occasions between 1690 and 1781, a number of astronomers, including several of Europe's most eminent observers, had seen a star in positions that we now suppose must have been occupied at the time by Uranus. One of the best observers in this group had actually seen the star on four successive nights in 1769 without noting the motion that could have suggested

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✳ the developers, and bring this rigor to develop the next generation of NLP."
Wyatt L. Woodsmall, PhD, NLP Master Trainer and Master Modeler

The Origins of Neuro Linguistic Programming brings together the recollections and thoughts of some of the main protagonists from the very early days of NLP.

In 1971 Richard Bandler and Frank Pucelik were students at Kresege College at the University of California Santa Cruz. They had a strong mutual interest in Gestalt Therapy and started a local Gestalt group, collaborating and experimenting with the language of therapy, and achieving some brilliant results. Richard then invited one of their college professors, John Grinder, to come and see what they were doing – John was a professor of Linguistics and was instantly impressed. He was able to add more structure to what they were doing and in, due course, the three of them formalized what is now known as the Meta Model. NLP was born.

John and Frank have each contributed their own substantial chapters, John has written two commentaries and has been somewhat forthright in his views about how the methods and the work of the early pioneers are not reflected in much of today's practice. We also have chapters from Terry McClendon, Judith Delozier, David R. Wick, Byron Lewis, Stephen Gilligan, James Eicher and Robert Dilts.

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