

Editors Note. Muska Mosston was remembered and recognized through *In Memoriam* in the previous issue of this Journal (Fall, 1994; Vol. XXXI, No. 1). The following article also remembers Muska Mosston, but from a different perspective. This is about how a single individual made a difference in physical education that continues to enable children and youth to gain in so many ways from their movement experiences. Yes, a lone individual with courage and conviction can change the direction of a profession. Muska Mosston was such an individual, one who by daring to be different has made physical education better and more beneficial to children and youth everywhere throughout the world. Thank you, Sara Ashworth, for sharing your thoughts with the readers of this Journal.

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One Who Made A Difference

Sara Ashworth

Atributions of an individual's greatness are generally related to the degree to which one has positively effected and affected another's life. Muska Mosston altered every aspect of my life.

In 1969, at the Southern District Convention in Memphis, Tennessee, Muska presented, in his pre-Donahue interactive style, the keynote address to 1,000 people. With elegance and charisma which only an expert can demonstrate, Muska presented the now classic example of the concept of exclusion and inclusion in education. In a guided discovery teaching style, he sequenced questions, using his belt as a prop, and engaged the audience in analyzing a common experience—going over a rope! Holding his belt close to the ground, in a horizontal position, he set the scene by asking, "What happens when we ask children to go over a rope at this height?" The audience responded, "All the children go over and we raise the rope." In Muska's guttural voice and expressive facial features, he offered a resounding, "YES!" With drama, he continued asking, "What happens to the children as we lift the rope higher?" His demonstration led the audience to conclude, from this educational conception of a single standard of performance, that children were destined to be EXCLUDED from participating in the learning experience.

With the horizontal belt held high, he then asked the audience, "What can be done with the rope to create a condition for INCLUSION of all learners?" A variety of predictable responses followed. "Have each learner tell you where to place the rope." "Have lots of ropes available." "Place the rope at a middle height." "Go under the rope." "Remove the rope." to each response, Muska would provide an additional clarifying insight which gave the participating audience an opportunity to continue in searching for THE ANSWER. During a cognitive pause, Muska repeated, "What can be done with the rope to create a condition and a challenge for INCLUSION of all children?" A voice from the very back row, with awe, quietly responded, "Slant the rope." My exhilaration from producing that response and the realization of the implications of that concept, captivated me emotionally and cognitively. The humanity and dignity expressed by that concept of INCLUSION OF ALL LEARNERS IN THE LEARNING PROCESS overwhelmed my soul. It was at that moment that I became a professional devotee of Muska's work.

Impact on Physical Education Spanned Fifty Years

He began teaching at the age of eighteen in a small village in Israel. His gymnasium was comprised of eucalyptus trees and sand dunes. With a humbled reservoir of supplies, Muska managed to design a physical education program that, to this day, is remembered by his students. He designed activities which included, challenged, dared, lulled, and always developed his students physically, emotionally, cognitively, ethically, and socially. Muska's ability to focus personally on and direct his attention to each child within this village earned him a legendary reputation. Several years ago, after forty-eight years, he returned to this village. The word quickly spread, "Muska is here!" The now much older students clamored to meet and share cherished stories about their teacher who inspired, challenged, and delighted them so many years ago.

At the age of 25, and after the Israeli war of Independence, Muska came to City College of New York to study. He designed his own eclectic program, selecting many courses outside the typical physical education requirements. Intellectually, he became captivated by the elegance of scientific structures and anatomy and physiology.

Muska's notoriety in the field of physical education began during his years at Rutgers University. Content of his speeches very quickly labeled him as a controversial speaker. His first published manuscript, *Developmental Movement*, conceptualized categories which are intrinsic to movement and offer a framework for designing tasks, with varying degrees of difficulty, so development through continued participation is possible. His second book, *Teaching: Physical Education*, delineated a universal, unifying structure of alternative TEACHING STYLES FROM COMMAND TO DISCOVERY. In the early 1960s, large scientific structures which connected and explained events were not the norm. Muska began coaxing the field to re-examine teaching behaviors implemented and activities selected in physical education classes. Teaching practices of the early 1960s were represented by tasks which mainly excluded and offered single standard designs, by teaching methods which primarily profited the skilled performer, and required adherence to rigid and precise performance guided by skills and rules of the game. Muska passionately and vehemently challenged the profession to which were beyond the norm and outside the established set of rules. At one presentation to gymnastic coaches, he demonstrated his students' cognitive and physical productions of alternative and possible approaches to the vault. The designs received hisses and objections from the coaches who rejected the absurd alternative of running into a roundoff, back handspring into a flying back handspring onto the vault. Today such approaches are the norm. It was Muska's role in the field of physical education to begin paving a path for change. Innovation requires challenging the entrenchment of existing practices. *Prophets of Change* are destined to confront resistance. Muska always saw new possibilities; he could not be confined or restricted by static rules or resistance.

Muska Challenged the Profession

In 1969, Muska presented a paper, *Mission, Omission, and Submission in Physical Education*. In that paper he made predictions about the fate of physical education if it did not alter its content designs and teaching practices. Prophets which challenge are not generally received well, even when they offer alternative solutions. Prophets of possible doom are received with even less enthusiasm. In spite of philosophical badgering and battles with the field, Muska's passion and conviction in the power of physical education and its impact on the learning process remained steadfast and undaunted. Resistance and lack of positive feedback by peers caused Muska to become more adamant in voicing his challenge to change. He became his greatest supporter; or so critics said. Arrogant, obnoxious, self-centered were labels which served as obstacles and isolated Muska from the mainstream and from decision-making positions. Tenaciously, he continued presenting and offering solutions to revitalize and redirect the *glorious field* of physical education.

Meanwhile, the book, free from the stigma of author personality, spread the merits of Muska's ideas throughout the world. The *Spectrum of Teaching Styles* gradually became an internationally recognized structure for understanding the nature of teaching. In 1984, Dr. Risto Telama from The University of Jyväskylä in Finland, with dignity and nobility, bestowed upon Muska an Honorary Doctorate and the University Medal of Honor. From that moment, and with each additional recognition, Muska began relinquishing need to defend and obsessively protect and project the notion of a spectrum—a repertoire—of deliberate teaching styles. Each recognition brought greater calmness and tranquility; it re-established a pride, even a reprieve from past inflammatory judgements and exclusions. By relinquishing the pain of the past, he freed himself to share the wisdom of his unique perceptions and experiences about physical education, the structure of developmental movement, alternative teaching styles, games, and institutional designs for efficient teacher preparation programs.

From the euphoria that only recognition can elicit, emerged an inspiring, optimistic, eloquent, charming, and futuristic Muska. Although Muska basked in the glory of the last decade of recognition and contribution, he stood poised and eager for more opportunities to accomplish his dreams of significantly contributing to the educational world. He felt his time had just begun. As he was ascending to the pinnacle, he was taken. Indeed, a tragedy for us all—but a greater tragedy had we not experienced his genius. Muska called himself an Ambassador of Humanity. What greater tribute to a person than to have his work be representative of his life?

It has taken over 30 years for some of Muska's ideas to become commonplace. Much of his work has yet to be acknowledged and implemented. He has offered paradigm shifts which fundamentally alter the ways we perceive the structure of teaching and movement. Muska provided us with WHAT IS POSSIBLE. Now, it is up to us to seek to expand the very boundaries of self and participate in implementing ideas that offer children education with dignity and opportunity.

Muska was the consummate professional. He believed in the power of knowledge and people. He believed that one person could make a difference. He did.

