

Mental Health Liaison Group – A History

MHLG Annual Meeting

December 4, 2020 E. Clarke Ross, D.P.A.

Clarke was first involved with the MHLG as a NASMHPD legislative assistant, Sept. 1, 1971

Clarke was a Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) co-founder in 1973

The Mental Health Liaison Group (first titled: Liaison Group on Mental Health) was formed in May 1969. The facilitator for the creation of the MHLG was Harry Schnibbe, NASMHPD, and a major motivating force was the reauthorization of the Community Mental Health Centers Act. 1968-1969 was an important year as major consumer-family organizations opened Washington, DC offices (the Arc; UCP; MHA) and NASMHPD housed two of these organizations.

For the first 20 years of the MHLG history, the coalition exchanged information at monthly meetings but the membership was frequently publicly divided and lacked consensus.

The first substantial effort at consistent MHLG consensus and impact was facilitated by Tipper Gore, spouse of the Vice President of the United States, who chaired the Clinton Administration's health care reform, subcommittee on mental health. Following Tipper Gore's efforts to include a basic mental health benefit in national health reform, the MHLG next consistently worked with consensus in promoting national laws requiring and operationally defining "parity" for mental health in health insurance.

During the co-chair tenure of the MHLG health committee by Peter Newbould (American Psychological Association) and Laurel Stine (Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law), a focus and operating premise was consensus and uniform public policy approaches.

Mary Lasker and Mike Gorman

Mary Lasker might be best known for her work with the American Cancer Society and establishing the NIH National Cancer Institute. Mary Lasker established the Lasker Foundation (1942) to promote medical research through a growing and strengthened NIH. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) was initiated in 1946 through Mary Lasker's advocacy with President Truman; NIMH was formally established in 1949. Mary Lasker was involved with MHA and CCD Co-founder UCP.

Mike Gorman was the executive director of the National Committee Against Mental Illness (founded in 1953). Mike was the personal Congressional representative of Mary Lasker and the National Committee was funded by Mary Lasker.

The Mental Health Study Act of 1955 authorized the formation of the Joint Commission on Mental Illness and Mental Health. In 1955, Congress appropriated \$1.2 million for the Commission. 18 national organizations participated in the Commission's work. The Commission published its 1961 report to Congress, "Action for Mental Health." The report advocated community mental health services to supplement the state psychiatric hospitals.

Harry Schnibbe

Harry Schnibbe served as the Communications Director for Senator John Carroll (D-CO), 1957-1963 (elected 1956). Senators Carroll and John Kennedy (D-MA) were close friends – both were Democrats, Roman Catholic, and aligned philosophically. Senator Carroll, staffed by Harry, was a Congressional member of the President's Commission on Mental Illness and Mental Health. Senator Carroll was defeated for re-election in 1962. On October 11, 1961 President Kennedy announced his President's Panel on Mental Retardation, and coordinated its work with the Mental Illness Commission. In February 1963, President Kennedy announced his National Action Plan to Combat Mental Retardation and sent legislation to Congress. Senator Carroll was a member of the President's committees, staffed by Harry. On October 31, 1963, President Kennedy signed into law the Mental Retardation Facilities and Community Mental Health Centers Construction Act (P.L. 88-164). The law authorized the construction of community mental health centers in defined federal catchment areas.

Harry Schnibbe – Continued (2)

In 1959, the state mental health directors appointed a Washington, DC secretariat. In 1963, NASMHPD was established and Harry Schnibbe was appointed executive director. [Harry served as ED until 1993.]

In the fall of 1968 UCP (headquartered in NYC) opened its Washington, DC public policy office, housed by NASMHPD and Harry Schnibbe. In the early winter of 1969, the Arc (citizens with intellectual disabilities) (also headquartered in NYC) opened its Washington, DC public policy office, housed by NASMHPD and Harry Schnibbe. In 1970, the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS) opened its first staffed office. In late 1970, the Developmental Disabilities Services and Facilities Construction Act was signed into law, the result of Arc-UCP-NASDDDS-NASMHPD efforts. In late 1971, the Arc moved to its own DC office and hosted monthly meetings. The Arc-UCP-NASDDDS-NASMHPD-& EFA were the core in establishing in early 1973 the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD).

