

Shrink Rap Radio #343, July 4, 2008

The Marriage of Tarot and Psychology

David Van Nuys, Ph.D., aka “Dr. Dave” interviews
Ruth Ann and Wald Amberstone

(transcribed from www.ShrinkRapRadio.com by Simon Huggins)

Introduction:

My guests today are Ruth Ann and Wald Amberstone, both of whom are long time students of esoteric wisdom, and teachers of the Tarot. We'll be discussing ways in which The Tarot and Psychology support one another.

Ruth-Ann and Wald Amberstone are co-founders of The Tarot School, created in New York City in 1995. Pillars of the modern Tarot movement, Ruth-Ann and Wald teach, write, speak and publish about Tarot on every conceivable level: Divination, Psychology, Esotericism and Magical Practice are all areas of expertise covered by this pioneering tarot couple.

Ruth-Ann and Wald's unique wisdom unfolds as they develop New Tarot techniques and innovative classes, inspiring students on a global level. Yet they remain lifelong Tarot students. Their Tarot School's correspondence course and various audio courses are perennial favourites among the international Tarot community. Their live Monday night Manhattan classes cater to the city's brightest esoterically-minded students.

The Amberstones are the authors of 'The Secret Language of Tarot', 'Tarot Tips: 78 Practical techniques to improve your Tarot-Reading Skills' and contributors to Chiro Mancetti's 'Legacy of the Divine Tarot' and the Welland's Tarot Reader Almanacs. Schiffer books has recently published the 'High Deck', a symbolic deck of cards created by Wald's father, Arthur Amberstone. They put on a conference every year, including an upcoming one this April of 2013, which we will discuss in some detail on this show. So here's the interview...

Interview:

Dr. Dave: Ruth Ann and Wald Amberstone, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

Both: Thank you / Nice to be here.

Dr. Dave: Yes, well it's wonderful to have you on the show. We've been communicating via phone and email about some upcoming events that we'll talk about further down the line, but I really welcome this opportunity to explore the wonderful world old Tarot with you and its intersection with Psychology. Now you both have a long history with The Tarot. Did you discover it separately or together?

Ruth-Ann: Well, definitely separately since we didn't know each other for the start of our lives, I shouldn't say definitely as there are people who come to it after they've met, but both of us had been involved with it for quite some time before we met each other.

Dr. Dave: Okay. So there's two good stories there. Just quickly, Ruth-Ann, since you've got the ball here, how did you two meet?

Ruth-Ann: Well, we met at a Summer Solstice Ritual. There was a group in New York city that did rituals on the solstices and the equinoxes and the full moons and such, and it was like a networking organization. People from the city would get together and celebrate holidays. There were always different people coming and going in the organization, and we just happened to intersect at that particular one.

Dr. Dave: Okay, so clearly you both were already involved in esoteric things, and that brought you together. I'd like to hear about what I would call, drawing upon Joseph Campbell, your 'Call To The Tarot'. You know Campbell talks about getting 'The Call' - and not anyone is drawn to The Tarot - it's kind of a select group - Wald, let me put that ball in your court. Tell us about your call to The Tarot.

Wald: Well, that's kind of interesting. I grew up in a family where symbolism and games were both important things. My Father was a game inventor [Dr Dave interjects: Interesting] - He actually was a creator and medium of games and play, and he created many board and card games that were symbolic in nature. It was physically beautiful to look at - very aesthetic. They played in such a way as to in some way engage the philosophical and spiritual side of a person.

Surprisingly, everyone turns out to be a philosopher when you push the right buttons! [Dr. Dave chuckles] I don't know how that happens, but it seems to be the case. So I grew up with that, and I began to see the world that way from a very early time - I would see everything in terms of games and play, such things as lockwards, churches and synagogues, and school and things like that - all of those were understood to be playgrounds with specialized rules that pertained entirely within the grounds of that particular organization, where you get some very ritualized things in order to accomplish certain very specialized tasks. And all of that was seen and understood by me through the kind of instruction I got from my Father, as being essentially playful.

Dr. Dave: Was your father into the Tarot?

Wald: No, actually he wasn't. We're talking now about the late 1950s, early 1960's, say. At that time, Tarot was almost impossible to find. The only people who knew about it were people in esoteric orders - The Freemasons and The Golden Dawn, and the OTO and OTA - these are names that many people may not know about. And many people did not know about it at that time - it was really hidden. People were much more interested in simply getting along.

Dr. Dave: So tell us, at what point did you discover The Tarot?

Wald: It was in 1959 that I discovered The Tarot and I found it in a store in one of those first head shops, one of the first of the New Age [indistinct]. I was wandering in there out of curiosity, and at the time, the only deck that was available that I know of was The Marseilles deck, which is basically a 17th Century deck that managed to survive all of those years. I was fascinated as soon as I saw it. And I recognized the symbolic aim that had obviously predated me and my interest by several centuries - I didn't know that such a thing existed - and so I took it and ran with it.

