

# The Road to Read House

Steve Stockdale, IGS Executive Director

In 1933, Alfred Korzybski published his second book, *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics*, twelve years after his first, *Manhood of Humanity*.

*Science and Sanity* created an immediate stir among academics and intellectuals, and in 1934 Korzybski began to travel around the country to promote his work, which he referred to as *general semantics*. His presentations ranged from six-week seminars at institutions such as the prestigious Barstow School for Girls in Kansas City, Missouri, to day-long lectures at diverse locations such as the Williams Institute in California, the Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas, the University of Michigan, and the Galois Institute of Mathematics at Long Island University.

Thanks to an initial grant of \$25,000 from Chicago industrialist Cornelius Crane, Korzybski ended his nomadic traveling and established the Institute of General Semantics in 1938, two blocks from the University of Chicago in a small apartment. A year later, he and the Institute's Education Director, M. Kendig, moved one block west to the apartment pictured, the "Magic House" with the numerically interesting address of 1234 E. 56th Street.

With the end of World War II, Chicago experienced a severe housing shortage in 1946, and rents skyrocketed in some areas. The Institute lost its lease on E. 56th Street, and after exhaustive attempts to locate other appropriate accommodations in Chicago, Korzybski, Kendig, and Korzybski's literary secretary, Charlotte Schuchardt, reluctantly decided to leave Chicago. Kendig was able to procure a neglected country estate in Lime Rock, Connecticut, near Lakeville. The Institute relocated to Lime Rock in the summer of 1946.

Korzybski died suddenly on March 1, 1950, at the age of 70. Kendig took over as Director of



Chicago 1938-1946

the Institute and continued with the Institute's training programs. The Institute remained in Lime Rock until her death in 1981. Fiscal necessities required the Institute to sell the house, and the Institute spent the next few years split between locations in Baltimore, Maryland, and Connecticut.

In the mid-1980s, the Institute hired Marjorie Zelner as Executive Secretary and moved the administrative functions to office space shared with her husband's business in Englewood, New Jersey. The Institute's 2,500-book library and archives, however, remained in storage pending a suitable 'home.'

In the early 1990s, the Institute initiated a fundraising campaign to remedy the lack of a proper place to house the library and archives.



Lime Rock, Connecticut 1946-1981

On June 18, 1994, “an unspeakably hot and humid afternoon,” 35 friends and patrons gathered in Closter, New Jersey, in the renovated nineteenth-century carriage house behind the home of Marjorie and Larry Zelner. “The Alfred Korzybski Research and Study Center” was thus dedicated.

Marjorie was diagnosed in 2000 with cancer and resigned as Executive Director. Jeff Mordkowitz, former President of the Board of Trustees, was re-elected President and also appointed as Director by the Trustees in February 2000. The Institute’s administrative office moved to his home office in Brooklyn, New York.

Marjorie succumbed to her illness and died in October 2000. The library and archives remained in the Zelner’s carriage house until March 2002, when the Board approved moving them to the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

In mid-2003, the Board of Trustees of the Institute of General Semantics, Inc. and the Board of Directors of the International Society for General Semantics initiated discussions to merge the two organizations. The merger plan was approved in October and the two organizations officially become one as of January 1, 2004, retaining the name of the Institute of General Semantics.

With some financial flexibility owing to a sizeable bequest from the estates of Allen Walker Read and his wife Charlotte Schuchardt Read, the Institute determined that the time was right to commit to a ‘permanent’ home. A suitable building in the Fairmount Historic District of Fort Worth was purchased in November 2003.

Renovation and remodeling were completed in late summer 2005. On September 24, 2005, “Read House” was dedicated as the new and consolidated home for the Institute of General Semantics in honor of Charlotte and Allen, and in recognition of Korzybski, Kendig and all the time-binders who followed, and will follow.



New Jersey 1994-2000



Fort Worth, Texas 2005-