

## In Tribute to Frances F. Kaplan

*Joan Bloomgarden, PhD, LCAT, MHC, ATR-BC and Margaret Carlock Russo, EdD, LCAT (NY), ATR-BC*

*April 12, 2018*

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Frances Fisher Kaplan on March 17, 2018. Frances was a well-known, welcoming contributing figure in the art therapy community and in 2003 received the *Distinguished Service Award from the American Art Therapy Association* for her years of service and outstanding dedication.

Frances F. Kaplan was a unique individual who touched many lives in the art therapy community and communities working toward peaceful solutions and social justice. By example she encouraged art therapists to expand traditional roles and reach outside their traditional therapeutic space of invisible structures to resonate with voices in the communities of social action, cultural competence, and peaceful mediation. She authored books, chapters, and many articles with thoughtful underpinnings and direction. Her writings were original and, as editor for *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, her viewpoints rang of her wit and conscience. Frances' ideas and personal relationships touched the lives of many of her peers.



To sum up Frances Kaplan's life and work, is daunting. She made vast contributions by simply interacting with people. She was a leader and touched the lives of those around her in lasting ways. It was at Hofstra University that Margaret and I met Frances; I was a new adjunct and she was a new student. Frances and I became friends and colleagues, maintaining a close friendship throughout our lives. I have laughed with Frances, sighed with her, and created with her. Margaret met Frances F. Kaplan in 1993 when she interviewed her for admission into the Hofstra University Creative Arts Therapy Master's program.

Margaret Carlock Russo, EdD, LCAT (NY), ATR-BC shares the following memories:

From the first moment in that interview I saw a woman who had a warmth and gentleness that both relaxed and inspired me. As my first art therapy professor, in her ever kind and insightful way, Frances imparted her knowledge of art therapy and quickly became someone I admired and respected immensely. She led by example in a quiet but



*In this picture Frances is in the hotel coffee shop enjoying down time with Margaret and me after her presentation in Seattle.*



*In this picture she is paused from walking in the natural surroundings of Oregon. Those were good times.*

compelling manner. Over time, her mentorship became a strong and valued influence for me. We continued to correspond, and visit, after she moved to Oregon and I looked forward to seeing her each year at the AATA conferences. I will miss her greatly.

Frances and Marty made a home in Portland. Friends and colleagues came to visit and stayed with them. We did and Frances and Marty enjoyed showing us the sights and sounds of Portland.

During down time Frances told us stories about Anika, her special grandchild from her son Jason and daughter in-law Summer. She loved Anika and sometimes that was the only time she could not find words to express the deep love and caring she had for her family. Her greatest joy was spending time with them.

Fellow art therapists were part of Frances' life. Notices were sent to invite their contributions. Here is what they had to say:

Frances Fox, MA, Hofstra University CAT program:

If it wasn't for her I never would have become an Art Therapist and had the amazing life I've had since then. She was always encouraging and believed in me, and I will be eternally grateful for that. I feel very privileged to think of her as a friend and enjoyed my visits with her when I was in the country. I'll miss her very much.



Arleen Levine, ATR-BC:

Many years ago, when I was an art teacher teaching at a special education school in New Jersey, I met Frances Kaplan. It was 1980 and many people (myself included) had not heard of the new profession, Art Therapy. Frances was working as head of the Adjunctive Therapies Department at Carrier Clinic. My supervisor at the school where I worked introduced me to this profession when I told him that it seemed like art really helped the children express themselves and even changed moods.

Frances kindly invited me to work as an intern in her program, when I told her of my interest. In a few months I was sure that I wanted to go to graduate school and learned to be an art therapist. Frances encouraged me and I enrolled in the program at Pratt Institute, her alma mater. Although Frances moved to Oregon, I spoke to her on the telephone and we visited at AATA conventions.

Sometimes there are people in your life who are not in your space, but are in your thoughts regularly. She is one of those people for me. She was my mentor and friend who could always be counted on—the way it was those many years ago at my first hospital internship.

Dr. Chioma Anah, ATR, LCPC-S, President of Maryland Counselors for Social Justice (MCSJ):

It was with great sadness that I read the reporting of the passing of Dr. Frances F. Kaplan in *Art Therapy Today*. I was lucky to have met Dr. Kaplan in the first year of my graduate Creative Art Therapy Program at Hofstra University in 1993. She was an incredible and inspiring professor then, and has continued to inspire me with her vast and important contributions to art therapy; particularly with her work on Art Therapy and Social Justice. As a social justice advocate, I have found myself referring to Dr. Kaplan's work throughout the years, for both guidance and clarity. Thankfully, her important contributions to the Art Therapy profession will remain with us for decades to come. Thank you, Dr. Kaplan, you will be sorely missed!

Susanne C. Pitak-Davis, ATR:

Frances once told me the following story which I thought was hilarious. She said she had tried unsuccessfully for years to have her mother go into therapy. Her mother always adamantly refused. Finally, after a crisis, her mother reluctantly agreed and Frances found an older male therapist she thought her mother could relate to. After several sessions she asked her mother how things were going. She said her mother indignantly proclaimed she didn't care for the therapist because he wasn't young. Frances, exasperated said, "He isn't old!" But what her mother meant was he wasn't JUNG!