The Mental Health Liaison Group

In 1969, Mental Health America hired a new executive director, hired its first legislative director – Bob Smucker (who served 1969-1978), and moved its office from NYC to Arlington, VA. MHA immediately linked up with Harry Schnibbe. Both organizations worked closely with the APA (psychiatry), whose government relations staff was transit until the hiring of Jay Cutler. In May 1969, NASMHPD-MHA-APA (psychiatry) and others established the Liaison Group on Mental Health.

NASMHPD was the meeting location for both MH & DD organizations – Harry wanted to strengthen the movement and impact. Harry also wanted to bring Mary Lasker rep Mike Gorman into the larger coalition. Mike Gorman never joined the Liaison Group on Mental Health.

MHLG Stories For Another Day:

Jay Cutler, American Psychiatric Association

Mental Health Systems Act, 1980

Chris Koyanagi and the Public Sector Group

CCD and MHLG – Effectiveness

Laurie Flynn, NAMI – National Alliance on Mental Illness

Leslie Scallet, Mental Health Policy Resource Center

Tipper Gore - Clinton Administration's Health Care Reform,
Subcommittee on Mental Health, Chair

Promoting “Parity” for Mental Health in Health Insurance

Co-Chair Tenure of the MHLG health committee by Peter
Newbould (American Psychological Association) and Laurel
Stine (Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law)

President's New Freedom Commission and the Post-
Commission Work of Andy Hyman

Long-Tenured MHLG Active Members



Psychiatric News



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March 19, 1993

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Humanitarian Aid 2
Psychiatrists in former Yugoslavia are asking APA and its members for humanitarian aid.

Mental Health Research 4
APA Medical Director Melvin Sabshin, M.D., called for increased funding for mental health research in testimony last month.

Insomnia 5
Untreated insomnia may be more dangerous than appropriate use of benzodiazepine hypnotics.

Cocaine Exposure 9
There is evidence that intrauterine cocaine exposure doesn't incur irreparable neurobehavioral damage.

Health Care Reform 13
Priorities for mental health services should be integrated with priorities for other medical care, according to some mental health experts.



The imposing offices of the Vice President hosted a meeting last month between Tipper Gore, who is steering mental health policy through national health reform, and the Mental Health Liaison Group. See story at bottom of page.

Some Physicians Supporting Single-Payer Alternative

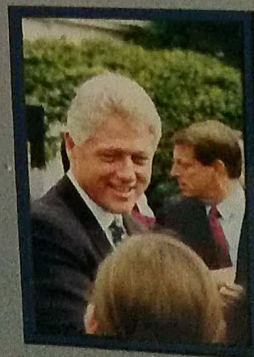
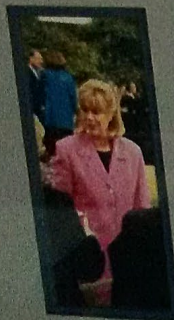
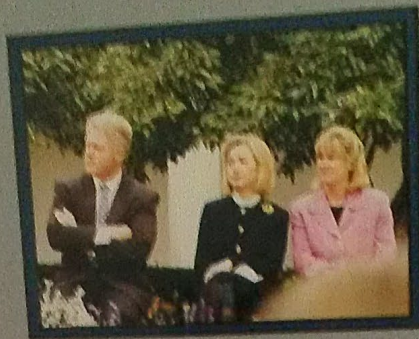
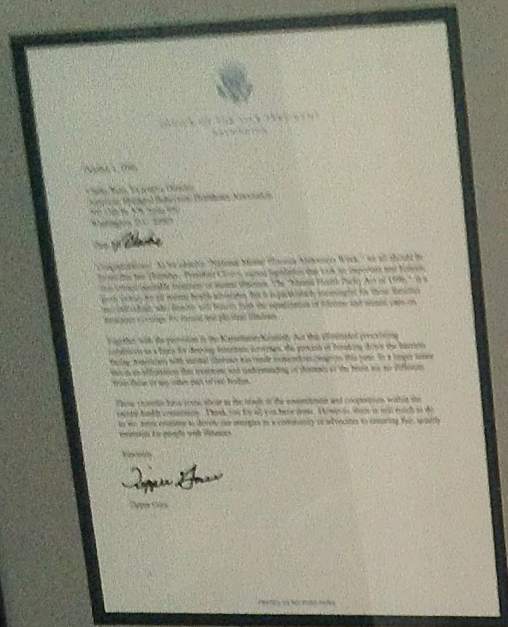
APA Testifies on RBRVS Flaws In Psychiatry

