

A Few Autistic Questions about Freud, Marx and Darwin

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Introduction

Psychotherapy, trying to talk people out of their psychosis, was the only treatment of mental illness during most of the twentieth century. Emotional trauma was assumed to be the cause of all mental illness, and if therapy could eradicate those damaging, traumatic thoughts from people's "ids", "egos", "super-egos" and "psyches", it was assumed that psychotic people would regain their mental health, and become "normal". My encounter with psychotherapy occurred when my three-year-old son was diagnosed autistic. At that time Bruno Bettelheim, a psychologist at the University of Chicago was promoting a theory that autism was caused by "maternal rejection", and psychotherapy for mother was the treatment. Supposedly if mother could be persuaded during therapy to acknowledge her pathological attitude, her rejection would disappear, and her child would stop being autistic.

I also suspect we were unknowingly involved in a "scientific study". During the early 20th Century, the height of scientific materialism, just about anything scientists wanted to do was considered ethical - after all, they were the priests of our modern religion, materialism, and whatever they did was supposedly for the good of mankind. In 1961, Kennedy, with a mentally disabled sister (who had been scientifically lobotomized), was our new President, and money was available for research on defective children. A generation of enthusiastic, young therapists had just completed training and were eager to display their wondrous, modern, scientific power to cure. Some therapists were bullies, convinced that their scientific truths justified coercion. However even the most benign therapists faced a problem. Most of them were men in those days (as were most doctors), and some of those nice young men were reluctant to be explicit. Maternal rejection is a pretty offensive concept, and how could they convince women it was nothing more serious than a mild, easily cured infection? How could they slip Mother a dose of psychotherapy without explaining exactly what they were doing? Awful as the experience was, I often managed to see humor in it. And hopefully the medical establishment has learned to view psychologists promoting scientific theories with more caution.

My distaste for therapy drew me into the debate over philosophical materialism. I recognize that life consists of an inherited physical reality. However free will is also part of life, and free will, or volition, is not always predictable. We seem to have some limited ability to change and adapt. So I don't believe Nature is just a mechanical device, in which adaptations occur as genetic accidents (random mutations). I'm also skeptical that people consist of ids, egos, super-egos and psyches, which can be manipulated by therapists. It has sometimes been suggested that mental illness and creativity occurs in the same families, and mental illness is often regarded as a stigma. Perhaps creativity is not consistent with excessive stability. Some of us are more stable than others, and some of us are more open to change. The stigma of mental illness might lessen if it were recognized it as being a part of the evolutionary process. The most stable individuals might not be the most creative, and the most stable families might not be the most adaptive. Certainly, if I had any choice (which I don't), I might prefer being born into a

family that was participating in the progress of the human race – even if some of those innovations are sometimes less than perfect.

No therapist ever succeeded in convincing me I rejected my children, and psychotherapy is no longer used for a treatment of autism. It has been replaced by drugs, which doesn't seem to have any more power to cure than psychotherapy did.

This story is true. The names of the professionals have been changed to protect the well-intentioned. There are no authoritative answers to most of the questions. Answers proposed by professional philosophers to such religious and philosophical concepts would be no more scientific than anyone else's speculations.

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Question 1: Wouldn't volition be an essential aspect of creativity?

"Tell me about yourself," suggested the young pediatrician.

What a strange request for a pediatrician to make! Especially a pediatrician at a busy Army clinic, where no one had time for idle social-chatter. Wearing a starched white coat over his Army uniform, the doctor sat behind his desk regarding me gravely through horn-rimmed glasses. I stared back, baffled. What did he expect me to respond? That I was an Army wife? But that was obvious, wasn't it, since this was an Army hospital? It sounded like something a psychiatrist might say, not a pediatrician.

I had never even met a psychiatrist, much less a mentally ill person. (The mentally ill were usually confined to institutions in those days). The silence became uncomfortable. The partitions of the clinic were flimsy, and I could hear a buzz of activity out in the crowded waiting room. I had only vague ideas about psychiatry, but while uncertain about what psychiatrists actually did, I was pretty sure I had no need for one. My father had been an automobile mechanic, and during my childhood, Daddy maintained the doctor's car in exchanged for our family's medical treatment. We tried not to abuse the arrangement. So I often felt compelled to convince everyone (including myself) that my medical problem was sufficiently grave. However on this particular occasion no one was sick, and I hadn't arrived at the pediatrician's office in my usual state of anxiety. I did feel a little self-conscious about my reason for consulting a doctor. I'd brought Tony to the clinic, not because I thought something was wrong with him. My handsome, independent little three-year-old was actually in excellent health. I was here because a neighbor had suggested it. I would have felt foolish admitting I'd consulted a doctor just because a neighbor disapproved of him, so I explained Tony didn't talk much, was

still in diapers, and maybe he should have a check-up. But to my bewilderment, instead of examining Tony, the doctor kept trying to initiate personal conversation.

"How do you like the new administration in Washington?" he asked.

"It's exciting, isn't it?" I responded.

"Society will be in trouble unless people start taking responsibility for their own lives," the doctor said disapprovingly. "People expect the government to do everything for them."

I was a political liberal who believed some of mankind's most magnificent accomplishments were achieved democratically, through government action. The abolition of slavery and the end of segregation were bitterly contested at the time, but most of us are proud of such achievements today. Establishment of an education system and Social Security were less controversial, but nostalgia for a simpler, more primitive society seems to ensure that all innovation faces some opposition. So I admired Kennedy, our new, liberal, young president, but I also realized some conservatives appear to feel a near religious reverence for "private-enterprise" and believe government should never interfere with the survival-of-the-fittest. (And a Nazi-like eradication of the less fit, I presume.) Apparently this doctor and I would disagree on politics, I decided, but a doctor's office didn't seem an appropriate place for such a discussion. I sat waiting for him to begin examining Tony.

"So now, why don't you tell me about yourself," the doctor again suggested, with a self-conscious little smile. He spoke rather tentatively, as though he realized his request was somewhat unusual for a pediatrician.

I had never encountered a doctor with such a desire for social conversation! I looked at Tony, busy examining the contents of the wastebasket. "Tony sometimes has a rather violent temper," I finally managed to offer, hoping to return the doctor's attention to his patient. Maybe one of Tony's glands needed adjusting or something. (My understanding of biology was obviously limited.)

"Does he understand what you say to him?"

"I'm never sure. He rarely does what I tell him but he's independent and stubborn."

Tony was on his knees, his little blue-jean-clad rear-end up in the air and his head on the floor, trying to see under a partition into the next office. If anyone were on the other side of that partition, they'd probably feel uncomfortable to see his bright, inquisitive little face peering up at them. I picked him up and held him on my lap.

"How does he get along with other children?"

I thought a moment. "I don't think I've noticed him play with other children," I finally said, as I realized Tony usually played by himself.

"Does he have opportunities to be around them?"

"Off and on, I suppose. Actually, he doesn't play with his brother and sister very much." I admitted.

"Where do you live?"

"In a big old house on a hill overlooking San Rafael."

"You own your home?" I nodded. "You are lucky to own property in such a valuable area," he continued.

He seemed to expect a response, so I tried to think of one. "The house is a hundred years old and has termites," I said. "In the coming depression it probably won't be worth what we paid for it."

"We don't have depressions anymore," the doctor scoffed.

Many of us who grew up during the thirties, sometimes accused of having depression mentalities, didn't really trust prosperity, but the doctor's comment seemed condescending. "You are probably too young to know what a depression is," I said.

The doctor frowned. I was startled by my own impertinence. I didn't usually come out with such retorts. Suffering from shyness, I was rarely rude or impudent. Perhaps the doctor was just making an effort to be friendly. Army doctors were not known for their bedside manner though, and I'd never encountered one with time or inclination for this kind of personal conversation.

"Tell me about your husband," he suggested, ignoring my comment.

Tony slid off my lap to examine the scales. Again, I was baffled. I couldn't imagine why our personal lives might be of concern to this pediatrician. Surely he wasn't interested in Ike's vital statistics, such as height, weight or eye-color. "He's stationed in Greenland at the moment," I finally offered.

"Uh-oh! That's bad." It seemed another strange reaction for an Army doctor. There was nothing unusual about overseas duty for military families. Again, I couldn't think of anything to say, and the doctor continued. "How do you feel about your husband's absence?"

"Well he'll be home in a couple of months."

The doctor glanced at Tony. After trying to turn the valves under the sink, Tony had crawled onto a bookcase. With a self-satisfied smile, he crouched on the bottom shelf like a life-sized bookend. We talked some more, and the doctor continued to try to discuss everything except Tony.

"Ever since you came your little boy has been running around the office examining the equipment," he finally said, as he watched Tony leave the bookcase and crawl under the desk. "He's paid no attention to me. Why he's hardly aware I'm in the room!"

Why should Tony pay attention to you, I wondered. *The Doctor hadn't done anything but talk, and Tony wouldn't understand much of that.* The doctor seemed strange to me, but Tony, with no understanding what the doctor was saying, paid no attention to him. I wasn't accustomed to challenging doctors though, and I nodded.

"Your child is not normal", the doctor said.

"You really think so?" I murmured.

His words seemed to have no impact upon me. After all, he hadn't paid much attention to Tony. He hadn't even examined him. For some reason, that pediatrician acted as though his purpose was to indulge in personal conversation with me, Tony's mother! I listened to the doctor make another appointment for us, but I was busy puzzling over what on earth this peculiar doctor had been up to for the past half-hour. I wondered what we could accomplish at another appointment that we couldn't do now? Ask a silly question and you get a silly answer, I thought as I left the doctor's office. Whatever that pediatrician had been doing, that's what I got for taking my child to a doctor when there was nothing wrong with him, I mused with chagrin. I always dreaded talking to doctors. Like many people, I felt intimidated by the medical profession. I had never heard of autism, and the doctor's declaration that Tony wasn't normal was too bizarre for me to take seriously. Tony obviously had more imagination than most children. And his curiosity was monumental. Tony was slow to mature, but my other son had also been a "late bloomer". I realized that psychiatric evaluations are not a pediatrician's specialty, and this doctor's manner may have been a little clumsy. But whatever a psyche consisted of, I was confident there was nothing wrong with mine. Today some scientists are pondering the complex nature of consciousness, but even without defining it, the psychiatric profession had already divided human consciousness up into imaginary ids, egos and superegos, and declared their ability to repair them. And if we laymen didn't understand the details – well, we didn't understand lots of modern technology, such as the atom bomb - or how penicillin worked.

*_*_*



Tony loved to tease

Evolution is where philosophical materialism has been most often debated. As a non-materialist, I believe that purposeful volition, free-will, is an aspect of all reality. Life seems to have some limited ability to intentionally change and adapt. A materialist philosophy, on the other hand, would regard the brain as "fixed", something that only changes by accident. The precise number of required "random mutations" would just happened to accidentally accumulate in one brain. We are far from understand the details of life's complexity, but what science has been able to learn about the process fills many, many volumes. Can anyone imagine a new biological feature appearing in one of those biology books as the result of a series of typographical errors - random mutations? Considering the complexity of biology, that would be too many fortuitous accidents for me to accept. If biological change occurs as purposeful adaptation, rather than accidentally, there is no reason that an organism couldn't also incorporate such information into its own genome. After all, the genome has a known ability to repair itself. However survival-of-the-fittest, "random mutation and natural selection", was eagerly accepted by 19th Century scientists as a complete explanation of evolution. Probably because the materialists feared any form creation might validate religion, and scientists of that time had spent years fighting the authority of church doctrines. A rigid, materialistic orthodoxy, which denied the possibility of any purpose to life, had replaced

religion for many scientists. People are beginning to express skepticism about the creative power of "natural selection", but they are often scornfully denounced as "ignorant, religious creationists" by the philosophical materialists. Many of us view our own volition and ability to adapt as real, and I see no reason to assume such an ability would be confined to human consciousness? Whatever the organizing force in living systems is labeled - biocentrism, self-organization, epigenetics, intelligent design, James A Shapiro's genetic engineering, or a phrase that encompasses them all: cognitive biology - they are all closer to Lamarck's inheritance of acquired characteristics than to Darwin's RM&NS. And Lamarck would be a more appropriate "father of evolution" than Darwin.

(Lamarck had been considered discredited by Lysenko, a Russian biologist whose Lamarckian thinking caused a disastrous Russian crop failure. Actually all Lysenko proved was that that he couldn't cause wheat adapt to cold in one generation by soaking it in cold water. However everyone was happy for any discredited Russian science to stay discredited during the cold war, and random mutation and natural selection was universally accepted as completely explaining biodiversity.)

Question 2: Could an inherently creative universe, a living universe, ever be defined by mathematical formulas?

Pondering the pediatrician's strange behavior, I drove home. My blue jeans might have been more casual than most army mothers dressed in those days, but it surely wasn't unusual enough to suggest abnormality. People told me I had a nice smile, but I knew there was nothing dramatic about my looks that might cause doctors to develop a sudden, romantic interest. Besides, I could recognize flirting, and I sensed that doctor was definitely not flirting. *What on earth could explain his strange fascination with me?* I'd taken my little boy for a check-up, but instead of examining Tony, the doctor acted as if I were the patient - as though he suspected something might be wrong with me, Tony's mother. He even seemed to have questions about Tony's father, far away in Greenland.

A light spring rain was falling when we arrived home to our big old three-story, shingled house. On our way up the brick walk some drops of water fell from the redwood trees and hit Tony on the face. He looked up at the dripping leaves and laughed, his big beautiful eyes sparkling with delight. His laughter was happy and infectious, and I laughed too. At nearly four, Tony was the healthiest and most handsome of our three children. He even looked boyishly adorable wearing his stained, faded old sweater. This scruffy looking garment had to be treated with care. In spite of constant mending, there always seemed to be holes other than the sleeves through which he could put his arms. He didn't wear his sweater for warmth; he was

comfortable outside on the coldest days in nothing but a diaper. However Tony was a determined child and he refused to go anywhere without this cherished, shabby looking bunch of yarn. He was also a mischievous little rascal with an active imagination and uncontrollable curiosity. One day as we walked along a street, Tony suddenly squatted down and peeked up under a lady's skirt. She squealed in alarm and jumped back.

"Tony!" I exclaimed in shock.

The woman noticed Tony's puzzled expression and seemed to regain some of her composure. "I suppose he thought one good peek was better than guessing," she conceded.

A few days later I noticed Tony start toward two nuns in long black habits. Would nuns react as casually to Tony's peaking up under their flowing, black robes? I decided not to risk finding out. I ran and caught him by the hand. The nuns smiled indulgently, unaware of what Tony may have had in mind.

At times Tony's curiosity could lure him into frightening situations. One morning I awoke to see him walking along the narrow roof overhang outside our third-floor, bedroom window. If he fell, he would land on a concrete walk below. Struggling not to panic, I crept up to the window, silently, so as not to startle him. I reached carefully out and got a firm grip on his diaper. Then I snatched him back into the safety of the room. Tony laughed, as we both collapsed on the floor by the open window, for he loved to roughhouse. We nailed heavy screens over all the windows that allowed access to the roof, but Tony discovered other ways, such as climbing from the balustrade of an upstairs porch. However he never harmed himself by any of his dangerous stunts.

My two older children arrived home from school soon after Tony and I returned from the doctor. Guy was in the third grade. A quiet, reflective little boy by nature, he had recently begun to express a dislike for school. His answer to my question, "What happened in class today?" was the usual bored, "nothing".

Sherry, my little six-year-old, was breathlessly bubbling with excitement. "I told Guy ghost stories on the way home," she said.

"Did you frighten him?"

"No, but I sure scared myself."

My mind still on the pediatrician, I smiled absently. The children ate bananas for after-school snacks. Tony's broke, and he erupted into angry sobs. He furiously tried to stick the two pieces back together, mashing them into a goeey pulp. His temper was like a small tornado. It could subside in an instant, and he'd be all smiles and sparkling eyes again. Some trivial annoyance might cause such a storm. Recently we were eating corn on the cob for dinner. Maybe some of it stuck between Tony's teeth. He hurled the corn across the room, followed by his plate of food, and his glass of milk flew over our heads and splattered against the wall. By the time we

had recovered from our shock and captured him, Tony had turned into a little whirlwind, furiously slinging food in all directions. A few minutes later, while we were still wiping up the mashed potatoes, Tony laughed, his rage having evaporated. Guy and Sherry never had temper tantrums, and I hadn't yet figured out how to handle Tony's. I took the banana he was angrily trying to repair and gave him another. He consumed it contentedly, tears of fury still glimmering on his beautiful long lashes.