Dr. Dave: Yeah I suppose I discovered it probably in a similar way - I hadn't thought of the term 'Head shop' in quite a long time [Wald interj: I know], but some time in the early to mid

sixties in Harbour, Michigan, that must be about the time that I came upon the Tarot, when the whole 'Sixties thing' was starting to happen, and head shops were around, and we were all discovering lots of interesting new things. Ruth-Ann, tell us about your call to the Tarot, or when or how you discovered it, and how it spoke to you

Ruth-Ann: How I discovered it? I know my mother had bought me a couple of decks. I had probably talked to her about it, because I can't imagine it's the type of thing she would just have done spontaneously on her own, but I just wanted to mention that the first deck that I purchased for myself, which was a decision (in other words I looked around and chose a deck) also at a head shop, and this was a little bit later, probably in the early seventies, and I remember that Donovan was playing over the music, and it was wonderful with the flowers and the colors - and I bought an Aquarian Tarot which was also colorful. So, I had been very interested in all kinds of mystical things in general, and it was at the very, very beginning of what is considered the new-age movement. There was a conference, I suppose, not too far from where I lived then. I had already started college at that point. I was driving, so it was easy for me to get to. It was a five day conference where they had everything, and it was such an incredible feast - I would be there early in the morning, and stay there until late, took classes in every imaginable thing. It was shortly after that that I settled - I didn't want to be scattered in my interests - I wanted to focus on something. I considered astrology because I had a friend who was an astrologer, but I'm not really that type of a thinker - numbers are not particularly my thing, and back then they did not have computer programs that did the chart for you [Interj. Dr. Dave - Right!] You have to do the math yourself - and I did it once to prove that I could, but it was really difficult, and not a lot of fun. I like interpreting more than doing that kind of thing. Another friend gave me my first reading and said 'You should do Tarot'. So I thought 'Hmmm' and never looked back from that point.

Dr. Dave: Wow. Well did you both grow up in New York City, then.

Ruth-Ann: Well, I grew up in New York, and Wald started growing up in New York.

Wald: Yes, I was born in New York, then early on in my life, at about two years old, my parents moved out to California, and I grew up in the San Francisco Bay area until I was about thirteen or fourteen, then moved back to New York where I have been pretty much ever since. [Dr. Dave laughs]. I'm a New Yorker transposed back to California - I was like a potted plant moved from one flower pot to another, you know.

Dr. Dave: It's interesting that you choose the plant metaphor, because I was going to say something about getting pollinated. [Ruth-Ann laughs]

Wald: So yeah, I've got a little Californian in me and a lot of New York.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, I'm sort of picturing two young people maybe hanging around The Village, both with very interesting childhoods and sets of parents, it sounds like. Was there ever a time when you thought you were going to grow up to be something else, like a dentist or a hairdresser, or...

Ruth-Ann: [Laughs] Well, I majored in Theatre, and I was also a songwriter talking about The Village - I spent a lot of time in Greenwich Village, part of the singer-songwriter movement, and now a lot of now-famous people came out of that time - names you would recognize, and I really had every intention of following that path, although at school I was also taking classes in (as my Mother would say) something to fall back on. So I wound up going into Publishing, which at the time I thought was really a dreadful experience, but later in life as a business owner, you discover that everything you ever learned you use.

Dr. Dave: Exactly! I've said that more times - you are the only other person I have heard say that.

Ruth-Ann: It was amazing! All the things I learned in an office, skills that I picked up there, I use every day.

Dr. Dave: Exactly! I totally understand that. How about you Wald? Did you think you were going to grow up to become a fireman..?

Wald: You know, it's funny. That would have been the absolute last thing on my mind. When I started out, in those days early on, getting a job was pretty easy. There was no online universe at all, and I could get a job in the morning, by simply showing up at a door and knocking on it and saying 'I'm looking for a job' and they would say 'What can you do' and I'd give them some kind of an answer, and they'd hire me because I looked like a confident young person, and by the afternoon I'd had enough of that job [Dr. Dave laughs] By the evening, I'd get another job, and so I'd sometimes have as many as three jobs in one day. [Dr. Dave laughs] So my career was more than checkered, it was spectacular!

Dr. Dave: Boy, that was a very different economic environment than what young people find themselves in.

Wald: No, well you couldn't do that now, of course, but at that time I found it very exhilarating and fun. I had very few real needs, and in those days you could get a whole apartment in The Village for sixty bucks a month. [Dr. Dave - Wow], so I managed to do very nicely. My personal interests - the things that made life worthwhile - were completely separated from what was needed to survive. Economics and what really mattered to me were totally separate. I didn't have the slightest interest in a career - that is some choice of profession that you would want to follow, and the specialized skills in education that you would need to get that. I was completely uninterested - what mattered to me were things that I could uncover, and understand for myself. So I was a traveling philosopher from the time I was ten years old.

Dr. Dave: Wow. And that's a good recipe - to follow your heart. It takes some courage to do that, and I think you both did that, and you went on to develop a livelihood around teaching others about The Tarot, and I think also publishing around that. So tell us a little bit about that, and what is it about The Tarot - this is a very compound question here - what is it about The Tarot that attracted you in the first place, and what is it about The Tarot that keeps you sticking to it all these many years later.