*Artwork by Frances Kaplan. Photos provided by Jason Kaplan via Mary Andrus, ATR-BC, LCPC, LPC.*

Dr. Beth Gonzalez-Dolginko, ATR-BC, LCAT, NYATA HLM:

Frances Fisher Kaplan was one of the kindest and most sincere humans to ever walk the earth. She always had a warm smile that greeted you right before her soft voice that featured her native Floridian accent. She was truly noble. Frances and I attended Pratt Institute's Graduate Art Therapy program in the mid-1970s. She always presented as professional and scholarly. She eventually went on to get her DA in Creative Arts Therapy from NYU, which I'm sure got her scholarly research juices flowing for the rest of her professional career.

When I was the Internship Coordinator at Pratt Institute after we graduated, I had the pleasure of visiting her at Carrier Foundation—a benchmark art therapy program in a long-term private psychiatric hospital, which she developed. Students desired doing their internships there because it was an excellent program, and Frances was their supervisor.

Frances was my immediate predecessor as the director of the Graduate Creative Arts Therapy Program at Hofstra University. My orientation with her was thorough, and she made a notebook with month by month expectations and how to implement same. She always assured me that she was only a phone call away. Equipped with that notebook, a call was never necessary.



When she retired to Oregon with her husband to be closer to their son, Frances continued teaching at Marylhurst College, offering a whole new group of students her wisdom. We stayed in touch through conferences and professional endeavors. Each time our paths crossed, I was always so happy after spending time with her.

May the road rise up to meet you, Frances. You will be missed.

Christine Turner, ATR-BC, LPC, NCC:

With the recent death of Frances Kaplan art therapists have lost the presence of a brilliant, compassionate leader in the profession.

Frances contributed to the development of the field in many ways, over many years. She wrote two books, *Art, Science and Art Therapy* and *Art Therapy and Social Action*. These books preceded the groundswell of interest in both topics, and provided stimulus for growth in our field. They are still used in relevant courses in Universities. Frances served on the editorial boards of the professional journals *The Arts in Psychotherapy* and *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*. She was editor -in-chief of the latter for several years. Her experience included academic administration and teaching art therapy at Hofstra University in New York. She taught at Marylhurst University and Portland State University in Oregon and in Australia and South Korea. As a clinician, she worked in several psychiatric treatment settings and later in her private practice. Her high standards were consistently evident, drawing respect from professionals in our field and beyond.

When Frances moved from the east coast to Oregon, about 20 years ago, she contacted me at Marylhurst University where I was chairperson of the art therapy program. She was interested in resuming teaching. She was, of course, enthusiastically welcomed by faculty and students and was a great asset to the program. While she was with us she enjoyed teaching several courses including one on research in art therapy, an area of particular interest to her. Frances was described by her students as an inspiring role model. They appreciated the depth of her knowledge and her clear, direct communication style. Students counted on Frances to speak her truth and to do so with kindness and the expectation of mutual respect. In addition to teaching core art therapy courses she taught classes on art and conflict resolution at several different locations. I think that if she could have witnessed the recent street demonstrations and other political action by young people she would have vigorously applauded.

Despite Frances' remarkable body of work, her intrinsic modesty, integrity, and dedication to quietly helping others resulted in her maintaining a respected but rather low public profile in the national art therapy community. She was fine with that, taking satisfaction from the work itself. It was a great pleasure for her friends and colleagues



when she was honored by being given the Myra Levick Lifetime Award for Excellence in Art Therapy. It meant a lot to us to see her receiving well deserved recognition for a long career dedicated to the profession and to the welfare of the clients we serve. I know it was meaningful for her. Frances was an admirable individual, one of a kind, unique. She is sadly missed by those of us who knew her well as a dear and trusted friend.

Carol Lee Miller, ATR, LCAT:

In the Fall of 1989, as a mature student, I met with Frances to get information about the Creative Arts Therapy Masters at Hofstra University. I was not at all sure whether I would qualify for the program or if I could successfully complete the program.

Frances was welcoming and encouraging about my abilities and background. Because the interview went so well and because of her confidence in me, I decided to register for the program. Frances guided me regarding pre-requisite courses I would need as well as a plan to finish the program that would fit within my work schedule.

Frances was not an easy teacher! She was rigorous and demanding in what she expected from her students and for that I was appreciative. I studied hard and learned a lot. Visiting our son in college for parent's weekend, I spent quite a few hours working on a take home essay exam for Frances' class.

When it came time for my thesis project, Frances supported me 100%, meeting with me to discuss how I would carry out my research experiment and what instruments I would use to measure results. Because of her input, the experiment was firmly grounded. She shared her knowledge on how to correctly calculate the statistical analysis. She felt my paper was strong enough to be published in the Journal of the American Art Therapy Association, and helped me to take that final step.

I graduated with honors in December 1992. Frances came over to congratulate me. Her radiant smile and twinkle in her eye said "see, I had no doubt you could do this."

Frances Fischer Kaplan died at 80 after a long illness. Her family would like to thank the medical staff at Robison Rehabilitation and Health and Hopewell Hospice for their loving care. Condolences may be sent [here](#).



4875 Eisenhower Ave., Suite 240, Alexandria, VA 22304, [Contact Us](#)