All afternoon I remained preoccupied over my strange visit to the pediatrician. When I called the children to dinner that evening, Tony came in from the yard walking backwards. He backed through the house and up to the table. He tried to sit in his highchair backwards, but found that impractical, and turned around to await his dinner. The week before Tony had draped a towel over his head so he couldn't see and spent the day groping his way around the house and yard. Such solitary activities were the type of games he played. He also spent hours creating beautiful, intricate designs with a set of multi-shaped, colored blocks. He seemed indifferent to our admiration of his creations, but apparently got some personal satisfaction from the designs he produced. He was always busy, and when we came across a banana skin, a pencil and a toothpaste cap arranged on the floor in the shape of an airplane, we'd smile and recognize it as Tony's work. His latest stunt was redesigning a neighbor's garden. He pulled up all the flowers she had planted the day before, and left them lying there with their roots exposed. My neighbor angrily showed me what Tony had done. My children were generally well-behaved, and I didn't usually have to endure such embarrassment apologizing for them. I sympathized with my neighbor's outrage and punished Tony when I caught him next door, giving him several swats on the diaper, and scolding him with a loud show of anger. He seemed to expect my scolding, and submitted to my paddling, but it didn't keep him out of the neighbor's yard. Actually, he appeared to become more determined. After watching my futile efforts for a couple of days, my neighbor's anger subsided somewhat.

"Have you taken him to a doctor?" she asked.

"What on earth could a doctor do about it?" I asked in exasperation.

She stood watching Tony without answering. There was no medical treatment for mischievousness, independence and determination, and those would be silly reasons to take a kid to a doctor. Besides, I wasn't worried because Tony was slow to talk and toilet-train. My older son had been slow to mature and was now a delightful little nine-year-old. Nevertheless friends had sometimes appeared shocked by some of Tony's antics. Maybe everyone would be more tolerant of him if I could inform them that the medical profession had pronounced him normal. I called a nearby military hospital and made an appointment. Five hours had passed now since that appointment.

An uneasy, murky fear was beginning to gnaw at me as I stood at the kitchen sink washing the dinner dishes.

Tony had a number of fears. We became aware of his reaction to loud noises when we rented a floor-sander. Tony didn't cry when we turned it on; he butted the screen door open with his head and left home. He was barely a year old and couldn't walk, but was speeding away on his hands and knees when we caught up with him. Tony was also terrified of barbers. He was a masculine appearing child, and no one would have mistaken him for a girl. Nevertheless long hair would have been unacceptable on a boy before the 1960's, so I bought clippers and tried to cut his hair myself. I would sneak up on him but never managed to do more than a partial job before he escaped, leaving him with a ragged, ever-changing hair style. New clothes, especially new shoes, frightened him. Recently I had bought him a pair in a department store. His loud protests embarrassed me, but even in his tattered old sweater Tony looked cute and evoked sympathy.

"Poor little boy," someone commented.

"What's wrong with the little fellow?"

"Don't you like those pretty new shoes, dear?" asked a saleslady, kneeling in front of him.

Tony shoved her away and kicked over a display rack, scattering shoes all over the floor. I apologized, and then followed as Tony stormed out of the store, wailing with rage and still clutching his old shoes in his little fists. The new shoes disappeared that night. My neighbor found them a few days later, hidden in her hedge. Guy had many of the same fears and outgrew them, I reminded myself, and loud noises had always bothered me.

That day in April of 1961 was the most significant day in my life. For as long as I lived, I would date events as happening before or after 1961. So far it hadn't seemed all that different from other days, a little puzzling perhaps, as I pondered the strange doctor, but not a day that would cause me to feel alienated from humanity. Then, sometime after dinner on that April evening, perhaps about nine o'clock, the obscure uneasiness lurking in the recesses of my mind exploded into consciousness.

The doctor had said my child was not normal!

I was not a young, new mother, I was forty years old, and this was the most devastating thing that had ever happened to me. For five hours I'd managed to ignore it - completely block it out of my mind. The children were in bed, and I was alone. My husband was the one person with whom I could discuss things, but Ike was in Greenland, and I'd never felt so alone. I began to cry. Vaguely aware that children might have something known as emotional problems, I didn't really know what the term meant. Emotional problems must surely have some connection with unhappiness. I remembered Tony's laughter. He was obviously a happy child, and his trouble couldn't be emotional. *The pediatrician must have meant Tony was mentally retarded!* It might seem strange that I had no immediate reaction to the doctor's declaration, but I'd never doubted that any of my children were normal. If they weren't always average, well, there were ways in which I didn't consider myself average. I hadn't challenged the doctor, but I wasn't

accustomed to challenging any authority - and certainly not a doctor. I usually kept differences of opinion to myself. I have come to realize my emotional reactions are often delayed. If someone insults me for instance, I might not feel offended until a week later. There is no denying that when in shock my mind sometimes works in slow motion. My judgment seems reliable enough, but my brain apparently requires time to ponder things. I'd never succeeded in speeding up my reactions, but I did acknowledge the fault, and I'd learned to be skeptical of first impressions. I would change; I would become less intimidated by professionals. (And I would learn more about biology. In fact I would learn more about all sorts of things, as I struggled to understand what was happening to us.) Maybe none of us would really change and grow very much unless circumstances stimulated us to do so. However, as I mulled over my conversation with that strange pediatrician, I had no premonition of the painful, personal growth that awaited me.

I cried through that long, dark, lonely night. Why was I suffering like this? It couldn't be for Tony. Unaware anything was wrong, he was in bed sleeping as peacefully as the night before. The doctor's declaration that Tony wasn't normal hadn't changed my little boy in any respect. Tony hadn't paid any attention to the doctor's pronouncement, and it hadn't caused him unhappiness. At dinner he had been our same delightful, self-confident Tony. I was suddenly and unexpectedly finding myself the mother of a retarded child. Instead of someone who would share my life, Tony was being transformed into something alien and mysterious. But why should being the mother of a retarded child cause such anguish? *Was all this misery just self-pity? Surely self-pity couldn't be this painful!* Maybe I was in mourning - grieving - not for Tony, but for some little boy who had never existed except in my imagination. That little boy would choose what he wanted to do with his life, and possibly grow up to achieve some of it. He would have the ability to face life's challenges, and – *and do what?*

What did I wish for my children?

Perhaps I had some vague hope Sherry would find a nice man to take care of her and provide her with material possessions, such as cars and swimming pools. Yet that wasn't what I had sought for myself. Maybe I had secret visions of my sons becoming rich and famous. Yet fame and fortune hadn't been my priority in life. Most parents claim they simply want their children to be happy. But what did that mean? Could anyone even recognize happiness without having experienced some unhappiness? In any case, retardation wouldn't necessarily cause Tony to be unhappy.

So why was I suffering like this, I wondered, as I continued to struggle with my despair.

After fifty years of pondering the question, I now think I know what I wish for my children (and grandchildren). I hope they all develop the strength, and become tough enough to deal with all the problems, frustrations, tragedies and disappointments that are a part of normal "happy" lives. I hope the challenges they encounter stimulate them to grow and adapt, rather than allowing themselves to feel "damaged". However as I struggled to face the possibility that Tony

might not lead a normal life, I continued to cry. Since the imaginary Tony was apparently gone, I tried to think of my little boy in bed asleep as a handicapped adult. My love for him surely wouldn't evaporate just because he was retarded. I remembered a retarded man my husband's grandmother had adopted and raised. Rutledge was his name, and he was usually cheerful. He was a competent farmhand and played the harmonica at local barn dances. When I knew Rutledge he was over sixty, and Ike's grandmother was past eighty. Living alone together, Grandmother and Rutledge shared an obvious love for each other. With his limited understanding, Rutledge often seemed to find the world more interesting and exciting than many people with greater ability did. We once heard him say to Ike's grandmother,



(These are school pictures, and Tony was actually nine or ten when they were taken. I don't have pictures of Tony when he was three. When he was younger, he seemed to regard a camera as a loaded weapon pointed at him, and he refused to have his picture taken.)

"Gee, Mama, it's going to be a lucky girl who gets me for a husband, isn't it, Mama? I don't drink, or stay out late, or waste my money - like Jim and those other boys do. Isn't that right, Mama? Isn't it going to be a lucky girl that gets me?" We all laughed with him. How could anyone feel sorry for such an enthusiastic sixty-year-old?

I was still unable to think of Tony growing up to be retarded. I'd always had the feeling Tony might take after Ike's grandfather, a physician who seemed to have made a profound

impression upon everyone he met. His patients regarded him with an awe that lasted long after his death. Ike's father wrote a book about him, and everyone in the family talked about him and quoted him. I'd never met Ike's grandfather, but the many anecdotes I'd heard made him seem like a mysterious, revered, legendary member of the family. Tony bore a physical resemblance to a baby picture I had of this esteemed doctor, but I wondered now if I'd believed Tony was like him from an unconscious realization that Tony himself was different.

Dawn brought an end to that long sleepless night. I looked out the window at the redwoods and bay trees growing on our ivy-covered hillside. Our yard and the neighbor's garden, which Tony had redesigned, looked the same in the cold, misty, morning light. I shivered. My life seemed changed forever during that dark, bleak night alone in a rumpled bed. Yesterday morning I'd jumped out of it, ready for the day ahead. Would I ever again face life with the same cavalier attitude?

*_*_*

Mathematics is not a Divine Revelation. It is a game, with rigid, complicated rules, invented by men. However scientists decided that the universe must have been created in accordance with their mathematical rules. They "prove" their theories (to each other's satisfaction) mathematically. They also "disprove" them periodically, and challenge each other to think up new ones. Surely the reason the public doesn't laugh at some of these "theories", (many of them really are no more plausible than religious myths), is because most laymen are too intimidated by all those obscure, complex mathematical rules to laugh at them. However, if life is spontaneous and unpredictable, it will never be described by a human invention such as mathematics. Formulas such as $E=MC^2$ might express statistical probabilities, but they could never describe a biological interaction. No mathematical equation can ever express free-will.

Question 3: How did the laws of nature originate?

I kept trying to think of Tony as mentally retarded. Rutledge, Grandmother's adopted son, was the only retarded person I knew. In those days mentally retarded people lived in institutions. Schools and other services for retarded people were rare, and private care was beyond the financial resources of most families. Many parents saw no alternative to institutionalizing their retarded child at a young age. I'm sure they felt it was in the child's interest to find a safe life with other handicapped children, but it must have been a painful, heart-wrenching experience for everyone. Grandmother was actually Grandfather's second wife. Rutledge, her adopted son, had been born into a wealthy family. Instead of an institution, his parents chose to leave him, along with a trust-fund, with their doctor's wife. Grandmother was much younger than her

husband. They had no children, and I'm sure Rutledge was the comfort and purpose her husband hoped he might be during her years as a widow. Rutledge and Grandmother's love enriched both of their lives. Tony was born at a moment in history when we were just beginning to accept retarded people into society, and alternatives to institutionalization were still rare. If Tony were in a State Hospital for the retarded, I wondered if it might relieve some of this pain. My little boy would no longer be a part of my life, but I might eventually escape from this relentless grief. The thought of abandoning Tony to an institution was fleeting, but it couldn't add to the anguish I was suffering. Nothing could have.

After Sherry and Guy left for school that morning, I called the pediatric clinic. "I spoke with a doctor there yesterday, a pediatrician. I don't remember his name," I said to the woman who answered. "Maybe he had brown hair and wore glasses."

"What did you talk to him about?"

"My little boy. The doctor said - well - I guess he said Tony was mentally retarded." I began to cry again. "Somehow I didn't realize what the doctor meant yesterday."

"Try not to worry," she said sympathetically. "Give me your name. I'll find out which doctor and have him call you."

I hung up the phone and looked out the window at Tony playing in the yard. He was climbing a tree - one of his favorite activities. *Oh Tony, please do something clever, I thought unhappily. These past few hours must surely be a nightmare from which I will awaken. Tragedies like this happened to other people, not to us!* I can't explain why I thought we should be exempt. After a while Tony came in and emptied two pockets of dirt out of his little trousers onto the floor.

"Oh Tony," I scolded helplessly.

Tony picked up the edge of the rug, kicked the dirt under it, and then looked up at me inquiringly. Ever since rugs were invented people have thought it clever to sweep dirt under them, but Tony's ingenuity dispelled none of my despair, and I hugged him to me unhappily. Finally the pediatrician phoned.

"When you said yesterday Tony wasn't normal the meaning didn't seem to register. I'm sorry," I apologized.

"But I didn't say he was mentally retarded," the doctor objected.

"You didn't?"

"No. Actually, I suspect his trouble might be something quite different."

"If you mean some emotional problem, I wish I could believe that. It's not true of Tony. He's a happy child."

"Don't feel too discouraged yet," the doctor said. "Come in again next week. We'll try to get your little boy an appointment at a psychiatric clinic."

A psychiatric clinic? Where psychiatrists do whatever they do? I vaguely imagined those mysterious, specialists sitting silently, listening to a patient stretched out on a couch describing dreams. From a few obscure clues, such experts could scientifically detect people's deepest, subconscious thoughts. They also had methods to measure a child's intelligence more accurately than any fallible human judgment could. *Didn't they?* Although a few things existed that science hadn't yet learned to measure, those of us who believed in science knew anything "real" was measurable. I was also aware that psychiatrists delved into people's past. Tony didn't have much of a past, but I thought over the few years of his life.

Ike was a major in the Army, and we had two children. Army life appealed to our sense of adventure, and I actually enjoyed moving every couple of years to a new and different post. After a European tour of duty, we were stationed in Colorado. The fishing was great, but after hectic days of pulling toddlers out of streams and rescuing them from falling down ravines, I left the fishing to Ike. We bought a small house, our first, and I tended a yard full of flowers. Planning to have two children, a boy and then a girl, I felt annoyed to find myself pregnant at the age of thirty seven. If abortions had been legal, I would have had one. Nevertheless, something (I've since read it was hormones) soon convinced me another child was a good idea, an unplanned bonus. By my fourth month I was eagerly looking forward to the new baby. Guy and Sherry came down with measles. I was sure I'd had them as a child, but the doctor gave me a shot of gamma globulin, which was supposed to lighten the illness in case I hadn't.

There was nothing unusual about Tony's delivery. It was routine. Bastille Day was probably an appropriate date to launch us upon our coming chaos, for Tony was born on July 14, 1957. He arrived several weeks early, on a Sunday, and Ike had gone fishing. Leaving the children with a neighbour, I took a taxi to the hospital, where I discovered my doctor had also gone fishing. The baby didn't wait for my doctor. Tony was born after a few hours, and my first question was the same one most mothers ask, "Is the baby all right?"

"A fine healthy boy," the substitute doctor said from behind a surgical mask. Such was my faith in medical science, I assumed the doctor had determined Tony's normalcy in that first glance. I never gave the matter another thought. Our optimistic culture seems to encourage such a self-confident attitude. Materialistic philosophy regards people as either perfect or "broken", and imperfections are thought of as preventable accidents, often scientifically repairable, that might otherwise interfere with our "normal" happiness.

When Tony was sixteen months old, Ike was sent to an artillery school in Oklahoma for a few months. After that he had orders for Korea. The children and I took the train to California to stay near my family. That train trip, confined to a compartment with three small children, was not a relaxing experience. The two older ones, missing their neighborhood playmates, became bored and bickered - while Tony jumped up and down on my lap. We ate in the compartment,

instead of trying to go to the dining car. Tony spilled a bottle of ketchup over all of us. There was a tiny toilet in the compartment, to which I occasionally escaped with a cup of coffee. In California, I rented a house next door to my sister. Her husband's work kept him away from home much of the time.

"My children resent their father being away," my sister said. "Yours will become unhappy too." Believing one of the obligations of a parent was to avoid unhappiness, I thought of ways to keep us busy.

"I don't understand it," she remarked after a few weeks. "Your children are eager for their father to get home, but they don't seem unhappy."

She probably meant I didn't appear unhappy. Her children seemed all right to me, and I suspect she was the one who resented her husband's absence.

My sister once took Tony to town to buy him a toy. Tony could not be talked into anything. He shook his head and responded a decisive "No!" to everything she offered. Awed by Tony's determination, she took him into a big toy store and playfully issued a challenge. "I'll buy anything in the store that interests my nephew," she announced. She spent an entertaining afternoon as the clerks exhibited their most expensive toys. Despite their enthusiastic demonstrations, Tony continued to shake his head and declare a determined "No!" My sister left the store without a purchase. We laughed when she told about it.