Ruth-Ann: Well, what attracted it to me in the first place was that soup of mystical, magical things, that I was always attracted to. But there are a couple of things that have kept my interest. One of them is that it's an evolving form, and it's always news, and there are always things to discover about it, so you can go backward in time to discover things about it, and you can create your own forms and there's a lot of creativity in terms of technique, and art, and it's just a few vibrant form, and personally, the two of us have spent a lot of time developing rather intricate techniques that we use all the time that fascinate me, and just keep me involved. And we are always thinking of new ways of applying things, and new discoveries that will come up, and so I guess that's the basic answer.

Dr. Dave: Ok. Well, Wald, what's your take on that?

Wald: Well, to cut a long story short, I discovered with Tarot early on that it was at least for me a language. It's cards, and the symbol on each card were both highly organized and deep, and I found that like with any language, you could learn to speak it, think it, read it, feel it, to communicate in it. I found that it was extremely valuable without losing its shape and its substance, and I found that it gave me the means to organize a whole lifetime's worth of somewhat chaotic thought. It gave me the means by which to penetrate deeply into my understanding of myself, and the world around me. You know how when you learn when you are a little kid, you go to school, and they teach you the ABCs - sing the little alphabet song so you remember the alphabet. Then you teach how to add - how $1+1=2$ - that first statement - the amount of

philosophical and spiritual experience that comes with that one statement - $1+1=2$ - there's so much embedded in that, even though you don't know what you're doing, you have already been inducted into a whole civilized way of being. It's really hard to imagine how powerful those first classes, those first new experiences as a little kid - you are inducted into a whole way of thinking, doing and feeling that is unique to your particular time and place. I think each infant's school is very much contemporary. What they taught in the 1880s is not the same thing that they teach in school now - I'm pretty sure of that. What you are taught in school now allows you to take part in the world that you are part of. Well, what I learned from Tarot was something that was pretty old. I learned something that was ancient. I learned a style of thinking and a style of doing, and a style of organizing my thoughts and life, that came from something that was as close to timeless as I can get.

Dr. Dave: Hmmm. That really fascinating. Gives a fascinating feel for it. I know as I began to look into Tarot, I discovered that there's a whole realm of historical scholarship, and there are relatively recent debates about the history and so on, and I think I had been initially that I was told something simple - something like 'All the Tarot goes back to the ancient Egyptians' or something like that, and just kind of left it there, but it turns out that it's got a past that is somewhat shrouded in mystery and so on. Maybe you can just give us a bit of an overview of the history of the Tarot as far as we know about it.

Wald: Well it's a complex subject by this time [Dr. Dave - Sure] A relatively recent (10-15 years maybe) extreme interest in the history of the Tarot by those that find the Tarot fascinating, and that amounts to millions of people at this point, so there has been a considerable amount of scholarship over these years, and I have not paid careful attention that that scholarship, so what I am going to say here is only going to be very broadly true. The specifics of it are something that someone who have to follow up on their own. But given that limitation, I can tell you that it has been discovered and documented that Tarot makes its first appearance on the world scene in Northern Italy somewhere in the middle of the 15th Century. There are some antecedents - there

are some playing card decks that came out a little earlier than that, they come from different sources - but the idea that they are an ancient Egyptian artifact is basically mythology. It actually had its origins in 15th Century Italy. And from there, it went through a series of stages. To begin with, it was widely accepted, and widely used as a game. It was a game like you would play Bridge. Now, the use of Tarot to play card games, as far as I understand it, was the origin of Bridge and the idea of Trumps as being a part of the trip-taking universe of card games. So, it started off that way, it was very popular, and it spread across Europe in that particular way. It tended to be the occupation of the Upper Classes, as far as I know. It was something very popular at court.

Dr.Dave: Ok. Let me interrupt here to ask you something. Earlier you said that it taught you a timeless, ancient way of thinking, of viewing the world, of understanding yourself. So we have that on the one hand. Then on the other hand, we have the relatively recent discovery that its origins are maybe somewhere in the 15th Century as you suggest. So how do those two articulate with each other? Tell us a little bit about that. Where is it that that older way of thinking comes in?

Wald: Actually, the older way of thinking comes in a little bit later. For the first part of its history, Tarot was a game, and it was of course used for divination and fortune-telling for a long time. At a certain point, the European esoteric community discovered that Tarot was useful to them, and expressed in its structure things that were useful to express. It became in fact a universal symbolic language - it allowed astrologers, numerologists, Cabbalists, Christian esotericists [Ruth Ann interj: Alchemists, Masons] - Exactly - All of those people found that Tarot was a useful way of expressing their particular disciplines, and normally speaking, they didn't have much of a way to communicate with each other. They were really different fields - like with the sciences, where you can be a biologist, and not be able to speak very well to a Physicist - they are simply different disciplines. They found that Tarot was a way that they could express a simple, single, conception of the Universe as essentially a magical and spiritual place. And Magical spirituality

was the essence of esotericism. Europe was filled with it. The whole intelligentsia of Europe was loaded down with the intent of esoteric magic. Once they applied it to Tarot, which happened in a big way from the end of the 18th Century onwards - from around of the French Revolution forwards - once esotericism and Tarot were joined together, then Tarot began to express in its symbolism the entire wealth of European esotericism which goes back a long, long way. So Tarot actually acquired its depth, power, ancientness, philosophical capacity by way of connection with that community which had existed and pre-existed Tarot, and probably had a lineage as far back as you can go, because the human race has always had an interest in these things, and its been cumulative so that the esoteric community of Europe borrowed a lot from the Esoteric Universes of Greece and Egypt. That all turned into a kind of stone soup.

