

*“How I met Ernest Lawrence Rossi, PhD”*

*by Mauro Cozzolino, PhD*

Before getting to know Giovanna, I had never heard about Ernest Lawrence Rossi. So, one day in 2000 during her psychotherapy training Giovanna told me she had attended an amazing workshop with Dr. Rossi. She said she had experienced, through a hypnotic trance, such a high-impact voyage into her unconscious mind that such experience had been a professional and personal turning point. I listened to her story, carefully focusing my attention, mostly on her personal experience, and not much on the details of Rossi’s intervention. Subsequently, I had no more thoughts or considerations about Rossi and his approaches.

After about two years, Rossi returned to Italy. Giovanna informed me she would be attending another workshop with him, but I decided not to take part in it. I just drove her to the building where the workshop was taking place. The strange thing is that I spent practically all day sitting on a bench outside that building. But the strangest thing is that I spent all that time on that bench reading Rossi’s works, surrounded by nature, and in a state of light trance. I was constantly repeating to myself that Rossi was a genius, definitely a genius, fantastically brilliant, but also crazy to test the limits of human possibilities. I thought he was a genius for having been able to do all this massive body of work while keeping together all those levels of our functioning as individuals. My curiosity and astonishment were accompanied by incredulity and fascination! Later on I spoke to Giovanna about my thoughts and the light trance I had experienced. I let her know that on that very bench, just outside the building where she was having her hypnotic experiences with Dr. Rossi, I myself had started my own personal journey of change, without ever having met him personally!

The following year I found out Rossi would be holding another workshop at the site of Giovanna’s psychotherapy studies. However, this time without any hesitation whatsoever, I decided, with great enthusiasm to attend the training, especially because Giovanna highly recommended it. On that occasion (2004), I came forward and expressed to Rossi that I wanted *to create a point of convergence* between his lifework and the University of Salerno, where I had started my scientific research activity. In 2006 Rossi came for the first time to the University of Salerno to give a master class to 400 attendees. It was a fascinating experience to all of us! In 2009 I spent six months at the Milton H. Erickson Institute of California Central Coast studying with Rossi and his wife and collaborator Kathryn, in intensive training on clinical and research matters. For many years since then, Giovanna and I as a team have been training with the Rossis, both in Italy and the United States.

From that crucial moment in 2004 when I first met Ernest Rossi personally, I have gradually come closer and closer to him at all levels: scientifically, educationally, and clinically. This approximation has been so deep and to such an extent that we have started sharing an increasingly in-depth personal relationship, based on mutual respect, high esteem and extraordinary gratitude. With all of this I mean that if it is true that Ernest Lawrence Rossi has changed my life by offering me extraordinary personal and professional possibilities, it is also true that if I hadn’t met Giovanna I could not have met Rossi!

In conclusion, I would like to offer a few reflections on the *power of convergence* and the *integration of differences*. Giovanna wrote, on another page “How we became a couple: our story” and I just told you my story on “How I met Ernest Lawrence Rossi”. As we conclude our stories: Giovanna hers, and I mine, we cannot help but reflect on the *power of convergence* and *of the integration of differences*. The merging story could be named: “A full circle journey from Italy to America and back to Italy and to the world, creating points of convergence and integrating differences.” By inviting Ernest Rossi to the University of Salerno a *point of convergence* was created between his ideas on the psychosocial and cultural genomics of therapeutic hypnosis and psychotherapy, and our research activities at the University. Giovanna told you our story on how she and I integrated our personal differences, by merging as a couple, both in marriage and in our professional life. We are also quite aware of another unifying story: the University of Salerno is about 35 miles from the village of San Lorenzo Maggiore, where Ernest Rossi’s father was born, and from where his grandparents left toward America, in search of a dream. Yes, all these stories have been a full circle journey for the benefit of Humanity!