As in Colorado, we lived in a neighborhood with lots of children. It was the baby boomer generation. From morning till night our children were at the neighbors or the neighbor children were at our house. Tony was still too young to participate in their activities, but I assumed that "being part of the gang" kept him entertained. However as I remembered the doctor asking how Tony got along with other children, I realized he really never paid much attention to them. If the other children played in the sandbox, Tony played on the swings. He would roam out of the yard. I would find him, scold him, and give him a swat on the diaper. Once we couldn't find him anywhere. After frantically searching the neighborhood we called the police. Tony had apparently gone exploring on his own. Someone several blocks away had found him, and two policemen brought Tony home, frightened, and sobbing, "Tony broke! Oh no, Tony broke!" Things often "broke" around Tony, and it was one of the few words in his vocabulary.

Like my older son, who didn't talk until he was three, Tony had not babbled as a baby. He was capable of speech, and occasionally said a few words, but mostly he was a silent observer. His first words were "see boat". We had no idea how Tony happened to share Ike and my interest in boats, but we all joined his game and yelled, "See boat!" when we spotted a car pulling one along the freeway. It was about this time he had his first real temper tantrum. I don't recall the cause of his fury, but I remember us all standing and staring in amazement at him lying on the floor kicking and screaming - a little bundle of violent rage. We laughed at him. My family had always enjoyed differences in people, and we regarded children as fun? *Wasn't that the reason everyone wanted children? Because they were fun?* I'd never known anyone with a temper, but

surely Tony's tantrum wasn't any more cause for concern than Larry's imagination was. My four-year-old nephew insisted he had a herd of colored goats which were invisible to the rest of us. "You are sitting right on top of my green goat!" he would declare, causing startled visitors to jump up in alarm from wherever they were sitting. At other times Larry claimed he was a robot and had to be wound up every morning. We assumed that whatever our children did was normal, and often entertaining, and that included any differences we noticed in Tony.

Ike returned from the school in Oklahoma. In a month he would leave for Korea, and we plunged into a flurry of activities with the children, such as fishing, picnics, zoos and museums. However I could see Ike was troubled. He was a public information officer, and the school he had attended was an artillery school. It included mathematics and difficult, technical subjects. Ike acknowledged that the course had not gone well. One indication of my husband's unease was his acquisition of a swagger stick. Some Army officers carried this ridiculous little six-inch piece of leather around, for no purpose as far as I could see, other than to prop up their egos. I wouldn't have thought Ike's ego needed such a prop. His natural self-confidence was one of the traits that had attracted me to him.

Then, a couple of weeks before he was to leave for Korea, a letter arrived stating what Ike had secretly feared and dreaded. The armed forces were cutting back, and he received orders relieving him from active duty as an officer in the Army Reserves. His feeling of failure was one of the most painful things Ike ever had to endure, and my heart ached for him. However we had always led a more eventful, unconventional life than most people and we turned our attention to dealing with our altered circumstances. With only five years until retirement, Ike could enlist as a sergeant to finish his twenty years. Then he would retire as a major. At least now he didn't have to go to Korea. Although Ike and I were busy trying to adjust to a different future, the children were too young to pay much attention, and the event didn't have much effect upon them. Tony, not yet two, wasn't even aware anything was happening.

Ike enlisted at the Presidio in San Francisco. He received "mustering out pay" for leaving the Army as an officer, and we bought a big old triplex across the Golden Gate Bridge in Marin County, with a couple of apartments to rent out. I was reluctant to try to work while the children were so small, and I put an ad in the paper offering to do ironing at home. Today most fabrics don't even need ironing, but at that time it was a chore that required hours of tedious effort. Many housewives were relieved to hire someone to do it. I rather enjoyed becoming proficient. I was soon doing all that ironing in half the time as when I started. It was a way I could help with the finances, but wouldn't have to leave the children with a baby sitter. We had lived a quiet, uneventful life until Ike was sent to Greenland eight months ago. Temporary separations were routine in the Army, and the children and I had gone on with our lives while awaiting Ike's return.



Tony

I went for my next appointment with that strange doctor, expecting a quick answer to the question of whether there was something wrong with Tony. The medical profession had scientific ways to measure everything that was real, I assumed, and that included intelligence. *Didn't it?*

*_*_*

I don't really expect to understand how the laws of nature originated – not through either science or religion. Theism claims a deity dictated them and suspends them when it suits His purpose. The Atheist concept seems to regard such laws as popping into existence, for no particular reason, and accidentally creating a deterministic contraption of infinite complexity, ticking away in perfect harmony - a mechanical reality in which adaptation occurs accidentally. There is supposed to be a third view, agnosticism, which insists such knowledge about ultimate

origins is unknowable. However the human mind seems unable to resist speculating about such things. My own agnostic guess is that the entire universe is alive and conscious, and something similar to the same free-will I personally experience plays a subtle, undetectable role in all of reality. The universe created itself, and the laws of nature are entrenched habits. In fact, the laws governing the inanimate universe have grown and developed so slowly, and have become so entrenched, that they appear fixed to us. Life, on the other hand, is still actively evolving, and free-will has evolved in humans to the point where most of us take it for granted. Thus, with a will of my own I feel like a participant in that creative process, rather than a passive observer in a mechanical reality. I might not have much power to effect significant change in most of the universe, but I do sense some participation in my own growth and development.

I didn't think up such ideas. Plato reportedly stated more than two thousand years ago, "The universe is a single living creature that encompasses all living creatures within it." Robert Lanza calls it biocentrism. Rupert Sheldrake - and some proponents of Intelligent Design - also indulge in similar speculations. Every learned philosopher is at some time disputed by some other learned philosopher, so I feel justified in picking and choosing which philosophy appeals to me. Our understanding of life, creativity, consciousness and free-will is primitive, leaving us with much to wonder and speculate about. Just as religion has proselytized, philosophical materialists present their speculations as established truth, insisting that anyone who disagrees is being deliberately ignorant.

Question 4: Are some scientific concepts too sacred to be debated?

By the time I went for my next appointment with the pediatrician, I was even more confused and frightened. In addition to the authority doctors are accustomed to exercising over patients, what happened with the doctor that day may have also been partly due to the snobbery of Army rank, which extended to wives in those days. Captain's wives outranked lieutenant's wives, and the general's wife could tell us all what to do. Fraternalization between officers and enlisted personnel was discouraged. Doctors were officers, and I was an enlisted wife. In my emotional turmoil I had probably shown up dressed somewhat like a migrant farm worker. If the doctor seemed to bully me, well, that was how some officers felt entitled to treat the troops in those days. Nevertheless I suspect I would have resisted such an invasion of my privacy, no matter how tactful and skillful the doctor had been.

I took *Castor Oil and Quinine*, the book about Tony's great grandfather. I suppose I hoped it might give credence to my vague belief that Tony was unusual because he would grow up to have some mysterious quality like those attributed to the legendary Dr. Vandegrift. Tony was not precocious, but I'd decided precocious children don't necessarily grow up to be the most capable adults. My other son hadn't talked until he was three, and he was growing up to be a

great kid. It might be difficult to determine a correlation between precocity and creativity. By the time creativity is recognized in an adult, the age at which that individual said his first words would usually be lost in a forgotten past. However I'd read of a couple of highly creative people, such as Edison and Einstein, who were reportedly slow to mature as children. Furthermore Tony's great grandfather was quoted in the book Ike's father wrote as recommending children not start school until the age of eight in order to guard against early intellectual development. Perhaps such distrust of precocity suggested that late bloomers might have been common in my husband's family.

The pediatrician's hair was indeed dark and he wore glasses, I noticed. His words remained stark in my memory, but details of the doctor's appearance had been blasted out of my mind. He greeted me briefly, as though impatient to begin, with only a glance at Tony. He didn't mention the psychiatric appointment he spoke of on the phone. Instead he tenaciously continued with the same menacing demand of the previous week,

"Well now, tell me about yourself."

Weren't we going to even make a pretense of discussing Tony? I wondered with dismay. I wanted to answer him, but somehow I couldn't. I'd always found doctors intimidating, but I'd never encountered one so threateningly intrusive.

"If you have some wild idea you are going to get to know me, forget it! No one knows me as intimately as you seem to have in mind," I said. Then I fell back in my chair with a resigned sigh. "But for some reason I don't understand, this is supposedly for Tony. So go ahead. What do you want to know?"

"Just tell me anything you can think of."

The doctor apparently wanted me to just say whatever popped into my head. I had no hidden, shameful secrets; I considered myself quite open and well adjusted. However even my husband seemed to respect my privacy more than this doctor with his hostile demand that I "tell him about myself". If I started rattling on about myself, as the doctor apparently wanted, I'd probably blurt out something inane. *Was that what he hoped I would do? Say something so ridiculous that he could then diagnose me as abnormal?* I just couldn't bring myself to cooperate. In 1961 in the United States, the validity of this new scientific treatment, psychotherapy, was rarely challenged. A psychiatrist's couch was prescribed for many ailments of unknown cause. Anyone who resisted such personal intrusion was contemptuously accused of "refusing help". The doctor was certainly suggesting an intimate discussion in which I was reluctant to participate. I've heard that women sometimes "fall in love" with their analyst, and I suspect sexual feelings are sometimes an aspect of psychoanalysis. There was actually no hint of sex in this doctor's manner, but I suddenly felt I knew what being raped by a stranger must feel like. We spent some time verbally sparring, and I managed not to tell him much of anything. Tony, probably sensing my distress, stood and watched the doctor instead of pursuing his usual explorations, but like the previous week, the pediatrician ignored him.

Finally the despair on my face must have convinced the doctor I wasn't being intentionally difficult. He stopped and tried a fresh approach.

"Was your husband a sergeant when Tony was born?"

"No. He was a major. He was '*reduced in rank*' a couple of years ago, but that did not cause us any terrible unhappiness. There are even advantages for me - such as not having to attend officers' wives' luncheons."

"You don't like officers' wives' luncheons?"

"No. Would you?" He hesitated, and I detected a trace of smile at the corners of his mouth. Maybe I could distract him from tormenting me for a moment. "Well? How would you like to attend women's luncheons?"

His grin finally materialized. "I can't picture myself wearing an appropriate hat," he admitted with amusement. (In those days women wore really fancy hats, often decorated with artificial fruit and flowers, to luncheons.) The doctor didn't stay distracted for long though, and he soon resumed to his relentless interrogation.

Everyone has their peculiarities," I said. *Which of mine was this doctor so determined to expose?* I would willingly confess to something, *anything*, if it would end this inquisition. "Maybe Tony is just going to grow up to be peculiar like his great grandfather." I indicated the book I'd brought about Dr. Vandegrift. That Tony might grow up to be exceptional because of his great grandfather was not a rational thought, but there was nothing rational about my thinking at that moment.

"What was peculiar about him?"

I faltered, not even sure what I meant. I didn't really understand why Dr. Vandegrift was regarded with such awe by everyone in the family, but it would seem immodest to come right out and admit I thought my child might grow up to be such an exceptional person. I finally blurted out,

"Well, he was clairvoyant."

Tony's great grandfather was said to have once jumped up from the dinner table in New York and declared his barn in Maryland was on fire. It was. We know how radio and television are transmitted over long distance. I don't dismiss the possibility that, under exceptional stress, individual minds might also occasionally communicate by some means that we don't presently understand. Such a phenomenon might be difficult to demonstrate scientifically, though. Terror, or some other violent emotion, often seems to be a part of it, and how could such feelings be simulated in a science laboratory? Nevertheless I was aware that extra sensory perception was not a respectable notion in our 20th Century, scientific society, and I certainly wasn't one of those ignorant people who question science. I usually avoided thinking about Dr. Vandegrift's reported psychic abilities by deciding he was probably highly perceptive and had

somehow convinced everyone he was clairvoyant. To my relief the pediatrician ignored my suggestion and didn't ask me to explain. He seemed preoccupied with something else I'd said.

"Peculiar," he muttered to himself. "Peculiar. . ."

He stood up and walked over to the window. He stood for a moment in silent thought. Then he turned and resumed his interrogation more purposefully, as though seeking specific information.

"Where did you grow up?"

"In Ukiah, a small town a couple of hundred miles north of here."

"And your husband?"

"He's from New York."

"We were married by a one-armed preacher in Alaska." I wasn't trying to be flippant. I merely thought this miserable ordeal might become less grim if we could inject a little levity into it. Mentioning irrelevant fact that the preacher only had one arm was just part of my frantic search for a diversion.

"Where were you married?"

"Alaska! What were you doing up there?"

"I don't know. Got restless, I guess."

"Restless," he repeated. "Restless...hmm. What type of work did you do in Alaska?"

"I've done lots of things. The first money I ever earned was selling acorns to Indians. In Alaska I carved totem poles for the Indians."

"Totem poles!! What did they do with them?"

"Burned them."

"*Burned them??*"

"Oh," I explained, exasperated at how seriously he took my attempts at humor, "I worked in a store. I carved some totem poles out of candles, and lots of people bought them, including some Indians."

He stood looming over me. I wondered how he'd react if I told him about getting into a poker game, down in the engine room with the crew of the *SS North Sea*. When the ship reached Sitka, I didn't have enough money to return home if I had wanted.

"Architecture is what I studied in college," I said, sensing this was what he was trying to find out.

The doctor moved back toward his desk and was silent for a moment. "Got pretty good grades, didn't you." It was a statement rather than a question. He sounded less contentious, almost sympathetic.

"My grades were all right." They weren't quite as good as the doctor was making them sound.

"What is your religion? I mean - ah - do you have any religious affiliations?" A moment ago he had arrogantly badgered me to tell him details of my private life. Now suddenly, he seemed hesitant to ask my religion.

"Agnostic."

"Agnostic or atheist?"

"Agnostic I guess, but I send the children to Sunday school."

Most parents feel obligated to indoctrinate their children with their own theology. Resolving questions about one's personal philosophy, and finding meaning in twentieth century existence seemed to me the most difficult, significant accomplishment of anyone's life. Certainly children aren't capable of such philosophical insights. Even after becoming adults, many people seem content to adopt some ready-made religion or philosophy, rather than working out their own. However neither Ike nor I felt capable of such conformity, and we didn't want to usurp any of our children's options.

The doctor sat down at his desk and began writing in Tony's medical record.

"I'll try to get you an appointment at a psychiatric clinic as soon as possible, Mrs. Vandegrift," he said without looking up from the folder. *He appeared embarrassed - as though he'd been caught brow-beating the general's wife, for heaven's sake!* I remained in the chair. The doctor still didn't look up. He seemed to consider the appointment finished. Apparently he had finally learned some significant fact about me, some clue for which he had been probing. *But what had I revealed? Did the doctor expect me to get up and leave without ever discussing Tony?*

"Isn't it possible Tony is merely slow growing up? I can't believe something is wrong with him. I've watched every move he made this week. He seems to spend his time playing, like any child does. For instance, he spent this morning taking a flashlight apart and trying to pu--"

"He likes to take things apart, does he?" The doctor turned to look at Tony.

"Yes."

During the past half-hour I had become so involved in the doctor's interrogation that I had forgotten Tony. I looked at him now. He was watching the doctor gravely. The doctor bent over and spun his pen on the floor like a top. Tony stood observing the doctor's performance suspiciously.

"Couldn't he just be taking longer to mature?" I asked again. "Such a thing is possible, isn't it?"

He stared at Tony a few moments. The spinning pen hadn't seemed to affect Tony as the doctor expected. He picked it up and pocketed it in apparent disappointment. "I wouldn't care to make a judgment on the matter," he said, turning his attention back to Tony's medical folder. Apparently such slow development was a specific, normal possibility, but this pediatrician didn't feel qualified to make the diagnosis. This was the first hint of some mysterious condition that doctors would refuse to discuss.

I got up and took Tony's hand. I was shaking. I felt as though I had fought off a physical assault. I managed to walk through the waiting room and out the door of the clinic with Tony. I hadn't understood the doctor, and he seemed to ignore my questions. *Never, had I felt such bewildering inability to communicate!* This was the first of many incomprehensible experiences. I often felt more understanding of Tony than I did of the doctors I encountered. I should think everyone, including children who receive one of psychiatry's exotic diagnoses, would feel some of that same alienation. Autism was unheard of when my first son didn't talk until three, and Guy never had to cope with such a diagnosis.