Dr. Dave: We haven't mentioned Kabbalah.

Wald: I'm sorry I didn't mention Kabbalah, as that is my primary interest. Kabbalah is essentially a form of specifically Jewish mysticism, and because it has a highly organized philosophical content, it became the foundation or blueprint for esoteric work in Europe in general - whether you were an Alchemist or a Christian Esotericist, people tended to use Kabbalah as a way of organizing the esoteric practice. It wasn't just a matter of knowledge and thought, it was also a matter of magical practice and philosophical practice. So Kabbalah became the organizing principle, and from my point of view, Alchemy became the engine. So one was the principal and one was the engine, and the two together, with Alchemy and Kabbalah when they joined and blended, produced a very very heady philosophical and magical mixture. What's funny of that is that here we are at the tail end of the movement that brought Psychology into Tarot in very much the same way that Esotericism was added on, and became wedded to, and pretty much identical to Tarot. Psychology has had that same experience with Tarot in the last 50-60 years. Once Jung became very popular, and Tarot became popular at pretty much the same time when you and I both discovered it in the 60s and 70s, all of a sudden everybody began to see Tarot as Archetypes.

Dr. Dave: Yes

Wald: And that word was not used about Tarot earlier. The idea of Archetypes came into play in the popular mind with Jung, and Jung didn't become popular until the 60's. So in the meantime, Tarot has learned to carry, to express, and to further the work of symbolic psychology.

Dr. Dave: Indeed, and if anyone's wondering why I have these two people on the show - what's the relationship to psychology - you've just put your finger on it. Some years ago, I was conducting a workshop in Ireland, and planned to use an exercise that involved Tarot cards, because I have found them to be an excellent projective device - you talked about them carrying meanings for us, and they are just so wonderfully evocative - well some of my Irish hosts were just shocked, and regarded the cards as essentially evil - they associated them with, I guess, carnivals with Gypsies who they saw as being about theft and so on... So, indeed some of my listeners may even be shocked that I am devoting earnest conversation to this topic. What are some of the myths, in a sense of erroneous ideas, that surround Tarot?

Wald: Well, you know it's not really a matter of erroneous. It's more a matter of style and personal predilection. There are, as you probably know, in this country and certainly are in other places, vestiges / pockets of population who regard the automobile as evil, and who still insist on going from place-to-place with horse and carriage. There are still some people who regard the old philosophical ways of seeing and doing as the only true ways. There are whole areas of the world that are heavily influenced by spiritual orthodoxy that come from a couple of thousand years ago. The mindset comes from those days, and those people honor those mindsets. So if it says something in The Bible, or The Koran, or the Confucian Analects - whatever it is that happens to be your particular spirituality. And if you observe those things literally, as people often do, then you are going to find ample reason to take something like Tarot and say that it is evil. Evil is simply a word that is used by and coined by people who have that particular long-ago mindset. They bring it into the modern world, and insist that the world observe their principles - they feel

very strongly. It's not that it's wrong or erroneous, or that it is silly or foolish - it's just that it is their way of thinking, which often-time conflicts with the world as most people see it. It's not a majority viewpoint anymore.

Ruth Ann: I think that there's ignorance involved in that too

Wald: Well, that's what we say.

Ruth Ann: Right. From our point of view, it is a matter ignorance, and when you had mentioned earlier that this has been very prevalent for a long time - this story that Tarot came out Egypt - it's a sound-bite. So if you had only heard that, and didn't take the time to learn more about it, your understanding would be that it was Egyptian. And let's say you had a prejudice against Egypt for some reason, suddenly it would be a negative thing.

Wald: Well, anyway, the point is that there are a lot of ways of thinking about the world. I am not inclined to regard ways of thinking as being either erroneous, evil, ignorant or other things. They are simply other ways of thinking. And since the Scientific way of looking at the world is the current orthodoxy, I would bet you that the Jungian Society in New York City would find Tarot almost as objectionable as the Fundamentalist Christians.

Dr. Dave: I am not sure. I have no idea, even though I have been interviewing a ton of Jungians lately. From your insider point of view, what's your understanding of what the Tarot can accomplish for individuals. You run a school, you are teaching people to use it - what's your understanding of the personal value for people?

Ruth Anne: The main thing that is important to me, and that I see with our students and with other people that I know who have worked with Tarot is that it really helps to understand yourself, your world, how you interact, and the people around you. So, I think that one of the ways that people get into trouble a lot is in making assumptions. It's totally subconscious. If you see the world a certain way, or you feel a certain way, that's the way it is. When somebody acts in a way

that is different, there's a conflict that happens. Tarot is the language that explains that person is different, and gives you a glimpse of the world through their eyes, so that you can see that they are just experiencing things in their own way. It does give some real explanation as to how that happens. It can take conflict out of relationships, blame out of relationships - it's a huge thing for that. Personally, it helped me understand the dynamic between my parents - that was something that always puzzled me - they are about to celebrate their 65th anniversary I believe. They would always argue, and I couldn't understand why they were still together. Through our explorations of Tarot, I understood the dynamics, and where they were strong together, and where they had difficulties, but those difficulties were just stylistic, and it didn't even impact their relationship that much... And being able to see things like that.

