

Psychologist Harris Stratyner, Ph.D., '77, HD '05 Leads Way In Mind Matters and Media

As the son of an accountant in the entertainment industry, Harris Stratyner '77, HD '05 was used to being around fascinating people. With music greats like Dizzy Gillespie, his godfather, and Stan Getz as close family friends, he had no shortage of inspiration. Yet, when Stratyner first crossed Dr. Frances Mahoney's path at a college fair, something told him she and Mercy College would change the direction of his life.

Talking with her that spring afternoon, he says he instantly felt a connection and felt drawn to the institution she represented. "I was the kind of student she wanted at Mercy," said Stratyner, who admits his vision had previously been set on Columbia prior to their meeting.

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Initially, Stratyner admits, he wondered if he, as an incoming Jewish student, would feel like an odd fit for a college with roots in the Catholic tradition. Mahoney, the woman who eventually became one of his greatest mentors, definitively changed that opinion. "She believed so much in what it had to offer for me that I began to as well. When she told me I could do anything I put my mind to, I believed her," said Stratyner. Something told him that Mercy would be a place he could grow in a way unique from other available academic settings.

Stratyner soon found himself with a full scholarship working toward a degree in psychology, a path only further influenced by his new mentor who served as Chair of the Division of Social and

Behavioral Sciences. "Dr. Mahoney and Dr. Ann Grow were like giants to me. They helped bring this little Catholic college into its own," said Stratyner.

Indeed, Mercy was an institution in the midst of dramatic growth in the years Stratyner spent at Mercy. Working in admissions while a student, he contributed directly to its ongoing evolution while he worked side by side with staff members bringing hundreds of new students in. "It was really an exciting time to be studying there and working there," said Stratyner, citing the expansion of its satellite campuses and the outreach to more diverse student populations, especially veterans.

Upon graduation, he continued to build his career toward a true passion, counseling psychology. Opportunities seemed to find him at the right place in his trajectory. Serving as a teaching and research assistant to Dr. Kenneth B. Clark, Distinguished Professor of Social Psychology, he was able to learn from one of the most influential voices in psychology whose work influenced the integration of American schools. Dr. Clark would serve as his referral into Seton Hall, where he would complete his doctorate.

While building his clinical practice, Stratyner zoned in on a needed focus in the field of addiction counseling. Having grown up witnessing the prevalence of addiction in the entertainment industry, Stratyner knew the dire need. "It became clear to me the great needs that were not being met for those struggling," said Stratyner. He developed a technique he termed "Carefrontation," a restorative treatment method for addicted patients with co-occurring disorders that uses a compassionate accountability approach.

In the late 1980s, Stratyner would find another passion in broadcasting, hosting a radio



Photo provided by Harris Stratyner

program "Here's to Your Good Health," on WFAS AM 1230. The show's format allowed him to share his clinical expertise with audiences throughout Westchester. The show, which ran for nearly 30 years, grew alongside him and he rose to roles directing addiction services at leading New York institutions. During his tenure as Division Director of Chemical Dependency at New York-Presbyterian Hospital, Weill Cornell Westchester, he founded The Retreat at Westchester, a world-renowned addiction program.

Today, Stratyner is a highly sought expert who is regularly seen on national media consulting on mental health topics such as anxiety, motivational psychology and addiction. He and his wife, Dr. Lynn Greene, an oral surgeon, are proud to see their daughter, Dr. Alexandra Stratyner, carry on his profession as a psychologist and partner in his practice.

Stratyner is quick to point out the weight with which he holds Mercy in the formative years of his education and believes firmly in giving back. "In my life, Mercy looms large," said Stratyner who earned an honorary doctorate from his alma mater in 2005 and served as a trustee for six years. His ardent support of the College is only further spurred by seeing in today's students the possibility Dr. Mahoney once saw in him. "Students can go as high as they want to go at Mercy."