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There are things science doesn't yet understand. I don't regard the notion that the laws of nature appear by accident much more believable than the idea that a god dictated them. I do object to either view being imposed upon society as "scientific truth". During the 20th Century the Scopes trial was held to determine whether evolution could be discussed in schools. The evolutionists lost, but such censorship was wrong, and the ruling was eventually overturned. A few years later another trial concerning evolution was held, this time in Dover, Pennsylvania, to determine which theory of evolution students should be permitted to discuss. Evolution defined as descent with modification was already accepted by many people before Darwin. Darwin claimed to have discovered a law which states that adaptations originate as random mutations. Philosophical materialists passionately defend the mechanistic formula, RM&NS, as an explanation of evolution. Nevertheless a growing minority of scientists have begun to question the creative power of "natural selection", and argue that intelligent, responsive organization might be an essential aspect of living systems. Proponents of Neo-Darwinism appealed to the courts for their "law" to be imposed upon school children, and at the trial in Pennsylvania, Judge Jones sided with the materialists. Actually, the case didn't even involve classroom discussion. The Dover school had a policy of reading a statement informing students that a book in the school library, *Of Pandas and People*, was available to any student who wished to explore the concept of intelligent design on their own time. What Judge Jones questioned was the motives of the Dover school board. Intelligent design is compatible with theism. Most members of the Dover school board were religious, and therefore the mention "*Of Pandas and People*" in the classroom was religiously motivated - and violated "separation of church and state". (According to Judge Jones.)

Question 5: Are intelligence and creativity two separate and distinct processes?

For a time after our second visit to the pediatrician, and while awaiting Tony's appointment at the psychiatric clinic, my mind became overwhelmed with irrational thoughts. I still have no explanation of that painful episode. That doctor's concern with me seemed to indicate that he regarded me as abnormal, and for a while I became obsessed with my own deviations. Maybe it wouldn't have happened if my husband had been home, but I had no one with whom I could discuss my "abnormalities". Eventually I even learned to laugh about the awful experience, but I confess that it was many years before I could write about that dreadful time without crying all over the typewriter. For some reason, I am still unable to make it sound terrifying rather than funny, but I certainly felt no amusement at the time. I'd suffered the most traumatic shock of my life. Much of the time I was alone with the children - and my thoughts. During the days I talked to neighbors, took care of the children and went on with my life. Night after night I lay awake pondering the pediatrician's bewildering cross-examination. I analyzed his every gesture, again and again, trying to understand the purpose of his strange interrogation. *What was he trying to find out? What did he think might be wrong with Tony?* (About which he "wouldn't care to make a judgment.") Aside from spinning his pen on the floor, which didn't appear to impress Tony, the doctor hadn't paid much attention to my child. *He appeared to be searching for something wrong with me, some abnormality serious enough to affect Tony.*

I'd never questioned my sanity. My parents had been blissfully ignorant about psychology, and I never paid much attention to it. "Suppressed hostilities", "inferiority complexes" and "emotional problems" might be clichés today, but they meant little to me at that time. Before television talk-shows, people didn't spend time discussing their feelings, and I never knew anyone who worried about their self-esteem. I'd never felt an urge to obsess over a "lack of affection during childhood". The world consisted of sane people and insane people, and no one seemed to express doubt that I was among the sane ones.

Until now!

One reason for my vulnerability was probably an awareness of being a little different. I didn't always share majority beliefs. My interests were often not those of a typical woman. I rarely felt the usual feminine enthusiasm for dresses, hats, hair-dos, sterling silver or the color of kitchen curtains - or even whether I had any kitchen curtains. Such non-conformity was not always comfortable, but I'd learned to live with it - mainly, by keeping my divergent thoughts and attitudes to myself. It had never occurred to me to regard them as abnormalities. But now *that doctor apparently not only thought I was abnormal, he actually believed my abnormalities had damaged Tony! Maybe I'd somehow caused Tony to become such a nonconformist that he didn't regard anything people did, including talking, as worth imitating.* Sometimes on those long, bleak, sleepless nights I vowed to phone that pediatrician and beg him to reveal whatever he had discovered about me. In the reality of daylight, I never mustered the courage to contact that menacing interrogator again, not even on the phone. I stayed home with the children and

awaited the appointment at the psychiatric clinic. While I waited, sentences floated to the forefront of my mind, statements I had read or heard somewhere, such as *"a very intelligent child who withdrew because his mother didn't talk to him when he was a baby."* That couldn't apply to Tony. I found talking to my babies natural. Besides, Tony had a talkative brother and sister, and numerous talkative, neighbor children.

I also remembered reading somewhere of a child (described by a psychologist as extremely intelligent) who *"wouldn't talk because he didn't have to; he pushed his mother around and got what he wanted."* Tony pushed us. He pushed someone into the kitchen and to the refrigerator when he was hungry. However Tony didn't push because he didn't want to talk; he obviously didn't know how.

I seemed to remember once reading of a psychologist claiming, *"An unusually intelligent child sometimes won't play with other children because he knows he is different."* That sounded silly to say about any child, and in Tony's case, he didn't pay enough attention to other children to notice any differences.

One night it struck me that all these remembered statements involved children with exceptional intelligence. I turned on the light, got out of bed and looked up *'genius'* in the encyclopedia. This authority stated some psychologists consider genius similar to a neurosis or psychosis, theorizing conflicts were channeled into productive pursuits rather than violent behavior. (That might sound silly, but it was in my encyclopedia - right along with all the Freudian nonsense.) I sat shivering on the floor by the bookcase, in my nightgown, with the encyclopedia in my lap. *Could that be what the doctor thought was wrong with me? Did he suspect me of being a closet genius and believe Tony had inherited this mysterious "neurosis" or "psychosis" from me?*

I knew my IQ was probably above average, and I generally had confidence in my own judgment. *But genius?* I was good at math, better than anyone else in my high school class. I even seemed to grasp mathematical concepts quicker than the boys did. I hadn't yet read discussions about the difference between analytical brains and intuitive brains. Eventually a Cambridge psychologist, Simon Baron-Cohen, would be one of the authorities to speculate about such differences, and he would suggest that autistic children possess hyper-masculinized, analytical brains. But Baron-Cohen was born in 1958, and he was only three years old in 1961 while I lay in bed agonizing over my "abnormalities" and what they had done to Tony, so I obviously didn't hear about such differences from him. However even before I read of such scientific discussions, I'd often been aware that I found men easier to understand than women. Women are often accused of "thinking with their emotions". Admittedly, I could become highly emotional, but I seemed able to understand my feelings and could often recognize any role they played in my thinking.

As a teen-aged girl, trying to out-smart the boys hadn't felt like a good idea. Playing dumb proved to be an effective social tactic, and I enjoyed clowning. In the architecture building at

the university a big tub of water was used to soak art paper before taping it to drawing boards. Architecture students were notorious for such juvenile pranks as dropping bags of water out the window onto unsuspecting victims. In 1940 I was the only girl in my architecture class, and my classmates announced that it was unladylike for girls to wear trousers. That was the reason they gave for throwing me in that tub of water whenever I appeared at school in slacks. They wouldn't have dared do such a thing to most girls, but they must have sensed in me the self-confidence and tolerance to deal with such playful rowdiness. In retaliation I talked someone into helping me dismantle a couple of their desks and reassemble them on the roof. Another time they locked me in the phone booth for a while and fed me Coca Cola by a straw through the keyhole. I was unable to keep from laughing. The truth was, I enjoyed being the victim of pranks as much as I delighted in playing them. Architecture was really my minor. I was majoring in fun. I actually had no pressing ambition to become an architect; like most girls I hoped to get married. Architecture was just something interesting to study in college. I was also developing social skills, something more important to me than academics at that point in my life.

Now as I pondered how my "abnormalities" might have damaged Tony, I remembered another incident at the university. Traditionally students stayed up together and worked all night before turning in their designs. We called it being *en charette*, a term borrowed from French architecture students who continued to work on their projects at the last minute, after they were placed "on the cart". One such evening I finished my work early and lay down on a couch to take a nap. Several of the boys were talking in a foreign language. They switched to English, and I realized they were discussing one of my roommates, and their words weren't meant for my ears. While I lay there wondering how to avoid being caught eavesdropping, one boy asked, "Do you suppose she's actually asleep over there?"

"You can never tell about her," another boy commented. "She's not as dumb as she pretends to be, you know."

I struggled to keep from laughing out loud. The boy was a friend, and he didn't seem to hold my "genius psychosis" against me. Now I suddenly wondered if that boy's remark could have more ominous significance. *The pediatrician had also detected my abnormality and apparently thought such a defect might have damaged Tony!* I felt overwhelmed with shame and humiliation. I cringed, as I wondered how many people must have observed the lengths my subconscious went to conceal my aberration, while I sailed through life oblivious to the glaring flaw. Such a defect might be overlooked in someone who accomplishes something, but I'd neglected to produce anything that might even remotely resemble genius. The pediatrician had even unearthed my shameful secret by using my own private IQ test: agnosticism.

If I was ever an Atheist, it was only briefly. The decline in our commitment to organized religion is a dramatic change in our society, much of which occurred just during my lifetime. Everyone has a religion, beliefs about right and wrong and speculations about the nature of reality. I'd

read that at that time, only one or two percent of the population admitted to being Atheists. I was a little ahead of my time. However not all religions include a supernatural, personal God - a God who expects to be “worshipped”, and who is concerned about the happiness and details of individual lives. I don't anticipate a complete understanding of nature's creativity, but I recognize that creativity exists as an aspect of reality. The accidental, mechanistic model adopted by most Atheists seems to me just as implausible as any religious story. Today, blatant scorn for religious beliefs has become almost common, and many people openly use Atheism as a measure of intelligence. Like many of today's rather abrasive, evangelical Atheists, I also considered myself quite clever to have rejected religious myths and parables. As I lay in bed agonizing over my deviations during those long, dark nights, my "genius psychosis" felt excruciatingly painful. That doctor's probing was one of the most traumatic experiences of my life. My reaction might seem absurd today, but it's hard to realize the power Freudian psychology could exert over frightened people's minds. I would grow, and today I hope my entire reaction to having a retarded child might be less self-absorbed. I suspect most growth is achieved when forced by circumstances, and my impending growth was bearing down upon me.

Then one night as I lay in bed brooding over my aberrations and what they had done to Tony, an amusing thought struck me. I remembered the time I wrote two checks for twenty dollars each because I couldn't remember how to spell forty (oops! *-forty-* these days my computer renders spelling an obsolete measure of intelligence). *Some genius!* My natural sense of humor had returned, and without really understanding them, I managed to push those agonizing thoughts from my mind. What the doctor was actually trying to determine was whether I rejected my child. He suspected autism, of which I'd never heard, and which at that time was believed to be caused by "maternal rejection". It was also thought that autistic children would be extremely intelligent - if they weren't rejected.

The episode did teach me that perfectly sane people are capable of irrational episodes. At that time subconscious thoughts were believed to cause insanity, and some doctors apparently felt qualified to examine people's subconscious to judge their mental health. Today, as Freudian analysis has lost some of its allure, fewer doctors might feel so presumptuous. As we have learned that autism is not caused by “maternal rejection”, we might remind ourselves that even the most skillful psychiatrist was once unable to distinguish a loving mother from a rejecting one. They detected “rejection” in every woman who happened to be the mother of an autistic child.

Question 6: Are psychoanalytic theories profound? Or just convoluted?

When I emerged from my agonizing self-examination, I began to seek opportunities for Tony to be with other children his age. I took him to a Sunday school. Marching energetically around the nursery with the three-year-olds, singing *Onward Christian Soldiers*, I tried to make it look like fun. Tony remained unconvinced. He seemed indifferent to the other children and what they were doing. He was more interested in opening the piano or finding out what was in the broom closet. He didn't appear frightened. Finally he got out of his little chair and lay down on the floor. The other children gathered around and asked what Tony was doing - and why.

At home I watched Tony constantly. He became suspicious and refused to do anything under my scrutiny. I coaxed him into repeating some words one afternoon, but when I tried again the next day, he took himself indignantly into his room and slammed the door. Some cooperation is required to teach anyone, I realized. One day I found him on top of some boxes stacked on a chair trying to knock a box of cookies off a shelf with a broom. Tony's reactions were quick, and his expression was bright-eyed and alert. Most of his mischief seemed to require imagination. But other than his lack of interest in other children, he appeared perfectly normal to me. If he wasn't unhappy - didn't have an emotional problem - *what else could be wrong with him?*

When the day arrived for our appointment at the psychiatric clinic, my fear for him had abated somewhat. That pediatrician was not an authority on emotional problems, I told myself. On the other hand, a scientifically trained professional at a psychiatric clinic would quickly see Tony was obviously a happy child. Confident such scientific specialists understood human emotions and could fix any that were out of kilter, I finally spoke to a psychologist at Letterman Army Hospital Psychiatric Clinic in San Francisco. He was an agreeable young man who introduced himself as Dr. Berger. Tony, probably sensing that men in white coats upset Mommy, sat quietly on my lap and gravely watched the doctor, instead of looking for something to dismantle.

"What seems to be the trouble with your child?" the psychologist asked.

"I don't believe anything is wrong with him. He doesn't talk much and is still in diapers, but so was our other son until the age of three." That pediatrician had appeared to consider it significant that Tony took things apart, and I continued, "He takes the knobs off the TV, unscrews pieces off the sewing machine, and clocks seem to disintegrate faster than we can buy them."

"Not so fast!" he said, trying to write everything down.

"Tony has a temper. I've never discovered an effective way to deal with his tantrums, so I try to ignore them." The doctor nodded in seeming approval. "Someone once suggested throwing a glass of water at him. My two older children thought that sounded like fun, and I tried it. Tony grabbed the glass out of my hand and threw it back at me. Then he continued his tantrum."

The psychologist, still writing furiously, smiled understandingly.

"One morning Tony wanted outside and couldn't get the back door open. He got a hammer and smashed out the glass panel. I could see by his puzzled expression that he didn't know why we were so upset."

We had all been shocked when Tony broke the glass out of that door, but I had recently decided he at least showed intelligence by figuring out how to get through a locked door. Undoubtedly the psychologist, an authority on intelligence, would agree.

"Would you say reward and punishment are methods that work with this child?" he asked.

"No!"

He grinned. "You sound as though you speak from experience." I nodded ruefully, and he continued, "Do you remember anything unusual about Tony as a baby?"

"No. He was a cute baby. He did get sick once. The doctors suspected asthma. He recovered when I stopped trying to force him to eat solid foods."

When my first child was born, the medical profession had decided tiny infants should be introduced to baby-food. Guy had resisted with an effective defense: he passed out at the feel of a spoon on his lips. My infant daughter had been less defiant and ended up in the hospital with diarrhea. However I made an effort to obey doctors' orders, and force food into Tony's mouth. When I suggested to my pediatrician that food might be causing Tony's asthmatic reaction, he suggested I experiment to discover which food. I felt guilty about disobeying a doctor, but I was reluctant to experiment. I decided that even babies sometimes sense what is best for them. I never gave Tony another bite until he became old enough to put food into his own mouth. Since then he'd been so healthy he'd rarely seen a doctor.

"Now," the doctor said, putting more paper on his clipboard, "Let's get some information about you."

"WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?" I shot back. It sounded louder than I intended. "I mean, oh well --"

I had been bracing myself for that question, and my defensive reaction was apparent. I took a deep breath, and struggling to sound calm and composed, I managed to regain control of myself. I inquired with a gracious smile and unconcerned serenity, "What would you like to know about me?"

The psychologist suppressed his own smile. Maybe he understood my aversion to these intrusive questions, and didn't seem to regard my reaction as pathological. "Just a little background material," he said.

"I grew up in Ukiah, went to the university, went to Alaska, got married --"

"Wait a minute! Let's start over and go more slowly."

Then he asked a few questions which didn't feel at all like the pediatrician's menacing interrogation. Just as I sensed the pediatrician believed I was concealing something, I soon felt this psychologist had quickly realized that I was well adjusted and emotionally mature. His questions seemed for the purpose of verifying my emotional stability. Tony slid off my lap to close a cabinet drawer. Checking for open drawers was one of the first things Tony did when entering a room. Closing them seemed to be one of his self-assigned duties.

"Were you and your husband getting along when Tony was born?"

"Well, my husband and I have our disagreements, like all married people, but --"

"But you weren't about to split up, or anything?"

"Oh no!" My unplanned pregnancy had been a stressful time for us. Ike was drinking a little more at that time than I would have liked, stopping by the officer's club after work. But Ike and I were very involved, we discussed everything, and we both appreciated the close understanding we had achieved. I knew the thought of separating had never occurred to either of us.