Dr. Dave: Ruth-Ann - you were just telling us about the value that Tarot has played in your life, relates a lot, I think, to the Jungian idea of Typology as a way of helping us to get out of the blame game and see that we come from different ways of seeing the world. I wanted to ask you guys: What is your theory, if you will, of how The Tarot works?

Wald: Oh well, that's simple enough. [Dr. Dave laughs - Ok] - Let's assume for the moment, and we have to make assumptions, that Tarot is indeed Archetypal, and that the imagery on the cards is evocative. Somebody who doesn't know anything about the Tarot can look at a picture of Death, or The Devil, or The Lovers, and they are going to see things in those pictures that everybody would see. They are archetypal in the sense that they are universal human responses to pictures.

Dr. Dave: Yes

Wald: They are universal because they are something that can be found in everybody - it doesn't matter whether you are Japanese or an Eskimo. You are going to recognize a father figure and a mother figure when you see one. And even if your personal experience and your cultural experiences are different, having a Father, and having a Mother, and having a Lover, and having

Death in your life are going to be present no matter what. And since Tarot was built on imagery and names and relationships like that, they tend to be there for everyone, pretty much on demand. Learning how to manipulate those things to get the most information from them is a matter of skill and experience, but simply being aware of them and responding to them is pretty universal. So what happens is that every single card in the deck has been so carefully developed and scrutinized over time that every single one of them can be said to be working inside of you. In some function or another. Every card has an Archetypal experience - it's going to be in you, working as you in one way or another. Either in Strength or in Weakness, either in Help or in Harm. One way or another, they are there. So when you work with Tarot and the cards come up however you use them, and there are very specific ways of using them to accomplish different purposes, the cards are going to speak not only to you, they are going to speak as you. They are going to speak through you. There are ways that those Archetypal forms can come to the surface in your own words and thoughts and activities. They can be seen, spoken about, understood. From that point of view, unconscious material comes to surface almost instantaneously.

Dr. Dave: Okay. What about the role of Synchronicity?

Wald: Well, Synchronicity is a particular and specifically Jungian concept, is it not?

Dr. Dave: Yes

Wald: As far as I understand, it's simply applies to the idea that two apparently separate happenings or events can be joined together in a meaningful connection by the person for whom the two events mean something. Two people looking at the same two events might not have the same reaction to them. So, let's say for example that you are crossing the street, and a dead dove falls at your feet. Well, for me it would be just a dead dove falling at my feet. Just a peculiarity. But for you, if a dove has symbolic significance - for example, who believes a dove is a significant spiritual symbol, then a dead dove might have all sorts of disastrous consequences for your psyche. So, it's only the fact that a person applies meaning from their own experience to the

world around them that gives those things meaning. I think synchronicity is nothing more than the application of your personal brand of meaning to the otherwise random events of the world. I don't think that in fact you can have meaning for anything. I don't think there's anything that can mean anything at all unless you make it mean that.

Dr. Dave: Ok. Well, you don't sound as woo-woo as a lot of people would expect you to sound [laughs].

Wald: Why do you think somebody would expect me to sound woo-woo? Did you expect me to sound woo-woo?

Dr. Dave: No, I didn't, based on our earlier conversations, but [coughs] you never know.... A lot of the questions that I wanted to ask you to comment on have already been interwoven in some of your responses... What do you see the relationship between Psychology and Tarot and where you see it going in the future?

Wald: Because there is, as a simple fact of life, a built in prejudice [in that prejudice is prejudging, and that you have an instantaneous and pre-arrange response to the world as it comes at you - either in favor of or against the world as it comes to you] - and Tarot is certainly on the receiving of a good deal of prejudice. The antidote to prejudice is awareness and knowledge. There is so much to know. The reason that we are having this conversation is that it is my pleasure and preference to bring the professional knowledge and value of the psychological community, which is a colossal amount of knowledge, into the service of the tarot community. The Tarot Community as a whole has been extremely affected by what psychologists have done, and are beginning to apply what they know, have heard, or suspect to their practice of Tarot, but they are doing it without knowing how. And my desire is to make the relationship between Tarot and Psychology, which has existed *de facto* for fifty years, become more formal. You guys have an awful lot to teach us, but the interesting thing is that we have a lot to teach you as well. It could be a very fruitful confluence - so we are trying to make that happen. It will take time, and

only affect a few people. The scientific orthodoxy is every bit as orthodox as religious orthodoxy, and there will always reject it and regard it as woo-woo, because they have a prejudice, a predilection to think that way, and you will probably never get them to change their mind, nor is it necessary. But there's some people who are open to this idea, and for those people this can be an extremely valuable get-together.

Dr. Dave: Your get-together is a good lead-in for you to tell us about the conference that you have going on in April. I gather you have an annual conference, and that you are doing something special as a pre-conference conference.