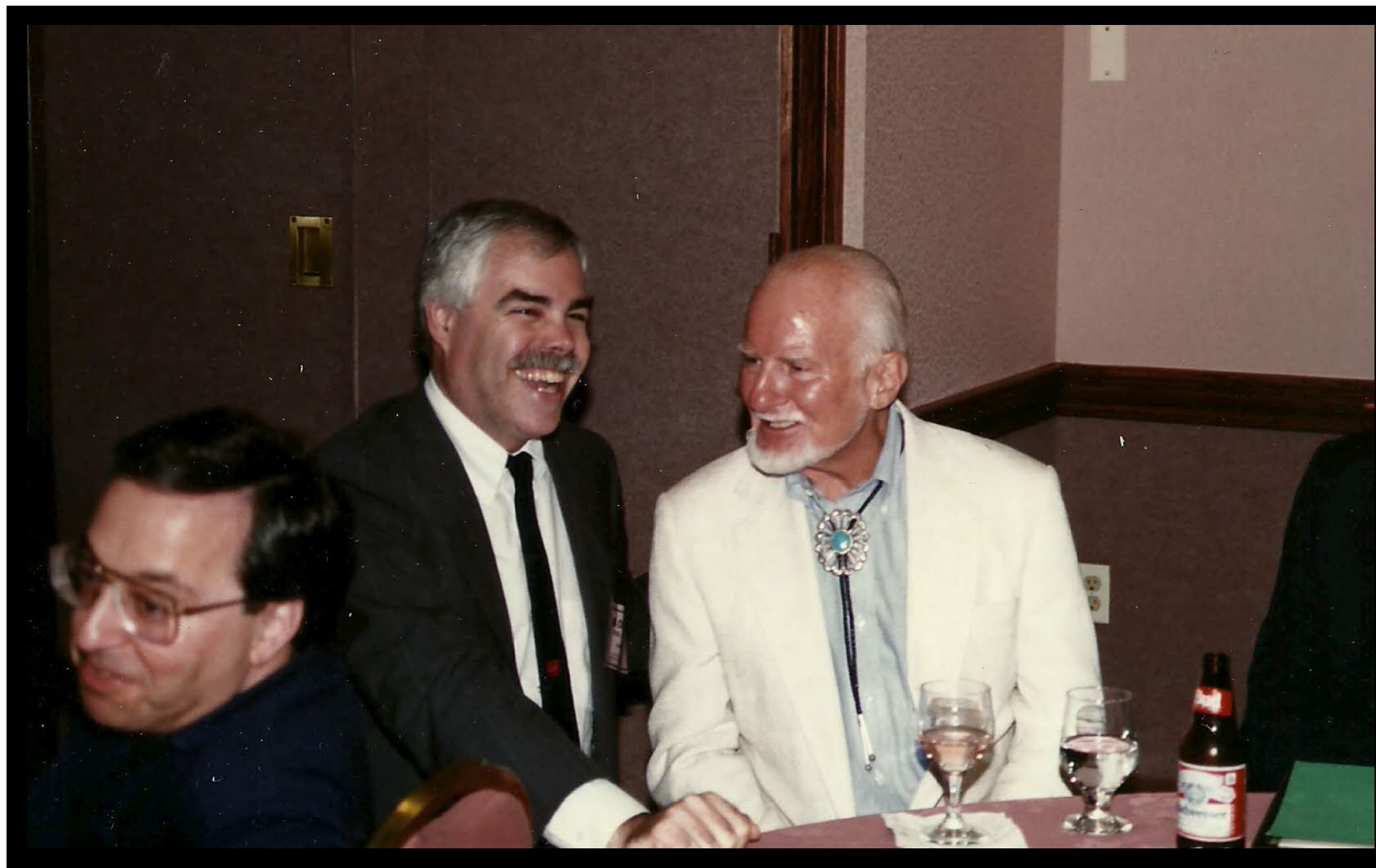
The federal government's Health Care Financing Administration is treating psychiatry unfairly in setting fees for Medicare psychiatric services, APA Assembly Speaker Ronald Shellow, M.D., told a HCFA advisory panel on March 1.