"You attended the University of California," he continued, looking over his notes. "Where did you live while you were in college?"

"I shared an apartment with three other girls."

"You had the same roommates all through college?"

"Yes. Twenty years later, we are still close friends." I recognized the point of his question. He must realize emotionally unstable people could have trouble maintaining long term relationships. Tony apparently decided this white-coat-clad man was not threatening Mommy. Losing interest in the psychologist, he was crawling under the desk.

"Did you graduate from Cal?"

"No."

"Oh? Why not?"

"I changed majors several times. When the war began, I went to work in the drafting department at the shipyards."

"Then you went to Alaska. Why did you go up there?"

I looked at him blankly. Travel was restricted during war-time, and at the time I'd had to make up a reason. I'd invented a fiancé and claimed I was going to Alaska to get married. However no one needed a reason to go to Alaska these days, did they?

"I don't know. I did it just for fun, I guess."

He appeared to find the answer acceptable and asked about Ike's rank in the army when we were married.

"He was a lieutenant..." I glanced around the office. I was looking for the psychologist's coat with some gold bars on it, so I could say, "that kind." I finally said, "Oh, that bottom kind. You know, that bottom kind."

It sometimes confused me that one became a second lieutenant before becoming a first lieutenant, *but dammit, why had I said something stupid like that?* Dr. Berger was suppressing another smile and didn't appear to consider my lapse serious. As I talked to more psychologists during the next few years, I was always tense. I strove to sound normal and casual, never intending to make jokes. Yet I often heard myself utter something preposterous. Certainly becoming so relaxed that I forgot my husband's rank was ridiculous.

"Let's find out something about your husband," the doctor said. "Did he go to college?"

"No."

"Oh? Do you know why not?"

"I'm not sure. I think he only wanted to work on a newspaper."

The psychologist asked about Ike's father, who was an eye surgeon. He seemed interested in Ike's grandfather and the book Ike's father wrote about him.

"What about your father?" Dr. Berger asked.

I hesitated. I could mention Daddy's inventions. That would be in the spirit of all this interest in our superior intellects.

Then I stopped myself. Depicting Daddy as a brilliant but unsuccessful inventor might be a bit of an exaggeration. "He was an automobile mechanic," I answered. Tony actually had relatives who were grade-school drop-outs. Subjecting children to years of education is a modern practice, and dropping out of school at an early age wasn't considered so unusual just a few generations ago. I sensed the psychologist wasn't interested in such relatives though, and didn't mention them. The psychologist appeared to have run out of questions.

"Doesn't an emotional problem imply unhappiness?" I asked.

"Not necessarily. Sometimes a child might feel guilty about something he doesn't understand, such as an automobile accident."

Guilty? I tried to imagine Tony feeling guilty! I dearly wished I could instill some guilt in the little rascal. I struggled to persuade him to feel remorse about things he *did*, such as throwing the cat out the window or smashing holes in the walls. Before we nailed screens over them,

Tony once threw all his clothes, bedding and toys out his third-floor, bedroom windows. Later, as I discovered his belongings scattered all over the ground below and began collecting them, some of the neighbors commented with amusement that they had watched that stuff flying out of our window all afternoon. But Tony seemed impervious to scolding. I'd been unable to evoke the least sign of compunction for anything he did, and I couldn't imagine him suffering guilt over something for which he wasn't even responsible. (Tony is now in his fifties, and I'm not sure he has ever yet experienced feelings of guilt.)

"Do you have any more questions?" Dr. Berger asked.

"Just one, and I suppose you won't answer it: Do you think anything is wrong with Tony?"

"No, I can't answer that now," he replied as he sat watching Tony dismantle a mechanical pencil he'd found under the desk. "We don't th -- I mean we hope nothing is wrong with your son. But we'll have to wait for an evaluation." I nodded, and the psychologist added optimistically, "In any case, it might be interesting to see exactly what kind of a child you have here!"

His tone was cheerful, almost excited, and it was another hint at some mysterious diagnosis involving high intelligence. At that time many psychologists apparently believed autistic children - despite their retarded level of functioning - possessed high IQ's. Although I had yet to hear of autism, this psychologist acted as though he suspected our family of being awfully smart. He hadn't asked if we graduated from college; he asked why we didn't. Remembering the horror of thinking something might be wrong with me, I tried to resist another attack of "genius psychosis". Nevertheless by the time I left, I'd had a relapse. This time my genius psychosis wasn't painful; it was a heady, lofty feeling. I felt confidently qualified to offer my opinion on any subject. Perhaps I should make another effort to understand relativity, I mused - or maybe even quantum mechanics?

Dr. Berger suggested we walk down to the end of the hall to allow Tony to become familiar with the playroom, where the evaluation would take place. I'm sure poor little Tony believed something frightening and terrible was about to happen to him. Mommy seemed convinced of it lately. He took one look at that room full of children's equipment and decided this might be where it would occur. He charged into me and knocked me out of the room. Then he got behind and pushed me down the long hall, through the waiting room full of people and out of the building. Most of my attention was focused on coping with Tony. Nevertheless I left with an impression of the psychologist watching with an amused look on his face. *Surely no one would regard the tragedy of an abnormal child with such amusement!* The psychologist would look more somber if he thought Tony was retarded. *Wouldn't he??*

The psychiatric clinic had a long waiting list, and our appointment for Tony's evaluation was not for several months. Determined to learn something about psychology, I began reading books from the library. Psychology seemed to consist of defining "normal" as average, and discovering unique experiences in our lives that caused some of us to deviate. (Apparently, no one would deviate from average without a reason.) In one psychology book I read that Navy frogmen fear

women and find in the sea the security of their mother's womb. In another old psychology book I found a description of a “withdrawn” child whose symptoms might have resembled Tony's. The psychologist discovered the child was in the care of a baby-sitter, a woman with a low IQ who talked too much. The psychologist felt the child, who had a high IQ, withdrew because of aversion to so much low-brow chatter. Here was another “withdrawn” child who had turned out to be exceptionally intelligent. This must be the diagnosis Dr. Berger suspected for Tony. Dr. Berger must be aware these children didn't “withdraw”. I decided that psychologists must have finally realized late development was natural for some highly intelligent children. I also read that Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, blamed most male emotional problems on an Oedipus complex, a suppressed, guilt-laden wish to murder father and ravish mother. Freud claimed little girls are obsessed by envy of their father's penis and feel castrated. (Some men sure have an exaggerated view of the aesthetic qualities of that piece of anatomy!)

Wilhelm Fleiss was an ear-nose-and-throat doctor and a close friend of Freud's. Fleiss and Freud believed there was a direct connection between a woman's nose and her womb. They made this scientific discovery when they learned they could treat menstrual cramps by applying cocaine to a woman's nose. Fleiss operated upon the nose of one of Freud's patients, Emma Eckstein, as a treatment for hysteria, an illness that was thought to take place in the womb. Fleiss removed the woman's turbinate bone in a horrifically botched procedure that left the patient permanently disfigured, with the left side of her face caved in. Nevertheless, Emma remained friends with Freud, and adopted his theories (one of which was that the prolonged hemorrhaging in her nose was the result of repressed longings for Freud). She became a psychoanalyst herself.

Beginning with Freud, the psychiatric profession began treating feelings, emotions and inhibitions like something physical – which could be manipulated by a therapist. They declared lack of inhibitions to be an abnormality, and invented a bunch of entities such as ids, egos and a naughty subconscious. All of us are isolated in our own heads to some extent. Learning to express one's thoughts and feelings could be a liberating experience for anyone, including the neurotic and mentally ill. Writing about my experiences, and learning to express my thoughts and feelings on paper has contributed to my personal growth. When struggling to put thoughts into words, I've discovered thoughts of which I wasn't consciously unaware. But psychotherapy usually limits the topic of psychoanalytic discussions to sex, rejecting mothers and traumatic childhoods. And guilt! I've committed hurtful acts during my life, but they were due to unintentional ignorance, and like Tony, I don't really understand guilt. We are free to reject or accept any thought that pops into our heads. We might feel guilty about things we do, but surely not about what we think!

In any case there must be more interesting subjects to expound upon besides sex and guilt! I personally would have trouble articulating about any of those recondite, multi-vocal structures of circumlocutory, obscure, macabre and tangled esoteric, elliptic, hyperbolic hypotheses and

postulates which seem to constitute psychoanalytic theories. I have a simple, straight-forward, uncomplicated mind. I suspect the same is true of many autistic people. We were born that way, and I don't see why we should have to apologize for it. Perhaps "neuro-typicals" (the term high-functioning autistic people sometimes use to describe non-autistic people) really do have more complex minds than ours. On the other hand, maybe neuro-typicals are just attracted to concepts too convoluted for human understanding. Nevertheless, considering all that emotional unhappiness suffered by people involved in psychoanalysis, if I had any choice, I'd sure choose simple over complex any day. And I can't resist the humor I see in some psychoanalytic theories. For instance, after his first ride on an airplane, Carl Jung's profound observation was: "People shouldn't fly. It's too fast, and they leave part of their psyche behind."

I continued to read psychology books, and as the months passed I worried less about Tony. My other two children didn't seem concerned. Sherry boosted my confidence with some of her own distinctive brand of logic.

"Really, Mother," she said. "I know why Tony didn't grow up. You never let him have his birthdays!" I organized birthday parties for the children because they enjoyed them, but Tony didn't seem at all interested. However Sherry was about to become seven and she knew it couldn't possibly be accomplished without a party. Ike arrived home from Greenland, worried, but reassured to see Tony looking bright eyed and healthy as ever. Tony was still unpredictable. He got up early one morning to fix his own breakfast, breaking a dozen eggs all over the living room rug. Once when Ike took him to town, Tony laid down on his stomach and drank out of the gutter.

"Drinking out of the gutter might be unsanitary," I assured Ike, "but perhaps it shows more intelligence than standing and crying that he's thirsty."

We resumed the busy life of a suburban family with small children. I awaited Tony's evaluation, rather smugly expecting to be informed we were the parents of a "gifted child"

Question 7: If purposeful creativity exists as an aspect of reality, why should we assume it is a process unique to human consciousness?

When I returned to the clinic with Tony the following week, both psychologists met us in the waiting room, Dr. Lavallo and Dr. Zircon. There was something different about their attitudes today; they seemed animated by a suppressed excitement. Psychologists and psychiatrists were proud to earn their living repairing human psyches, and confident of their ability to do so. Long before I ever heard of the terms autism or "maternal rejection", I often sensed doctors seemed

to view Tony as a rare, "interesting" case. I sensed it that afternoon. I decided these two psychologists must have finally compared notes with Dr. Berger. They probably now realized "exactly what kind of a child we had here" - whatever kind that was. We walked down to the playroom. Tony remembered where the blocks were kept and began to make an airplane.

Ike and I arrived at the clinic with Tony and sat in the waiting room. While retrieving Tony from crawling under or on top of the reception desk, I cautiously observed people in adjacent chairs, speculating about what mysterious cures and information everyone might be seeking from these modern technical experts. A young man came out and shyly introduced himself as Dr. Lavallo. I'd expected to see Dr. Berger, but Dr. Lavallo seemed to convey interested concern.

To our surprise, Dr. Lavallo asked Ike and me to take some tests ourselves, while he examined Tony. Ike complied with good-natured curiosity. Military families often obey without asking questions. However Tony apparently remembered that room full of children's playthings from our first visit, and he still found it menacing. He showed no desire to go in that playroom and have his intelligence measured, and he objected when I tried to leave. I stood anxiously out in the hall listening to Tony cry. I later wondered if allowing him to cry for those few minutes might have been interpreted as "maternal rejection". Actually, it was due to a misplaced "faith in psychologists". These men were the latest authorities on what was good for children. I did want to trust such scientific experts, and I forced myself not to interfere. Nevertheless, knowing the type of emotional reactions of which Tony was capable, I was confident his stress at that time was minor. Finally Dr. Lavallo came out and asked me to remain in the playroom while he examined Tony.

Tony found some blocks and began to make a train. The psychologist sat silently and watched him. The psychologist didn't appear talkative, and feeling uneasy about another conversation with one of these "mind experts", I also sat silently and watched. I was impressed that the psychologist could apparently measure Tony's intelligence by just seeing him play with blocks. Dr. Lavallo observed Tony for an hour, and then he asked us to return the next day. This time Ike stayed in the playroom with Tony, and I took the tests Ike had taken the day before, the details of which we had been asked not to discuss.

From a stack of cards with enigmatic phrases on them, I was told to pick twenty which applied to me, putting them in order with the most descriptive on top. From another stack of identical cards I picked twenty to describe Ike and Tony. Then I selected cards I *wished* applied to us. Most of the cards contained familiar words, but when presented out of context like that, I found their meanings elusive. "*Modest*", for instance, probably didn't just mean "*wearing enough clothes in public*". Even after looking up the word in a dictionary I sometimes ponder its meaning. If a person has a "*modest estimate of his abilities*", but the abilities are even more modest than the estimate, does the term still apply? The whole thing seemed difficult to determine. In any case my recent genius psychosis hardly entitled me to claim that one, and still feeling some embarrassment over that painful episode, I ignored "*modest*".

Did being a Cub Scout Den Mother qualify me to use “*leader*”? Probably not. I wasn't even a very good Den Mother. Guy, usually cooperative, became as uncontrollable as the rest of those rowdy little nine-year-old boys. They spent more time on top of the house and up in trees than doing the projects suggested in the Cub Scout manual. “*Warm*” surely didn't mean temperature, but come to think of it, what did it mean? “*Cold*” must be the opposite, whatever it meant. “*Hot*” and “*cool*” seemed to be missing. The harder I tried to figure out exact meanings, the more uncertain I became. Maybe I should stop doing so much thinking. I'd let my subconscious make selections. Surely it was my subconscious that concerned these psychologists. I did it rather playfully, never dreaming those silly cards could affect my child's diagnosis. Dr. Berger had appeared to have a sense of humor, I remembered, and I could probably think of some explanation for any choice he might question.

"Clinging vine" didn't appeal to me, but "independent" and "self-reliant" sounded fine, and I put them on top of descriptions of each of us. I'm not sure what causes boredom, but I do know that my husband and I and the children always found each other's company stimulating. But while I rarely disliked anyone, to be honest some people did bore me. I chose "can be indifferent to others" for all of us. It certainly described Tony, and I felt an impulse to defend my child's personality. Twenty cards for each stack were hard to find. Many sounded unflattering, such as "stern but fair", "believes everything they are told" and "generous to a fault". I would never have thought extreme generosity might be considered a fault. However if these psychologists saw it that way, I was willing to go along with the idea, and was careful not to choose that one. Then I tried to pick cards I *wished* applied. I wasn't actually dissatisfied with any of us. Everyone, including Tony, was entitled to respect for their individual nature. But thinking of it as a sort of game, maybe I should try to upgrade us all a little. I wished Tony were more precocious, but there was no card for that. *None of those cards felt like an improvement!* Finally I threw in one labeled "smug and self-satisfied". We all seemed content with who we were, but perhaps our family had more self-esteem than was justified, I speculated. However, if I threw “smug and self-satisfied” in with traits I wished applied to us, that might have puzzled the psychologists, I suppose.

Incredible as it now seems, I didn't question the scientific validity of those tests, never doubting that they mysteriously allowed psychologists to measure our innermost natures. Today I'd be more skeptical. Psychiatry regards inhibitions as abnormalities. Would they also regard *lack* of inhibitions as abnormal? Or would only certain inhibitions be regarded as pathological?

When we finished the tests Dr. Lavalley promised someone would phone when they reached a conclusion about Tony. We went home, and I told Tony to go wash his face. Tony often paid no attention when we told him to do things, but this time he startled us.

"Go bye-bye car?" Tony asked, always eager to go somewhere.

"Why no, dear! We are just going to eat dinner."

"Tony talk," he coaxed. "One, two, free, four, five. Tony talk."

"Did you hear that, everyone?" I exclaimed, grabbing Tony up in a gleeful hug,

"Maybe he's thinking he would have talked all along if he'd known it was all this important to us," Ike suggested. Guy and Sherry laughed with us. Tony seemed to tolerate our jubilation indulgently, but the rest of us remained in a festive mood all evening.

More than a week passed before someone called from the psychiatric clinic. "Could you come in tomorrow and talk to Dr. Zircon?"

"Shall we bring Tony?" I asked, wondering who Dr. Zircon was.