Wald: Yes, we have an annual conference, which is normally a three-day conference over a weekend every year at the end of April. It's a professional Tarot-reader's conference. It's a place where the best teachers in the world bring together a very strong audience of competent readers, and teaches them new practical techniques to raise the bar of their professional practice. It's been going on for 11 years. The audience and our reputation has grown, because we do extremely good work. Tarot has had an inclination towards psychology for a very long time. We've always done a pre-conference class, usually on Thursday afternoon where Anne and I will teach a masterclass for those who come to the conference a day early. This year, we decided we would take that day and devote it to a conference entirely connected to, concerned with and expressing the relationship between Tarot and Psychology. So we called it the 'Tarot and Psychology conference'. So we are doing a day of presentations by people who are PhD Psychologists with 30 or more years of practice who all use Tarot in their practice - they don't have to be convinced; they are already doing it. They know how to make those two disciplines work together, and the value of doing this. They can teach the Tarot community what they know, and they can also teach Psychologists who are curious and interested what bearing Tarot might have on their psychological practice. It will be a level meeting ground - a place where psychologists can 'come out of the closet' and allow for their interests in Tarot - might be professional, might be difficult otherwise. Here's a place where they can admit they are doing this,

get a great deal of pleasure from it, and where people have heard about and may have an interest, can leave the ivory towers of Academia, and enter another world altogether and find it as fascinating as I'm sure they are going to do. Our Tarot conference will be connected to this. We will have a total of four days of involvement together. People who are specifically interested in Tarot and Psychology can just come to and pay for the one day conference if they prefer. Otherwise, they can join us for the entire four days, and have the benefit of a really fabulous social and learning occasion. We hope to make this a regular feature of the conference every year - I'd like to learn with Tarot and Psychology for a long time to come, as I believe there's an enormous amount to explore, and there's a lot of people capable of helping us do that. So I'm hoping this is the first step along a long road.

Dr. Dave: I'll be putting a link to your web site in the show-notes, including a link to the conference in April. The psychology conference is on Thursday April 25th.

Wald: Did you tell people that you are going to be one of those wonderful presenters?

Dr. Dave: I think I hinted as much - I'm going to be one of three keynote presenters.

Wald: For those who don't know, one of the reasons we ended up doing this together --- we needed people who really had credentials in both fields. When we read your resume, both Anne and I felt like it made us look like slackers, which really cracked us up!

Dr. Dave: Are you kidding? You are hardly slackers!

Wald: The list of accomplishments and what you had done over time was so enormous, and it's really a beautiful piece of work - I just wanted people to know that. I think that was so funny. You should hold the attention and get the respect of everybody who comes.

Dr. Dave: I certainly hope so. I have a long-standing interest, and there's a thread in the interviews I have made - including Jungian and Dream related. In my own development, I have

a strong interest in hypnosis that goes all the way back to my doctoral dissertation. As part of my keynote presentation I'll be doing a hypnotic induction with the audience, and suggest that they have a dream, and then they'll be working in small groups to use the Tarot to help each person in their small group to explore or expand on the meaning of that dream. So, I thought we might give our listeners a taste of that here. We'll skip the hypnosis part.

Wald: Thank you. Thanks!

Dr. Dave: [laughs] And, anybody in the audience - wake up now!

Wald: I'll count to three and snap my fingers, and you'll be fresh as a daisy and you won't remember a thing, right?

Dr. Dave: Except, what a wonderful time you've had listening to us here. I though i'd share with you an image from a dream two nights ago, and suggest that you then draw one/two/three cards as random and see what they might have to say about me and my dream image. Is there some way that could fit within your theory of using the Tarot?

Ruth-Ann: We can give it a try, I'll grab and deck and you guys talk amongst yourselves.

Wald: I'll try you something interesting about that, by the way. There are two primary ways of using Tarot in practice - one is to work with a shuffled deck, and to extract from that deck at random, to have a synchronous connection with the top hand. This works very, very well. The extend to which it works depends to some extent on the skill and insight of the practitioner. There are however other ways of doing it that do not involve random selection, but involve very specific techniques that allow you to choose the aspects of Tarot that are appropriate to the situation, in which case you are dealing with something as precise and scientific as any scalpel. That's something that I prefer. I'm not as comfortable with the random as other people are - I like precision. A lot of people prefer the random - these are two different approaches. So I'll do the one, and Ruth-Ann will do the other.

Dr. Dave: Good - It'll be interesting to hear what the non-random approach is, and the random, and see where we go. I'm not going to burden you with a long elaborate dream account. I was blessed with just a very interesting little short snippet. So I'm bringing up my journal on my computer in front of me. So, here it comes:

I always like to title my dreams. The title is 'A bunny brings something buried'.

I'm in the back yard and I have a fleeting image of a bunny bringing me something it has dug up. The bunny is a dirty color - not a fluffy, white and cleaning-looking. Probably, because it has been digging in the adobe in the back yard. Now, it reminds me of one of the children's stuffed bunnies from long ago that got very old and beat-up looking over the years. Bunny has dug up something - I'm not sure what, because what it's dug up is also dirty. It has a strange lumpy shape. I think it might have been wrapped in bandaging - the white tape they use for bandage. And that's it!

Wald: Okay. Ruth-Ann do you want to go first?

