VIDEO INTERVIEW PROJECT: A VALUABLE LEGACY
from Eric Strasberg

Jerry Chalem, a most generous and loving man and much-loved Subud brother, passed away this past March 17. It was my good fortune to know Jerry over the last 40 years, both of us being members of Subud New York.

I’d like to speak here about the Video Interview Project which Jerry produced in the mid 1990s. Jerry, with Mardi Arquette and Henrietta Music, who both served as prime interviewers, conceived the idea to record interviews of Subud brothers and sisters on videotape. Those interviewed were asked two questions: “What are your experiences of Bapak?” and “How has the latihan affected your life?” Ra’up and Mashud McGee, Emmanuel Aronie, Holden Hinkle and other dedicated folks were involved directly in production, while Melinda Wallis was a great support which included help with fundraising. Hermina Ruetz took on the task of viewing and synopsis.

The project began in 1995 at an East Coast Regional congress near Boston. People were interviewed over the duration of the congress. They continued the interviews in Northern California, Los Angeles, San Diego, Vancouver, Indonesia, England, and at the Spokane World Congress in 1998. In total they interviewed 250 people and accumulated 100 hours of unedited video.

Some of those interviewed, like Ibu Rahayu, Hussein Rofé, Patricia Lacey, Varindra Vittachi, Sharif Horthy and others, had lived near Bapak and were involved in the emergence and spread of the latihan brought to us all through Bapak. We thank those involved, who are too many to mention here, for their dedicated efforts to provide us with these personal stories, a rich anecdotal history of Subud from the very early days through the late 1990s.

The first public viewing of any of the interviews was at the World Congress in Spokane. The specially produced video was called “Stories of Bapak and Ibu”, in which Lusana Faliks relates her experiences living in Wisma Subud, Indonesia, with Bapak and his second wife, Ibu.
Recently, there has been renewed interest in the project and discussion about what needs to be done and who might take on management responsibilities in order to properly prepare the material and make these interviews available to our entire Subud community - for example, as DVD sets and/or in protected areas online. In a note from 2005 summarizing the project, Jerry concluded with this wish: “Someday someone will edit parts of this material for a presentation to the public.” At this time, Latifah Taormina, chairperson of SICA International, has expressed a willingness to take on this work of the Video Project as a SICA project.

Another aspect of the Video Project is the need to transcribe the interviews - the process of getting the spoken content from the audio cassettes into written form on paper. Sierra Goodale worked on this with Jerry more than 10 years ago and currently Renata Robb and possibly Emmanuel Williams continue this effort.

More recently an inventory of the source film, tapes, and DVDs was taken. There are complete sets of DVDs in Arizona under the care of Daniela Moneta, Subud USA Archivist, and in Australia in the care of Amalijah Thompson for the World Subud Association Archives. There are also DVD copies at the USA National Office and in Chicago. Jerry also gave a complete set of VHS tapes to Subud New York, where they are in the process of being integrated into the local library.

Also, the issue of our ability to make an archivable copy came up. Subsequently, we found a set of the interviews on BetaCam tapes in New York brought unknown to us at the time, some five years ago, as Jerry moved house from Manhattan. We have been advised by several professionals that these BetaCam tapes serve as the only “masters” from which an archive quality copy could be made. The fact is that it may be too late because 10 years of natural deterioration of the fragile tape might have rendered it unusable for archival purposes. We are currently trying to arrange to have their condition inspected and assessed by professionals in New York. In any event, the DVD sets in our care can be used for some years in whatever ways are decided upon.

*ED Note: Renardo Bardon from Subud NYC wrote of Jerry: “He was a man of many talents and he wore many hats: a son, a husband, a father, a New Yorker, a successful entrepreneur and businessman, a videographer, and an artist.” You may see some of his found object art by visiting [http://www.jerrychalemart.com](http://www.jerrychalemart.com).*