"No. The appointment is just for you."

"Do you mean my husband shouldn't come either?"

"No."

I was to return to the clinic alone? Was there something more than merely telling us there was nothing wrong with Tony? But if something was wrong, why had they sent for me to come alone? And why weren't Dr. Berger or Dr. Lavalley to reveal the results of the examination? I must have fouled up those damned cards! Damn! Damn! Damn! I should have taken them more seriously. Why did I always take such a playful approach to everything! Surely it was time I learned life consisted of more than just having fun! I'd expected my nightmare to end when the medical profession finally examined Tony and pronounced him normal. I shed some tears of fear, frustration and disappointment.

With foreboding I left the children at the Army-post, child-care facility, and met Dr. Zircon at the psychiatric clinic the next day. He turned out to be a chubby, cheerful looking young man in his twenties, with a round face and a smooth, pink-cheek complexion - an adult sized cherub. I followed him down the hall to his office and seated myself uneasily across the desk from him. He explained he was organizing a group of women who would meet once a week for a year. While their children were receiving therapy, the mothers would discuss their similar family problems.

"Family problems!" I exclaimed. "I don't have any family problems I want to discuss with anyone."

"Well then, you aren't yet aware of your problems." *(Was that ever the truth!!! And my biggest problem would turn out to be psychologists!)*

"But what's wrong with Tony?" I asked.

"We don't know."

Oh hell! He wasn't going to tell me Tony was one of those highly intelligent, "withdrawn" children I'd read about in the psychology books, I realized with a feeling of panic. "Then how do

you know something is wrong with him?" I argued. "I've heard of several children who didn't talk until they were four and grew up to be fine people."

"It isn't only that Tony doesn't talk. His symptoms are globular." He probably meant global. It sounded pompous to me.

"Tony's older brother was slow to talk, and he is a very intelligent child."

"Now, there is no denying Tony is a very bright little boy," the psychologist said. "But intelligence has ab-so-lutely nothing to do with this."

The psychologist had just declared that Tony was "very bright"! That was the scientific pronouncement I had been seeking. Tony's IQ test had apparently confirmed that he wasn't retarded, and retardation was what I had feared.

"If you think some problem in our family is causing Tony to be the way he is," I argued, "you are ab-so-lutely wrong."

"We'll see," he muttered.

I was confident I didn't have any emotional problems that needed the attention of a psychologist. "You don't believe me?" I managed to ask.

"Yes, we believe you." (He obviously didn't.) "Nevertheless, I urge you to try the group for a few weeks." Then he mumbled under his breath, "We'll see if we can't get a little transference going here."

I had come across that word in the psychology books. Psychiatric patients sometimes transfer emotions they feel for their parents to the therapist, and female patients often "fall in love" with their analyst. Did therapists come right out and suggest such a bizarre thing? I stared at the young psychologist in horror, unable to imagine ever feeling a romantic attraction toward him.

"I mean, it's about time we get Tony to show some emotion," Dr. Zircon added hastily.

I'd read the term also might refer to the transference, at a certain age, of a child's affection from his mother to his father. Maybe that's what he meant, I thought. But what was that mysterious diagnosis Dr. Berger seemed to have in mind when he said, "*It might be interesting to see exactly what kind of a child we have here*"? I tried to repeat some of the things I'd told the other psychologist, probably sounding more desperate than coherent.

"But the things he took apart?"

"Tony takes things apart?"

"And drinking out of the gutter."

"*He drinks out of the gutter??*"

"And bashing in the back door, I mean, and the other children, ignoring them, that is, and pulling up the neighbor's flowers. It was like the things he makes with blocks. Besides! I just remembered! Tony talks. He told us so. One, two, free, four, five. Tony talk. . . ."

The psychologist was eyeing me dubiously.

Oh Hell! I must stop raving and try to regain some composure! I realized.

"I don't mean to sound ungrateful," I said, falling back in my chair and trying to relax. "By offering me therapy you are trying to do me a service. I appreciate your concern. But--"

"Bring Tony in next week to get acquainted with Dr. Lavallo. He's the psychologist who will work with Tony." Dr. Zircon's face dimpled with a smile, as he got up to open the door for me.

"You'll be surprised at the progress Tony will make with our help."

I hadn't meant I was so grateful for his good intentions that I wanted some psychotherapy. However the psychologist seemed determined to administer a dose of it - whether I wanted it or not. I left his office, dazed, and with a premonition that something disastrous had just happened. As I walked down the hall I met Dr. Berger, the first psychologist who had interviewed me.

"Hi," he greeted me. "Was your little boy ever evaluated?"

"Yes," I answered glumly.

"How is everything?"

I shot him an unhappy look, but didn't answer. I figured he was in a better position than I to know "how everything is" around this crazy place. Doubts about these professionals, and their scientific tests, were beginning to creep into my mind. However science was the "religion" of our time, and expressing doubts would have constituted heresy. In 1961 I was still somewhat a captive of our 20th century materialistic philosophy, and I didn't question authorities. I would eventually decide that life is not a mechanical process and cannot be completely explained by the laws of chemistry and physics. Life is unpredictably responsive. Each particle seems to have some limited ability to respond purposefully, intelligently and creatively. Such creativity is what defines life, as distinguished from inanimate matter. If responsive creativity is actually an aspect of living processes, then the following materialistic, Neo-Darwinist, assertion (presently imposed upon school children by court order) is not true:

"all organisms have descended from common ancestors solely through an unguided, unintelligent, purposeless, material processes such as natural selection acting on random variations or mutations; . . . the mechanisms of natural selection, random variation and mutation, and perhaps other similarly naturalistic mechanisms, are completely sufficient to account for the appearance of design in living organisms".

Mechanistic explanations would not be “completely sufficient” to explain any non-mechanical process. If creativity isn't mechanical (and materialism is a philosophical assumption - not a scientific fact) - "naturalistic" mechanisms won't explain it. Philosophical materialists regarded intelligence as a unique human ability. They did consider man-made devices such as computers to be intelligent. However any intelligent appearing behavior by animals was at that time attributed to instinct – some mysterious, undefined, automatic process. That is changing now, and intelligent behavior has been attributed to other mammals, birds, fish and even insects. Some scientists see evidence that even plants have some ability to make informed choices.

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/12/23/the-intelligent-plant>

Scientists committed to philosophical materialism felt any suggestion of purpose in nature posed a danger to science. Rupert Sheldrake is a biologist at Cambridge University. He has spent many years arguing for a less mechanistic approach to biology. He recently wrote:

The belief in determinism, strongly held by many nineteenth-and early-twentieth-century scientists, turned out to be a delusion. The freeing of scientists from this dogma led to a new appreciation of the indeterminism of nature in general, and of evolution in particular. The sciences have not come to an end by abandoning the belief in determinism. Likewise, they will survive the loss of the dogmas that still bind them. They will be regenerated by new possibilities. (From: Science Set Free, by Rupert Sheldrake)

Question 8: Can the value of scientific knowledge ever justify enrolling people in research projects without their knowledge or consent?

When I returned to the clinic with Tony the following week, both psychologists met us in the waiting room, Dr. Lavallo and Dr. Zircon. There was something different about their attitudes today; they seemed animated by a suppressed excitement. I had never heard of autism, and was unaware that therapists were hoping to convince society that it was caused by a human deviation known as "maternal rejection". Psychologists and psychiatrists were proud to earn their- living repairing such human deviations. But long before I ever heard of the terms autism or “maternal rejection”, I often sensed doctors seemed to view Tony as a rare, "interesting" case. I sensed it that afternoon. I decided these two psychologists must have finally compared notes with Dr. Berger. They probably now realized "exactly what kind of a child we had here" - whatever kind that was. We walked down to the playroom. Tony remembered where the blocks were kept and began to make an airplane.

"Does he spend a lot of time playing with blocks like this?" Dr. Lavallo asked.

"Yes. Some of his creations are elaborate and quite artistic." I had learned principles of artistic design while studying architecture. No one had to teach them to Tony; he seemed to have been born with such knowledge.

"Note his use of symmetry!" Dr. Lavalley exclaimed to Dr. Zircon. Dr. Zircon didn't respond. "Do you see his use of symmetry?" Dr. Lavalley persisted, apparently excited by Tony's arrangement of the blocks.

"Hmph," Dr. Zircon grunted, with an uneasy glance toward me. Did he feel such technical matters shouldn't be discussed in the presence of uninformed laymen such as mothers? "Let's go down to my office and have a little chat," Dr. Zircon suggested to me.

Tony, busy with the blocks, didn't object to me leaving. I walked down the hall with Dr. Zircon. *Damn! Another psychiatric interrogation! Would the psychologist try to persuade me to lie down on a couch? How could I cope with his psychotherapy from such a vulnerable position? Maybe I should just refuse. Thank you, I'd insist, but I prefer to sit in a chair. How did he come up with the bizarre notion that these psychiatric inquisitions could be considered "little chats" anyway? How did I ever get into this ridiculous predicament? Most people live their entire lives without having their sanity or emotional stability questioned.* Dr. Zircon opened his office door for me. I glanced furtively around the room. *Thank heavens there didn't seem to be anything resembling a couch.* I sat uneasily on the edge of a chair and clutched my purse in my lap.

"Now," Dr. Zircon began, as he sat back comfortably and crossed his chubby legs. "Tell me about yourself."

"That corny question again!"

"Well then," he persisted, "what sort of things do you enjoy doing?"

"Yesterday I stopped at a railroad crossing with the children in the car. My daughter asked, 'Mommy, did you ever drive a choo-choo train?' I remembered the night I drove the *Nancy Hanks* from Atlanta to Savannah, tooting the whistle like mad all the way. That was sort of fun."

The remark was an exaggeration but it wasn't a complete fabrication. Ike had rejoined the army. I had been working for some architects in Atlanta, and until I could finish the project upon which I was working and resign, I took a train, the *Nancy Hanks*, to Savannah to be with Ike on weekends. One evening in the club car I met a vice president of the railroad, an elderly gentleman who invited me up into the engine to sit in the driver's seat and pull the whistle a few times. I realized I'd fouled up again - I'd said something flippant. *But why should I have to convince this psychologist I was normal?* Such a task seemed hopeless, like proving a negative. I looked him in the eye, daring him to make something out of my remark.

"What else do you enjoy?" He was trying not to smile, apparently not wishing to encourage levity.

"I garden, play tournament-bridge, and I read a lot. I've always managed to find something to keep busy." At the moment I probably wasn't portraying a convincing picture of a woman who enjoys life.

"What type of things do you not enjoy?"

"Oh, cocktail parties, women's luncheons." I could have added, and impudent young psychologists asking impertinent questions - but didn't.

He sat and looked at me a few moments. "Tell me about your childhood," he suggested.

I stared back at him, shocked. *What a nerve! How could psychologists sit and so cheerfully display such unmitigated gall? This Psychologist apparently felt absolutely no compunction about asking offensive questions!*

"Tell me about your childhood," he persisted.

I continued to glare at him, but his gaze didn't waver. Psychiatric theory had permeated our society enough that I realized traumatic childhoods were expected to cause children to become abnormal, and I supposed my childhood might be judged as somewhat traumatic.

"My father was an alcoholic" I finally said. "You'd probably consider that an unhappy childhood, but it wasn't really. I seem to have a talent for enjoying life and I enjoyed life as a child, in spite of a sometimes hectic home life."

As a child, I'd felt embarrassed about my father's alcoholism, but it had never been much of a secret. Many people in the town where I grew up were probably aware of Daddy's drinking. I was capable of lying. At least I thought I was. I wouldn't consider lying a mortal sin - especially if I thought something was no one's business. I just couldn't remember occasions when I felt compelled to do so. Certainly when taken by surprise like that, any ability to conflate the truth evaded me. Later I experimented to see if I could lie. I found I could - if I thought about it ahead, and prepared myself. I might even become proficient at lying - with enough practice. However when taken off-guard like that, the truth just seems to automatically pop out of my mouth. Besides, at that time I was under the impression that lying to psychologists would be futile; they had scientific methods of uncovering the truth. Scientifically trained psychologists could even detect my subconscious thoughts, things I wasn't even aware of thinking. *Couldn't they?*

Dr. Zircon finally seemed to become aware of my anger and changed the subject. "How do you feel about coming to group therapy?" he asked.

"A year would be a long time to sit and listen to the same women's problems."

"Yes, but after you become interested, you'll enjoy it. While you are in the group, Tony will be in the playroom with Dr. Lavalley. Allowing Tony to form a relationship with someone outside the family would be a good idea. That's the only reason for you to attend the group," he emphasized. I realized it would be nice for Tony to interact with someone outside the family, and I believed the psychologist when he said that was the only reason for me to attend group therapy.

*_*_*

I understand the practice of testing scientific theories. It sure beats Freud's bizarre, undocumented assertions. During the next few years I witnessed efforts to recruit or coerce parents of autistic children into various treatments. Therapists don't work for minimum wage, and all those "therapies" were obviously being financed by someone. It seemed apparent that publicly-sponsored research must be paying for much of it. Scientists might be reluctant to be completely open about research. Allowing parents to make decisions could influence the results. As it was, a few parents from other parts of the country learned about all the autism "treatment" going on in our area, and moved here to take advantage of it, making it appear that our area was suffering an autism epidemic.

How could science ever determine what role traumatic childhoods play in neurosis? If psychotherapists encourage patients to remember traumatic experiences, traumatic childhoods are precisely what those patients will obligingly recall. Some therapists not only suggest traumatic childhoods; they seem to demand such memories. And, strange as it appeared to me, some psychiatric patients seem to actually enjoy playing the role of victim. As I've read more about other people's lives, I noticed that children with an alcoholic parent often manage to accomplish quite a lot as adults. I might have accomplished a little more, myself, if I had taken everything more seriously. But whatever my childhood was judged to be, it seemed to have left me with the conviction that life was a glorious adventure. I was an individual, not a statistic. I'd never had any trouble convincing people I didn't fit the statistical generalization about boys being better than girls at math. Surely after he got to know me, Dr. Zircon would quickly realize I had not been traumatized by my childhood, and didn't need any therapy.

*_*_*

Medical experiments conducted upon people without permission produced some notorious examples during the first part of the 20th Century. Few people questioned the motives of scientists in those days, but we have since learned of the Tuskegee Study, which continued to "study" untreated black men suffering from syphilis for years after an antibiotic cure had been discovered. This "scientific study" was still going on at the time we were involved with the psychologists. It was also recently revealed that scientists once infected unknowing patients with malaria as an experimental treatment of syphilis. One of the most callous experiments I read was a 1939 study in which researchers deliberately mistreated a group of orphan children for the purpose of demonstrating that stuttering is a learned behavior. *Someone felt they could*

add to scientific knowledge if they could traumatizing children in an orphanage into stuttering! Scientists can choose to only publish those studies that produce the results they are seeking, and discard the others. Drugs can have adverse effects, and Ritalin was one of the drugs commonly prescribed for autism. However most of the psychological treatments of autism that I know of were benign. I doubt Tony, or any child, was actually harmed by it. I hated my psychotherapy, but I even benefited from the awful experience. If nothing else, it would cure me of my timidity. I'm convinced one can benefit from any experience, including traumatic ones, and perhaps the most harrowing experiences are the most valuable learning opportunities. Maybe I even needed something dramatic to penetrate my natural complacency. Conducting research upon people without their knowledge was finally recognized as unethical. However it would be 1974 before a law was finally passed requiring informed consent before including anyone in a research project.

I still wish someone would think of a way to evaluate the results of psychotherapy and counseling. Such treatment might still be worthwhile if people found it comforting. Furthermore, in the absence of a cure, psychotherapy might help mentally ill people learn to live with some of their minor disabilities. But surely the public is entitled to know whether or not psychotherapy actually cures anything. Its purpose should be more than just to provide employment for therapists.

Question 9: Exactly what technical knowledge enables psychiatrists to manipulate ids, egos and psyches?