Ruth-Ann: Okay. I have one question. Are you more interested in the bunny as the symbol, or do you want to know what it is the bunny dug up?

Dr. Dave: Well, those are both very interesting questions. I think that the one that might be easier for us to explore here would probably be the bunny as a symbol, since it does fit into the symbolic realm so well. The mystery gift, of course, is very interesting. Consciously, I don't know what that gift is.

Ruth-Ann: I know we talked about doing a random draw, but I'm actually not going to do a random draw, and I'll tell you why. There happens to be one card that feature a bunny that's the color you described, digging in the dirt. That's the Queen of Pentacles.

Dr. Dave: Okay

Ruth-Ann: So, that symbol from your dream is right there, so that would lead me to look at the Queen of Pentacles to give you a message.

Dr. Dave: Okay, go ahead and do that, and I'm going to be looking for the Queen of Pentacles.

Wald: By the way, you've got to realize that there are three or four thousand decks out there, and they are all different by virtue of the pictures that they show. We're working with the Waite deck at this point.

Ruth-Ann: Not all the Queen of Pentacles are going to have a bunny, and certainly not necessarily a brownish bunny, and especially not necessarily a brownish bunny that happens to be digging in the dirt! You were talking about Synchronicity before - that's quite a synchronous event, I think. Let me know when you've found it.

Dr. Dave: I probably should have arranged these in some kind of order

Ruth-Ann: When I teach I have two decks - one that's arranged in order, for when people draw cards and we talk about a particular spread, I can draw those cards very quickly.

Dr. Dave: I've pulled the Queen of Pentacles, but I'm not seeing that image on my version.

Ruth-Ann: What kind of deck do you have?

Dr. Dave: It's a Rider-Waite, but it may not be the same one you have

Wald: It should have the bunny in the lower right hand corner on the Queen of Pentacles.

Dr. Dave: It blends in! You have to look very closely. It's the same color as the earth.

Ruth-Ann: We use the Universal Waite deck, which is colored with color pencils, which makes it much easier to see the symbolism, which is why we like it.

Dr. Dave: Also turning on the light helps a lot!

Wald: [laughs] There alone is a symbolic act.

Dr. Dave: [laughs heartily] Duh! Okay, let's get into it.

Ruth-Ann: Here you are in this really lush environment - most people are not going to be familiar with the card, so I'll describe it a little. It's an outdoor scene, which explains the bunny and the dirt. The main figure is the Queen of Pentacles. She is seated on a rather ornately carved stone throne which has pears, angels, a goat head (because she's associated with the sign of Capricorn), and she is dressed in a robe of red pinafore of a white undergarment. She has a long green veil going down her back like a shawl, and a little crown on top of her head. She is holding a Pentacle - a golden disc with a five-pointed star in the center, in her lap - which she is gazing at in a contemplative manner.

Dr. Dave: Let me insert a comment here. Any listener can google this card and they will see a picture of it very quickly.

Ruth-Ann: She's in an outdoor scene - there's mountains in the background, with flowers around. She's under an arbor, with leaves and what appear to be roses or some kind of pink flower. The thing that's striking me about you - this is a technique that we use a lot, where an image will draw your attention, and that image will be the jumping-off point for a message or understanding.

Dr. Dave: Okay

Ruth-Ann: So you can look at the same card dozens of times and get something different from it each time.

Dr. Dave: Definitely.

Ruth-Ann: So we're talking together, and I'm talking to you right now, so the thing that is drawing my attention most at the moment is the stone throne. And yet she is apparently very

comfortable. You would think that if you were sitting on a chair made out of rock, that you couldn't wait to get off it. But she's very cozy, hanging out, and what I'm getting from this - because she's contemplating the pentacle - is that your inner life is very rich and comfortable, and so it doesn't really matter what is going on around you - you still always have that. You can always go there. And, connecting with your innocence will give you a sense of comfort... Even in you're in an uncomfortable situation.

Dr. Dave: As I hear you speak, and pointing out that this is a stone chair, which I had never thought about before - it suggests to me a firm base - resting in a kind of firm, maybe confident - which I don't experience myself always - but this inner feminine presence is firmly established.

Ruth Ann: Yes, and she's a *Queen!* So she has rank, and she has experience, and she is firmly established. Also, pentacles are an earth suit, so it firmly grounded. And, just getting back to the bunny, just in case people are thinking *but you're not talking about the bunny!*

Dr. Dave: I was just going to say that too, go ahead!

Ruth Ann: I use the bunny as a kind of secret path - you mentioned the symbol. I've found where that symbol led, so it's not necessarily about the rabbit, but the rabbit is part of the environment. The rabbit led me to the card the held the issue.

Dr. Dave: Okay

Ruth Ann: It does definitely, according to this, describe your elevated position - she's a Queen so she has a certain amount of respect and experience - and a solid base, both because of the Earth and because of The Stone Throne. Yet, within all of that... She's not a hearty queen - she doesn't have attitude - she has a softer feel to her, and her world consists of both her outer and inner world. I'll stop there.

Dr. Dave: Thank you for that. I could work with that. I want to get Wald in here.