Testifying before the Practicing Physicians Advisory Council, which meets quarterly to discuss changes in Medicare regulations and carrier instructions, Shellow stressed that APA had "high hopes for a fair and equitable Medicare fee schedule" when HCFA used the resource-based relative value scale to reform Medicare reimbursement.

Despite HCFA's willingness to listen to some of APA's complaints in the past, however, "that hope for fairness and equitable treatment... is now being called into question," he told the council.

Shellow cited several areas in which HCFA's policies have negatively affected





OBITUARIES

Harry C. Schnibbe Dies at 84; Director of Mental Health Group

By CLAUDIA LEVY
Washington Post Staff Writer

Harry C. Schnibbe, 84, who retired in 1993 after 30 years as director of the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, died of cancer May 13 at his home in McLean.

Mr. Schnibbe was organizer and founding director of the Alexandria-based association.

He was a native of Brooklyn, N.Y., and a graduate of Fordham University. While attending Fordham, he wrote a play with Richard Breene, titled "Ye Who Ride on White Horses," about the life of the Jesuit saint Edmund Campion. The play was performed in New York and elsewhere.

Early in his career, Mr. Schnibbe was a journalist in Texas and Oklahoma and a radio reporter in Cheyenne, Wyo. In the latter job, he reported on the marriage of Ernest Hemingway to foreign correspondent Martha Gellhorn, and he joined Hemingway for a drink of whiskey while waiting for Ms. Gellhorn for the ceremony.

In 1941, Mr. Schnibbe was a publicist for the prewar isolationist group of Charles A. Lindbergh, the America First committee. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Mr. Schnibbe volunteered for the Navy and was trained at the U.S. Naval Academy. He served as a bomb disposal officer in the South Pacific. After the war, he was assigned to Japan. He was awarded two Bronze Stars.

Mr. Schnibbe was active in Democratic politics in Denver after the war. He directed the successful 1956 Senate campaign of John Carroll, and he was then Car-

roll's legislative chief in Washington for six years.

Until hip-replacement surgery forced him to retire at age 74, Mr. Schnibbe was also the goalie in long-running ice hockey matches for men over 34. He was also a goal judge who worked for the Washington Capitals.

Mr. Schnibbe began playing hockey on roller skates as a youth in Queens, N.Y., and took up goaltending much later in life, while coaching youth hockey at Uline Arena.

In 1958, he helped start one of the first hockey programs for Washington area children, at an ice rink in Falls Church. After he retired from goalkeeping, he became coach of the Geri Hatricks hockey team for senior men. The American Association of Orthopedic Surgeons made the team the subject of its national television advertising.

Mr. Schnibbe led the team to a senior Olympic gold medal two years ago.

He was a member of the social action committee at Pilgrims After Christ Catholic Community in McLean, which he helped found.

He became president of the Printery, a printing firm in Leesburg, after the death of son and partner John Schnibbe in 1994.

His wife, Betsy Schnibbe, died in 1975.

Survivors include four children, Phillip Schnibbe and Peter Schnibbe, both of McLean, Marilyn Schnibbe of Portland, Ore., and Valerie Smith of State College, Pa.; a sister, Margie Quinn of Harrisburg, Pa.; and four grandchildren.



PHOTOS BY JAMES M. THRESHER—THE WASHINGTON POST

Harry Schnibbe grabs his stick, drops down for a save during pickup game at Fort Dupont Ice Arena.



B18 SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1990

At 72, Goals Still Fill His Life

Twice a Week, Schnibbe Dons Mask and Pads, Braces for Hot Shots

By Ed McGonagle
Special to The Washington Post

It's 6:15 on a wintry Monday morning as Harry Schnibbe pulls into the nearly deserted parking area at Fort Dupont Ice Arena in Northeast Washington. He pulls out the 40 pounds of goalie equipment in the trunk of his car, gathers it and heads up the long stairs to the rink.

He passes the ice surface on his way to the locker room and notices 10 or 12 pucks sitting out on freshly made ice. Before long, he will see a lot more of them in the warm-ups and, later, in the two-hour scrimmage when all those young hotshots start whistling 90 mph slap shots at him.