During the Twentieth Century psychiatry divided human personalities up into Ids, egos, super-ego's and psyches. This was where psychosis supposedly occurred. These abnormal entities sometimes harbored naughty thoughts and kept them secret from the conscious self – thus destroying sanity. But if a psychiatric patient lay on a couch and talked, and a licensed therapist listened, the subconscious might be tricked into revealing itself. Once enticed out into the open by a therapist, the subconscious supposedly lost its destructive power, and the patient became normal. Understanding of psyches would be beyond the capabilities of most of us, and depending upon the expertise of the therapist manipulating them, the treatment could be very expensive. I felt fortunate to be less ruled by my subconscious than most people. On the other hand, a measure of neurosis, or at least some conflict, is probably essential for understanding art and poetry, talents of which I confess a dismal lack. Whenever I see lines arranged on a page like poetry, I sense immediately that I won't understand them, and I rarely do. Poetry is rife with symbolism, and symbolic meanings sometimes elude me. I recently heard of a book, *The Asperger Dictionary of Everyday Expressions*. Apparently Asperger people, (said to be a mild form of autism) have trouble understanding metaphors. I can usually figure out their

meanings, but I often fail to appreciate their beauty. I can't resist wondering why poets don't just say what they mean instead of concealing it in all that symbolism. But while an inability to appreciate esoteric verse should be no cause for pride, I hardly regarded it as pathological. I was convinced I was "normal" even if I seemed to lack much of a subconscious.

I remembered the excitement with which I left Ukiah at the age of eighteen and boarded a Greyhound bus for the university. There was a place at the University of California for any high school graduate with B average grades. Tuition was a mere twenty-six dollars a semester. Today's cost of education, with the horrendous burden of student loans, might have caused me to take it all more seriously, but at that time working one's way through college was an easy, carefree adventure.

A friend had arranged for me to spend one night with her aunt in San Francisco. In possession of fifty dollars, which I'd saved, and carrying a suitcase full of my belongings, I arrived in Berkeley early the next morning. Before registering, I located the campus employment office, where in exchange for room and board, I obtained a job helping with the children and household chores in the home of a professor. To my dismay the job didn't start until the next day. As I signed up for classes, I pondered the problem of where to spend that night. I'd never spent a night in a hotel. In fact, I was under the impression there was something unsavory about them. People made whispered comments about a woman in Ukiah who hung around the hotel. I was reluctant to take the ferry back to San Francisco for another night with the friend's aunt. A student adviser was assigned to each enrolling freshman, and I discussed my problem with her. She was probably puzzled by my aversion to hotels. Maybe she thought I didn't have any money, (*I actually had what remained of that fifty dollars in my purse – more money than I'd ever had in my possession at one time!*) but she offered me the bed of her roommate, who wasn't expected until the next day. We didn't inform the housemother. The roommate arrived unexpectedly in the middle of the night. The housemother was exasperated to find an uninvited guest. Muttering to herself, she gave me a pillow and blanket and allowed me to sleep on a couch. It was an unsatisfactory beginning for my glorious adventure, but at least I didn't have to brave the mysterious dangers of a hotel. The next day I moved into the professor's home. After paying tuition, I blew the rest of my fifty dollars on clothes, acquiring a pair of shoes with heels so high I could barely keep my balance.

My first months in Berkeley were a euphoric haze of blissful excitement. During my childhood I'd wished my family were more like those described in movies and magazines. Now suddenly my parents were far away, and no one gave any thought to my family. I made my first friend because my name was Starke and hers was Stahl. Seated alphabetically in freshman classes, (presumably to help the professor remember our names) I helped Kay Stahl with math. The similar spelling of our names was the beginning of a friendship which would last the rest of our lives. Soon we met Alice, a spunky orphan who had been earning her own living while still high school. Then Phyllis joined us. We all lacked sophistication, even for our ages, but we shared a sense of humor and enthusiasm for new experiences.

During my second year in college, the four of us squeezed our few possessions into a tiny studio apartment, all of us sleeping on couches in one room. We supported ourselves on about six dollars a week by working as waitresses and theater usherettes. We ate canned tuna, peanut butter and fresh vegetables, food that cost only pennies in those days. Coca Cola cost a dime, so we drank water. But so did most people during The Depression. Kay owned a beautiful, black velvet dress that we all borrowed for special dates. We were usually able to scrape up a quarter for an occasional hot fudge sundae or a trip to San Francisco on the ferry. The only credit available was a department store that allowed us to buy some clothes and pay for them at fifty cents a week. The clothes wore out before those accounts were paid off, leaving me with a life-long aversion to credit. We learned to live on whatever cash we could earn. We once decided to discover what it felt like to get drunk. We bought ale and whiskey and came back to our apartment and sat down and drank it. It felt awful. We all ended up sick in the bathroom.

I chose math as my major because it was easy. One doesn't have to spend time and effort memorizing anything for math; you just solve the equations. My thinking ran along analytical lines, and an understanding of people did not come easy to me. Today people are no longer such a mystery, and I think most of that insight was achieved from books. Reading is certainly one way to compensate for a lack of intuitive understanding of people. That's what books are, accounts of what other people think. One summer while still in high school, I decided to read every volume in the Ukiah library - alphabetically. I finished the A's and B's, which included Jane Austin and Louisa May Alcott, but the C's turned out to contain some pretty weird tales, and I abandoned the project. However when I started college I was still barely aware of my own feelings or beliefs, much less what went on in other people's heads. As a result, I was sometimes shy around strangers. Shy does not necessarily mean faint-hearted. I determinedly confronted new situations, and approached strangers, even when trembling with nervousness. Curiosity attracted us to the foreign students at the university, but we also made friends with cooks, waitresses, fire-fighters and baseball players. We worked and attended classes, but we also found time to swim, ice skate, ride horse-back, go camping and attend parties and dances. We stayed up all night with anyone willing to talk, trying to discuss our newly-found world of ideas. For me fun, and the discovery of this big exciting universe, took precedence over the pursuit of a career.

I became disenchanted with math when I took a course in which we solved equations on an imaginary plane where parallel lines meet at infinity. The equations weren't difficult, but I kept asking the professor why anyone would do such a thing. Any solution achieved on an imaginary plane at infinity was itself imaginary. Of what value was it? The math professor, a Chinese gentleman who spoke less-than-perfect English, was never able to give me a satisfactory answer. I began to wonder what one might actually do after becoming a mathematician - other than teach, which didn't appeal to me. (I never enjoyed telling other people what to do, and imposing one's will upon children is an essential talent for a teacher.) I consulted a counselor, who suggested mathematicians might be statisticians, but she neglected to explain exactly

what statisticians did. I changed my major to art. My drawing skills were adequate, and while I never really understood art, I felt empathy for the spontaneous, nonconformist attitudes of most artists. Then, I switched majors again and began studying architecture, where my math and spatial-relations talents came in handy.

I was the only girl in most of my architecture classes, although there were a couple of other girls enrolled in the school of architecture. Architecture students and professors were a liberal bunch and they seemed to feel no prejudice against female architects. However we were required to take a few engineering courses, and not all engineering professors were as tolerant. Proudly acknowledging the name Stinky Davis, one engineering professor made it clear that he resented girls in his classes. At the end of the hour, he would sometimes ask me to leave the lecture hall early so he could tell a few dirty jokes. The boy next to me fell asleep in class. Stinky threw an eraser at him and hit me. Today women would never put up with such harassment, but that was a different time. Women had only been able to vote since 1920, the year I was born. The engineering professor may have been correct in one respect though; I wasn't as serious about a career as the boys were. Other than some vague idea of yearning for adventure, I really had no idea of what I wanted to do with my life.

When Pearl Harbor was bombed, and the war started, I quit school and went to work in the drafting department at a shipyard. There, besides indulging in my fondness for pranks and jokes, I tried to interest friends in buying a sailboat together and sailing off to the South Seas when the war ended. Some of my fellow workers pretended an interest, but I was probably the only one serious about such adventure. I was a good draftsman and was promoted, but "leader" was not a role I coveted, and I didn't enjoy supervising my fellow workers. Kay and Phyllis had married Turkish architecture students and were making plans to go live in Turkey. Alice had also married. All the boys I knew were going into the service. Everyone but me seemed to be going somewhere. Whatever my future might turn out to be, this damned war seemed to have brought it to a grinding halt. Finally I saved enough money for a ticket on a ship bound for Alaska, about the only place one could go during wartime.

Alaska was pristine and beautiful - mysterious fiords, placid little lakes and steep mountains covered with trees down to the water's edge. In Sitka I got a job in a music&variety store and rented a cabin. The cabin wasn't much more than a tar paper shack, but it was up a lovely green canyon, reached from town by a boardwalk. An oil cook stove burned constantly to keep it warm. I liked the Alaskan people. They drank a lot. Sitka had thirteen bars and only one grocery store. Most Alaskans were also hard working, adventurous and exuberant. Self-reliant and fun loving, they had tolerant attitudes and uninhibited lifestyles not acceptable in the States until years later. Many Alaskans had come from somewhere else, some giving up traditional careers. An attorney, for instance, had traveled up the Inland Passage in a canoe, with his wife, and set up a business repairing boat motors.

For most of my twenty-four years I'd yearned to fall in love, but I had almost despaired of finding a man I wanted to marry. Oh, I'd always developed passionate crushes. In fact I'd spent

most of my life "in love" with someone - public figures, such as Bing Crosby or some unsuspecting classmate. One of the first objects of my affection, a little eight-year-old boy who sat near me in third-grade seemed alarmed by my romantic interest. I decided it might be prudent to keep my fantasies to myself. My passion was fickle though, and after falling out of love so many times, I wondered if I was ever going to find whatever I was seeking. (One of my most enduring fantasy heroes was Tarzan. I suppose he never talked enough to disillusion me.) My day dreams were never about settling down with a house and children. I was looking for something unusual in a husband, but exactly what I was seeking remained vague.

And then it happened.

Ike was in the Army and stationed in Sitka. He came into the store where I worked and bought all my favorite phonograph records. Then he invited me to the Army post to listen to them. His thirst for adventure seemed to equal mine, and from the moment I met Ike, I somehow never felt an urge to "play dumb". Ike had an actual aversion to helpless women. He had been a newspaper reporter before the war and knew a lot about literature and poetry, things I was struggling to understand. Ike seemed willing to debate any subject, and he never appeared offended if I disagreed with him. I had always been fascinated by ideas. However I could never join a group or "movement" committed to a specific set of beliefs, for I always seemed to find something with which to disagree. Most people don't particularly enjoy controversy, and I'd learned to keep many of my thoughts to myself. But Ike and I could spend hours discussing ideas, and unorthodox concepts didn't seem to frighten or shock him. Sometimes after hours of debate, Ike would admit he'd actually agreed with me, and had only been arguing for fun. I respected Ike's intelligence and independence, admired his character, and enjoyed his personality and his kindness. My attraction to Ike was more than intellectual though, and while still unable to define exactly what I had been looking for in a husband, I knew I'd finally found it. We were married after knowing each other only a few months.

In those days wives obeyed husbands. Ike was nine years older than I, and I'd promised to "love and obey" in the marriage ceremony. (Agnostics were accustomed to repeating meaningless words, and it wouldn't have occurred to us to request a change in the wording of the marriage vows,) However the first time I asked Ike's permission to do something, he laughed,

"Don't ask me what you can and can't do," he told me. "I'm your husband, not your father," enforcing my feeling of being a liberated woman.



Soon after we were married, we bought a thirty-foot boat some soldiers had put together in their spare time, and began commercial halibut fishing. Our engine was an old truck motor "found" somewhere on the Army post. Salt water corroded the cooling system, causing sudden streams of water to shoot into the air. A supply of corks stopped up such holes, making our engine look like it had warts. Our knowledge of boats was dangerously limited, but being young and fearless, we laughed about harrowing experiences. I suspect it was only luck that saved us from piling up on the rocks or being swept out to sea. Financially, the fishing venture was a failure. We would tie up at the dock next to big fishing boats unloading tons of halibut and place our few little fish on the huge scales. Fish liver, used to make fish liver oil, was sold separately. The weight of our livers was imperceptible on the big scales, but the workers on the dock would laugh and give us a few cents for them. We didn't make enough money to cover the costs of fuel and fishing gear, but both Ike and I cherished the experience.

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Homosexuality was still considered a mental illness just a few years ago. How do psychiatrists determine which behaviors are pathological and which are mere deviations from average? Actually, they do it by ballot. The psychiatric profession publishes a list (presently numbering 374) of mental illnesses in a "*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*". Psychiatrists add to, and delete from this list every few years by popular vote at their annual convention. Not long ago any woman who considered herself the mental equal of men would have been viewed as an abnormal female. In fact, just a couple hundred years ago, a man could have his wife committed to a mental institution for being too independent. (Feminism is still probably considered a mental illness in most Muslim countries.) Some of the listings in the

current DSM Manual include: antisocial personality disorder, narcissistic personality disorder, histrionic personality disorder, avoidant personality disorder and dependent personality disorder. Psychiatry hasn't found cures for the most debilitating forms of mental illness, so it's understandable that they might prefer to "treat" such personality traits, conditions they might convince people they had some ability to change. Most of the "disorders" that psychiatrists deal with are merely identified by "deviant attitudes and behaviors", and no physical marker has been found for any behavior, deviant or otherwise. Most mental illness was once called dementia praecox. What was once regarded as manic depression might now be called schizophrenia. However there is no evidence that Ids, egos, or psyches even exist anywhere outside the imaginations of psychologists and psychiatrists. Nevertheless, according to psychoanalytic theory, perfect people, ones who enjoy perfect childhoods, wouldn't suffer from personality defects, much less psychosis. They would lead perfectly happy lives. Such perfection might be uniform and uneventful.

Question 10: Should "normal" be equated with average?

In 1946 Ike was discharged from the Army in New York. We spent that summer with his step-grandmother on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Grandmother's place lacked plumbing, electricity or a telephone. We seemed almost cut off from civilization. Without a car, we drove a mule and wagon down the dirt road and through the pine woods to town for groceries. The trip took up most of a day. The population of Snow Hill, about ten miles away, had grown by two during the past century. Time seemed unimportant that carefree summer Ike and I spent with grandmother and her adopted son, Rutledge, at their little house in the Maryland woods.

Séances had been a tradition in Ike's family. Grandmother hadn't participated in one for several years, but she agreed to help us communicate with Ike's deceased grandfather, Doctor Vandegrift. Rutledge had reportedly caused poltergeist activity if he were in the house during séances. Once the table flew up and stuck to the ceiling. Another time it gave Ike's sister a black eye. So Rutledge was banished from the house during séances. On this occasion Grandmother sent him down the road to the next farm to spend the evening,

Ike and I sat down to a small, three-legged table with Grandmother, a frail little lady of eighty two years. Grandfather had built the house himself. It was an OK house, except at one point, Doctor Vandegrift realized he'd forgotten to plan for stairs, which he added as a steep, spiral after-thought inserted in a corner of the tiny parlor. The room was crowded with overstuffed furniture, brick-a-brac and faded pictures. The kerosene lamp was dimmed, but I could see our three pair of hands lying on the little table. Except for the sound of insects of a warm summer evening, the silence was profound in that clearing in the Maryland woods. Until that time I hadn't believed in séances, and neither Ike nor I believed in ghosts. Nevertheless ghost stories

could overwhelm me with an irrational feeling of apprehension, and I could be reduced to a state of terror by scary movies. I hoped I wouldn't giggle, as I sometimes did when nervous. We sat for a while, and Grandmother began to scold Grandfather affectionately,

"Now George, the children have come a long way to talk to you. You must say a few words to them." Although I didn't believe in spirits, sitting there waiting for one made me uneasy. I shivered, as I peered into the dark corners of the room, wondering nervously if something immaterial was about to "materialize". Finally the table rose up on two legs.

"Is that you, George?" Grandmother asked.

The table came down with a thump, meaning "no".

"Is that you, Mary?"

"No," the table again responded.

"Are you anyone we know?"

"No."

"It's nice of you to appear," Grandmother said, "but please go away and let us talk to one of our friends."

Finally the table again rose up on two legs and responded with two thumps when asked if we were in communication with Grandfather. Grandmother related news of the family and asked a few questions requiring yes or no answers, none of which seemed significant enough that I remember them. We asked Grandfather's opinion about Ike's and my plans for the future, but he declined to answer. (Our plans were somewhat out of the ordinary, and most people were probably a little skeptical about them.) Finally Grandmother asked if Grandfather had a message. Two thumps indicated yes. At last I was about to hear a message from this esteemed doctor who had become a legend in my husband's family. The table went up on two legs, and Grandmother began, "A, B, C--" The table came down. At the next repeat of the alphabet, it didn't come down until U. Finally the message was spelled out: "CUT THE GRASS."

The thought of Grandfather returning from the grave to chastise Grandmother for not cutting the grass was almost too much for me, but I managed not to laugh. I glanced at Ike. There was enough light in the little parlor that I could see his face. If he thought grandfather scolding grandmother was funny he was managing to conceal it. Any apprehension I'd felt about meeting a ghost had disappeared. How could anyone fear a ghost who was fretting about the lawn not being mowed?