Wald: I'm going to talk to you about your bunny. There are four suits in Tarot. Each describes a different aspect of consciousness and activity and the human experience. One of the suits is involved with the energy and activity and focus and intention that a person brings to their world. One of the suits deals with the heart and the issues with heart - everything from trust, beauty, community and faith. There is a suit that deals with issues of the mind, intellectualism, of thought, of systems of organization, of hierarchy of connection, of measurement. Finally there is a suit that deals with substantive things - the hard facts, the clear evidence, the tangible world that we all experience directly. Each is symbolic and has all sorts of ramifications. So here you have a dream that consists of a series of things that have elements of those four suits. The bunny expresses an act of principle. The bunny is the actor. The bunny is the one with intent. The bunny is the one that knows what it is doing, what it wants. The bunny has purpose. Even though a bunny is often seen as soft and cuddly, in this particular place, it is the actor principle. This has been evoked from the outset in this dream. You want something, you are headed for something, you are looking for something, you are going to get that something if you can possibly manage it. That comes under the heading of the suit of wands, which is the suit that describes both energy and focus. It can take any form. In this case, it took the form of the bunny. Then there's the fact that the bunny is earth-colored, and that it's digging in the earth - that the earth is the medium. Whatever it is looking for, can be found in the real world. It is itself a living creature who has significance over and beyond the physical and factual, but what it is looking for in your dream is buried in the real world, and it's not easy to find, and it's not guaranteed that you'll find it. Nor is it guaranteed what it is you'll dig up. Instinctually, you know where to look. The third thing is, you mentioned that it was covered with or included white bandages. It included things having to do with your children - issues of the heart. A hint, a suggestion that underneath all of this activity, there was something important that dealt with an issue of the heart, but that is out of sight, and not really the main focus of your attention. What we have here is an attempt to manifest

something important - something hidden, and something that has a touch of the emotional from out of the practical facts of your current environment, using yourself as a soft, but determined actor, who uncovers something hidden, but necessary to find. So something is going on - something necessary for you to do. You are under the emotional and symbolic and active imperative to make happen something that needs to be done, to find something that needs to be found - and you need to do it fairly quickly. You don't know what that is.

Dr. Dave: A phrase that leaps out to me from what you were saying is: 'A soft but determined actor'. I've kind of made a note of that to think about and come back to.

Wald: So it doesn't tell me precisely what your experience is, or what you're after, or what you'll find - only that you are experiencing internally a need to accomplish something that needs your attention subconsciously that you currently have not brought to awareness - something's going on inside you that is imperative - something needs to be done, and it's something that if you are aware of the need, you'll probably find the details.

Dr. Dave: Well, it's something I want to think about. It certainly opens up a lot of space for self-exploration, and potential dialog if we had more time together.

Wald: You have to remember that if we were sitting down together and doing a reading together, this would only be the beginning of a long exploration, and in the course of that exploration, more specific applications of these principles would come into play, and you'd see rather rapidly, something that was hidden from sight before.

Dr. Dave: Yes. Well I think we've come to the place where we need to wind down. So, I'm wondering if there's anything more that you would like to leave our listeners with - anything maybe that you planned to say, but didn't get to say.

Wald: I think that the phrase that is so inimical to the psychological community which is 'Magical Thinking'. In a psychological context, it simply means *foolishness*. A form of believing

that something is going to happen just because you want it to happen, regardless of what is actually going to happen. The fact of the world - the realities - are denied and replaced with wish fulfillment. And it doesn't get you anywhere.

Dr. Dave: Right - I think that's accurate.

Wald: In Tarot, magical thinking involves the ability of the magician precisely what they bunny was doing - to take intentional action on any number of levels to accomplish a particular purpose. The whole idea of magic here is the application of will in the real world. So if you wanted to fly, for example, if you thought of it as a crazy person who gets on top of a building and because they had a dream they could flap their wings and jump off a building a survive - that wouldn't work. But if you were Leonardo da Vinci, and you had the idea that a human being would fly, you would work to the purpose of producing flight. The intention, that desire to fly, that has been in human beings for a very long time, has manifested itself as various forms of flight - everything from hang-gliding to jet planes and rocket ships. It has in fact happened. It's happened by the dedicated intention of generation of people who maintain the same intention. Intention by itself is the form by which magic takes its place in the world. Magical thinking is a thinking of an intent - forceful, personality, and intellect - whose intention is to accomplish - just like that bunny digging up something unknown, the human being has the power to intend, and that is root of magical thinking from our point of view. As far as I am concerned, it is the essence of what has allowed human being so remarkable in this world - every ability of every human being to control it's environment, to manage the world and himself, comes essentially from magical thinking. Although they don't realize it, that's what it is. And they don't call it that. And what Tarot does is work with that and a number of other factors that make a human being human. And that ability to understand a human being as a human being, to know what it means to be human is the essence of what Tarot is from my point of view - it's how I work with it.

Dr. Dave: That's a great place for us to wrap it up. This bunny needs to be digging along. It's been great to speak with you both, and I want to thank you both for being my guest today on *Shrink Rap Radio*, and I'll see you before too long in New York City.

Ruth Ann: Great - we really look forwards to seeing you there, and thanks again for having us.

- End of Interview -