Schnibbe is the goalie for the Red team in the longstanding Monday morning Red-Yellow game for 35-year-olds and over. He's way over 35 these days, the 72-year-old executive director for the National Association of State Mental Health Directors.

He began playing hockey in Queens, N.Y., on roller skates. He played defense then and didn't take up goaltending until about 25 years ago. He was coaching youth hockey at the old Washington Coliseum. After workouts, the coaches played and, whenever they needed a goalie, Schnibbe would get his son's

equipment and fill in. After a while, he stayed there.

Now he plays twice a week in pickup games for "adult" players—Monday morning before work and Thursday evenings. "Just enough time to let the body recover," he said.

Injuries?

"Nothing real serious," he said. "I've dislocated both shoulders, groin pulls and lots of bruises. There's one on my ankle that I got three months ago and it's still not right. The shoulder dislocations were the worst, though. I still can't raise my catching glove much above my waist."

One of the highlights of his goaltending career occurred a few years ago. Washington Capitals Mike Gartner and Doug Jarvis dropped in on the Thursday night session at Mount Vernon for a light workout before the Capitals' training camp opened.

Schnibbe will tell anyone who asks that he stopped Gartner on a breakaway. So what if his teammates tell him Gartner was taking it easy on him? Schnibbe insists the fleet winger was trying to score. "I held him to two goals that night," Schnibbe says with a grin, ignoring his teasing teammates.

He also says he likes to play against the kids with the big slap shots. "You know where the puck is going most of the time, and I stand up on them. It's the crafty old guys that

are tough—the playmakers. They get me to go down a lot and then I'm in trouble.

"I don't get up very fast and sometimes there are rebounds sitting out there. The toughest thing of all is the guys who come piling into the crease area and take me off my feet. There are a couple of fellows I play against who do that.

"I'll be honest," Schnibbe said. "I don't like the warm-ups. Too many shooters, too many pucks and too many high shots. Sometimes it's a zoo out there, with two pucks coming at you at the same time."

Schnibbe is usually one of the last players on the ice. The shooters at his end are impatient and ready to let fly as soon as he does a few perfunctory stretches and steps into the goal. Schnibbe has planned it this way—as short a warm-up as possible. After a minute or so the buzzer sounds, signaling the start of the game. Now Schnibbe can focus on just one puck.

The game starts and Schnibbe follows the action in his end, moving from side to side, post to post. A long slap shot comes rocketing in from the blueline and ricochets off his leg pad with a resounding "boom" that echoes throughout the building.

The action moves in close to the net. Five or six players jostle for a loose puck in front. Schnibbe is down on his side, his legs

sprawled. The puck reappears for an instant and, out of nowhere, a stick pushes it into the goal. In the course of the one-hour game, there are other goals on Schnibbe, but not nearly as many as saves. The action is rehashed in the locker room after the game.

"Good game, Harry. You had a good stop on me on that backhand I had toward the end," one player tells him. "And that was a hell of a save on Fuller's breakaway. Way to go."

"Yeah, thanks," he says wearily. He slowly climbs out of his sweaty equipment, which by now feels as if it weighs 100 pounds. He heads for the shower and then breakfast with his friend Bill Wellington, a 60-year-old-plus player himself and the organizer of the Monday morning session.

Wellington now is in the process of organizing a team of 60 and older players to face some other local teams of their ability and, possibly, to travel to play other teams in their age category. He is calling the team the "Geri-hatrics."

"Harry is our goaltender," said Wellington. "I never heard of any goalies much over 50. There is no doubt in my mind that Harry is the world's oldest goalie. Nobody is even close."

"You're not going to quit on us before next season, I hope," Wellington asked.

"Never," Schnibbe replied. "I'm not planning to stop. I'll go out with the pads on."

E. Clarke Ross, D.P.A.
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Lakeshore Foundation
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Lakeshore Fd Washington Representative

Clarke's work history includes Chief Executive Officer of CHADD – Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder; Deputy Executive Director for Public Policy, NAMI – National Alliance on Mental Illness; Executive Director, American Managed Behavioral Healthcare Association (AMBHA); Assistant Executive Director for Federal Relations and then Deputy Executive Director, National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD); and Director of Governmental Activities, UCPA – United Cerebral Palsy Associations (UCPA). Clarke was a co-founder of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) in 1973 and began his work with NASMHPD on September 1, 1971.