

## In Memoriam: Howard Lotsof

March 1, 1943 to January 31, 2010

By Dimitri Mobengo Mugianis & Kenneth Alper, M.D.

**W**e have been asked to write some words about our friend and teacher, and a profound scientific originator, Howard S. Lotsof. This very collaboration between an academic physician researcher and a drug user activist is an illustration of Howard's work and vision, and represents the diverse path his life took.

In 1962, as a 19-year-old heroin addict, Howard serendipitously discovered the anti-addictive properties of ibogaine, and worked the rest of his life to bring it to others. Ibogaine is a naturally occurring plant alkaloid used as a ceremonial entheogen in the Bwiti religion in Gabon, Africa. It is unique in its actions in detoxification from heroin. Howard met and worked with academics, heads of state and street junkies. He represented a nexus where science, social activism and shamanism meet.

Howard provided pilot data to the National Institute on Drug Abuse that became the basis for a program of research on ibogaine, which generated scores of peer-reviewed publications and led to the approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration of a Phase I clinical trial. He himself authored or co-authored scientific papers on ibogaine including those published in the *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* and the *American Journal on Addictions*. He accomplished all of this without a doctoral level degree.

While providing research and direction to science and academia, Howard opened another door: in the early '90s he provided ibogaine to Amsterdam's radical *Junkiebond*, a drug user's union who treated themselves and each other, in their tradition of users helping users. His legacy includes ibogaine

treatment centers around the world as well as many 'underground' providers, and thousands of people who have experienced ibogaine, many of whom provide accounts of the easing of the suffering of addiction, psychospiritual insight, and not uncommonly of lives saved.

Howard is survived by his wife, Norma, and two sisters Rosalie Falato and Holly Weiland.

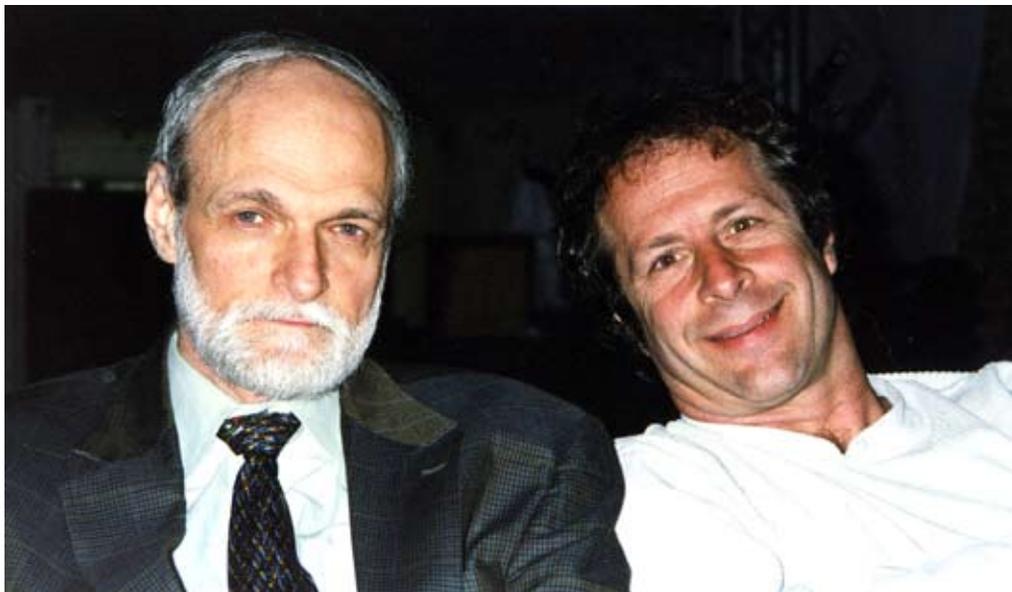
The Bwiti believe that iboga takes us to the other side, to the death realm and back, bearing the lessons of the dead. Howard was always a teacher and his death has taught us as well; he went with dignity and was working until the end to bring iboga and ibogaine to the world, and help the most maligned among us, the addict. His warmth and non-judgmental approach to drug users was a testament to the plant he worked for all his life. Our community has lost a precious elder.

*"Joy, the ancestors give joyful welcome and hear the news. The troubled life of the born ones is finished. And now the disciplines of the dead. I go to the dead. All the misfortunes are shorn away. They leave. Everything clean. All is new. All is bright. I have seen the dead and I do not fear."*

—Fang Bwiti prayer

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Howard Lotsof, discoverer and advocate of ibogaine's anti-addictive properties, with MAPS Executive Director Rick Doblin, Ph.D. at an ibogaine conference in 2003.