"I realize I haven't kept up the place the way I should lately. If I'm still alive next spring, I'll plant petunias in the flower bed on the front lawn," Grandmother promised. "Do you have another message?"

"No," the table responded with a final thump. Grandmother didn't appear offended by Grandfather scolding her for not cutting the grass, but she seemed to find the séance exhausting, and we didn't ask her to conduct another one. We participated in several with Ike's sister and her husband. The table seemed to reflect the personalities of the participants, for Ike's sister had a taste for the dramatic and would go into a trance. She would become rigid, and her breathing was slow - great, long gasps. We usually found ourselves talking to dead pirates or notorious murderesses. One evening we were all arguing about how to proceed, and the table sent the message, "Stop bickering." Ike and I later tried to get a table to move by ourselves, but no matter how long we sat in expectant silence, the table never budged for us.

I had no idea what could have moved that table, but it hadn't actually felt menacing. Although I believed in science, I regarded nature as infinite. I am confident that science will never explain everything, and I could tolerate paradox, ambiguity and unexplainable phenomena. I don't question the Vandegrift family-stories about séances - I experienced some of it. However I saw no way to fit séances into my view of reality at that time, and I pushed those episodes off into a remote compartment of my mind. If I occasionally told about them, I did so jokingly, not expecting to be believed. The table didn't weigh much, and I suppose it's possible that Grandmother or Ike's sister managed to put themselves into a trance, and physically moved it without being consciously aware they were doing so. However table tipping was a common pastime early in the 20th Century. I'm more inclined to suspect a few people besides Rutledge managed to develop a little poltergeist ability, and learned to move tables by pure volition, or some force that we don't presently understand. How can we know what consciousness can and can't do if we don't know what it is?

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Rather than return to his pre-war, newspaper job, Ike wanted to earn a living writing true-detective stories. In those days several magazines were devoted to such accounts. It was an alternative to settling down with a husband and children, something to which I'd felt an aversion. I planned to help gather information from police records and newspapers, and Ike would write the stories, as we traveled around the south eastern United States. With Ike's Army "mustered out pay", we bought a pre-war, sixteen-cylinder Lincoln Continental (with a cracked block, as it turned out) and a little, old, eighteen-foot, canvas-covered house trailer. Our crippled Lincoln had trouble with steep hills, and we made lengthy detours to avoid them. Re-treads, at fifty cents apiece, replaced our frequent flat tires. Our trailer had no water hook-up, and we carried water in a bucket. Living was primitive, but it offered the adventure Ike and I were seeking.

We visited small towns and county seats, interviewing sheriffs and constables. Most, flattered by the prospect of having their pictures and stories appear in a magazine, eagerly provided details of murder cases they had solved. At that time the South was more isolated than today, and it seemed almost like a foreign culture to us. Our Yankee accent was conspicuous, and caused some people to view us with suspicion, but when Southerners saw our car and trailer,

they sometimes became friendlier, apparently deciding we at least weren't a couple of those "rich-Yankees" who made the trek down the coast to Florida every winter. We met a lot of moonshiners. Murder seemed to be an occupational hazard in that business. We once met a sheriff who must have had something embarrassing in his past, something he didn't want written up in a magazine. When we explained what we were looking for, he angrily ordered us to leave "his county" before dark. Southern sheriffs could exert such authority in those days, and we laughed about it as we drove away. By searching through musty old newspaper files, we found murders committed in the previous century. Ike wrote accounts of the "dastardly deeds" colorfully described in those old small-town publications. When we happened across a current case, we attended the trial to gather firsthand information. Ike was a competent writer and all of his stories were accepted for publication; I believe a penny a word was the usual payment. One day we were crossing a railroad track in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. As Ike tried to shift gears, the gearshift came out by the roots, leaving our car and trailer helplessly straddling the tracks. We had arranged for checks from our last stories to be sent to the next town, and we had only a few dollars in our pockets.

I hope there's a story in this town," I said with a groan.

"Maybe Grandfather is finally taking an interest in our lives and is trying to tell us to stop here," Ike offered jokingly.

It wasn't the first time we arrived in a town, broke, and didn't find a check from a magazine waiting at the post office. A waitress job was always easy for me to find, tiding us over until we sold another story. Waitresses worked for tips and weren't paid much of a salary, so restaurants were willing to hire any competent worker who applied. Ike was soon busy on another murder, and a couple of days waitress tips allowed us to retrieve our Lincoln from the garage where we'd had it towed. After a couple of years traveling through the Southeast, the Lincoln finally expired, and we settled in a trailer park in Atlanta. Leaving the true-detective stories to Ike, who began using public transportation, I went to work for some architects.

While living in the South, I was shocked and offended by segregation. Every aspect of it seemed irrational and malignant to me. In 1948 Henry Wallace ran for President on a platform which included opposition to segregation, and I volunteered my services to the Progressive Party. I usually agreed with liberal political views. We collected our petitions to have the Progressive Party placed on the Georgia ballot at the church of Martin Luther King Senior. I'm sure many African Americans, actually being shades of brown and tan, would have felt offended if someone had called them black. I never met Martin Luther King Junior. I suppose he was a young man off at school somewhere, unaware that he was destined to have a national holiday named for him. I once asked a young Black man to sign my petition, and he refused with a look of hatred such as I hadn't often encountered in my young life. Maybe he considered my efforts patronizing. I wanted to assure him I wasn't opposing segregation for his sake, that it offended my own personal sense of right and wrong.

Many of the young people had come from New York to work for the Progressive Party, and some of them were a little arrogant and disdainful. Unselfishly devoting themselves to liberal causes, they never entertained the slightest doubt about issues they advocated. How could such self-sacrificing idealists be wrong? Opponents could only be motivated by meanness. No one would have uttered the pejorative, *nigger*, but those young people often referred to Southerners as *red-necks* and *bigots*. Raised among unsophisticated people, I understood Southern resentments, and I did not believe Southerners were more immoral than other people. Northerners might question segregation, but they sometimes promoted other concepts I regarded as equally irrational. One activity I always passionately defended was freedom to debate any idea openly. I had no trouble persuading Southerners of either race that the Progressive Party, whether one agreed with them or not, was entitled to a place on the Georgia ballot.

One day as I stood on the steps of the Atlanta library collecting signatures, a man stopped and said, "I'd be interested in a serious political discussion. How about a beer?"

He appeared sincere; I couldn't detect any man-woman type of personal interest in his words or manner.

Reasonable discussion was my favorite pastime.

"O.K.," I agreed, and we went across the street to the Elks Club. I seated myself in a booth, and the man excused himself. A waiter brought me a beer, but the man never returned. He disappeared without a word of political discussion. People in the South were strange about politics, I'd decided. Bitter feelings over desegregation hadn't really materialized at that time. Most Southerners viewed opposition to segregation more as a "silly Yankee idea", rather than a real threat to their way of life. However the anti-communist hysteria was as virulent in the South as in the North, and the Progressive Party was thought to be more tolerant of the Russians. The architects where I worked obviously viewed with skepticism the big, four-inch, Wallace-for-President button I insisted on wearing to work, but they didn't forbid me to wear it. They did assign me a desk in a back corner of the drafting room where I would be less likely to offend the political sensibilities of clients. They were Jewish and probably sympathized with my liberal views, but weren't eager to attract attention. At that time Jewish people were themselves still victim of some discrimination. I sat a while in the Elks Club and finished my beer. Still wondering about the man who mysteriously lost interest in political discussion, I gathered up my petitions. Collecting signatures as I went, I made my way back to Progressive Party headquarters.

"How did you escape?" everyone excitedly asked when I walked in the door.

"Escape what?"

They explained that while I was in the Elks Club, the police had rounded up all the other party workers, took them to jail, and mugged and fingerprinted them. Full of righteous indignation,

they seemed exhilarated by their arrest, rather than frightened. When I went back to the trailer and told Ike, he laughed.

"I'll bring you a cake with a hacksaw in it if you end up behind bars," he promised.

Unlike the other party workers, I was intimidated. The police felt justified in arresting people for any kind of political activism, but I was not sure I wanted to go to jail over politics. Hearing my views expounded by young radicals had dampened my liberal enthusiasm somewhat, and I withdrew from the political campaign. I've often wondered about that man who bought me a beer and saved me from arrest. Did someone among the police decide, for some reason, that I didn't deserve a police record? Maybe he was a policeman Ike had interviewed for a story, and he kept me from being arrested out of consideration for Ike.

I'm sorry I was so easily discouraged from opposing segregation. Today I hope I wouldn't be so easily intimidated, but other people would have to win that battle. I loved discussing ideas, but I had never felt much of an urge to change the world by imposing my beliefs upon anyone else; I could usually see more than one side to most controversies. People who disagree with me are obviously sincere, but emotions are involved in anything worth arguing about, and I couldn't bring myself to hurt anyone's feelings. Years in the future as I debated philosophical questions on the Internet (and in this manuscript), disagreements could be more distanced and less personal, and discussing controversies would turn out to be enjoyable pastimes during my old age.

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Babies had never interested me. When Ike and I married I was unaware I wanted children. Nevertheless during our carefree journey over the past few years, I became overwhelmed with an unexpected yearning for a child. Ike had been writing true-detective stories for four years. A penny a word provided a meager livelihood but would not be adequate to support a family. Ike was collecting a few dollars a month serving in the Army reserves, and he was offered an opportunity to return to active duty when the Korean War began. I urged him to accept. Ike did not feel my desire for children, but we loved each other very much. For me, he returned to the Army. Assigned to public relations, his writing skills were useful. Our son was born a year later, and Ike was surprised to find himself an adoring father. We received orders for Germany. Every moment of the three years we were stationed in Frankfurt was an adventure. The Germans were desperate for employment, and we could all afford a housekeeper, an unexpected luxury for American wives living on an Army salary. I studied German and took up bridge. At German bridge tournaments we found opportunities to become acquainted with Europeans. Ike and I left our two-year-old son with the competent German woman who worked for us, and we enjoyed our annual leave driving around Europe in a little MG convertible. Our daughter was born in Germany. In Europe at that time new mothers remained flat on their backs in bed for two weeks after delivery. When I arrived home from the hospital carrying my two-day-old daughter, I heard our German housekeeper brag to

her friends, "Sie gebart Kinder wie eine Katze. Genau wie eine Katze!" (*She has babies like a cat. Just like a cat!*) The words might not seem to sound so wonderful in English, but I could tell from their admiring glances what a flattering thing it was to say in German.

The Army topped off our European adventure by sending us home, first class, on one of the last great passenger liners, the luxurious *SS United States*.

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Ike had a drinking problem when we met in Alaska. During his youth he had been fascinated by the tough, hard-drinking-reporter legend, admiring Hemingway and Dashiell Hammett, and chuckling indulgently over their swashbuckling, alcoholic life styles. Speakeasies and illicit booze were considered glamorous and exciting during prohibition. Disdain for anyone who couldn't drink was probably Ike's only macho attitude. Alcohol hadn't been a problem while we were writing true-detective stories, but it was something with which Ike struggled for most of his life. The Army, with a social life based upon cocktail parties and officers' clubs, was probably an unfortunate choice. I suspect Ike would have been more successful at that artillery school in Oklahoma if he had done less drinking and more studying. He probably depended upon me to threaten to leave when his drinking became excessive. We both knew it was an empty threat. By the exercise of will-power, Ike always managed to keep his drinking under control - except for periods when he was away from me. I hated his stupidity at those times and felt shame that anyone should see him like that. But Ike only drank sporadically. I sometimes thought it ironic that I, with an alcoholic father, had married a man who drank too much. However most of the time Ike was articulate, considerate and deep-thinking, still the only man I'd ever wanted to marry. We didn't fight or nurse resentments. I had no intention (or hope) of convincing Dr. Zircon, so I didn't mention Ike's drinking to the psychologist, but I was confident it had minimal effect upon the older children, and none upon Tony.

I was also aware that psychiatry attached great significance to guilt. I'd made mistakes during my life and I regretted them. But I think such feelings have to be more subconscious than what I experienced in order to actually cause neurotic guilt. I was usually quite aware of my disturbing thoughts. I should have known I wanted children when we married. I felt bad about urging Ike to go back into the Army, where he was exposed to all those officer's-club cocktails. During the McCarthy era, whenever Ike applied for a security clearance I regretted my involvement in radical politics. It was an unnecessary regret, because thanks to that mysterious man who bought me a beer, Ike always got a security clearance. (A wife with a police record might have been a problem.) I remembered wanting an abortion when I was pregnant with Tony - and the moment in the middle of the night when I thought of putting Tony in an institution. Those thoughts were fleeting, and I didn't really feel guilty about them. Perhaps Dr. Zircon would regard me as abnormal for not feeling guilty. In fact I suspected the psychologists might disapprove of some of my other my untypical emotional reactions. For example Ike was sent to Germany six months before I was able to join him. A few days after I arrived, Ike confessed he'd had an affair. (After World War II, many German girls were eager to find

American husbands, a situation of which many American soldiers took advantage.) Ike said the woman was trying to cause trouble, threatening to tell me. I was annoyed at Ike for his little escapade but I never doubted he loved me.

"Bring her here and let her tell me," I suggested.

Although a little skeptical of such a confrontation, Ike went and got her. A nice looking young woman, she stood just inside the door regarding me uncertainly. Ike stood by uneasily. Not sure myself how to proceed, I invited her to sit down.

"Your husband and I have been having an affair," she blurted out.

He told me," I said. "What he did was irresponsible and inconsiderate."

"I told her I was married," Ike said.

"I'm in love with your husband," she continued.

I sat down on the couch, a little stunned and moved by her unhappiness. Ike was usually kind and thoughtful of everyone, and I wouldn't have thought he'd do anything to hurt someone like this. Telling her he was married didn't excuse his behavior. I wished I could think of some way to console her.

"I'm so sorry," I said. "He would never leave his family. But he shouldn't have. . . It wasn't right. . ." As I struggled to think of something else to say, she burst into tears and turned and ran out of the apartment. (Within six months she married an American Army officer, one who didn't already have a wife.)

I realized my reaction to Ike's affair was not typical. Most women take such things personally, feeling they have somehow been diminished by their husband's misbehavior. Jealousy would have been a more "normal" reaction than mine. And perhaps I would have felt offended if Ike had continued his relationship with the woman after I arrived. But while my reaction might not be average, I was convinced that it was not abnormal. Most people who knew me seemed to agree that I was emotionally stable, and an unlikely candidate for a psychiatrist's couch. Surely I could convince Dr. Zircon that I didn't need any psychiatric treatment. Perhaps he would then discuss this mysterious diagnosis doctors seemed to suspect for Tony. Group therapy seemed as good a place as any to demonstrate my emotional stability.

Question 11: What technical knowledge enables psychologists to declare people emotionally abnormal?

I attended Dr. Zircon's first therapy session, curious, but not particularly apprehensive. Since I was present "only to allow Tony to form a relationship with someone outside the family", as the psychologist had promised, I planned to be an observer, not a participant. The group consisted of five women, with Dr. Zircon as moderator. The psychologist said we could talk about anything we wished - or we could sit in silence if we chose. We soon discovered that sitting silently in the presence of a psychologist is highly uncomfortable, almost an impossibility. One feels compelled to blurt out something, *anything*, to fill such awkward silences. Dr. Zircon suggested we start by each explaining why we had joined the group.

I couldn't resist stating a little sarcastically, "My problem is that I'm not yet aware I have a problem." Surely the psychologist would realize how ridiculous his statement sounded when hearing it repeated.

One woman was the mother of a child with cerebral palsy and wanted a scientific evaluation of his capabilities, not wanting to expect more of him than he could achieve. The others just seemed unhappy. They had many complaints, not only about their children, but also about their husbands, their mothers-in-law, San Francisco weather and Army life. I didn't usually choose such unhappy people as friends and couldn't imagine what anyone might do to alleviate their discontent. If Dr. Zircon was willing to try, it seemed a worthy effort. Their children appeared normal enough, but didn't behave as their mothers wished. A couple of women complained about nine-year-old boys who didn't like baths. With a nine-year-old boy of my own at home, I might have been more inclined to drag Guy to a psychologist if he suddenly decided he liked baths. Although I wished Tony would grow up more quickly, I had no intention of sitting around complaining about him. Another woman was the mother of an eleven-year-old daughter who ran away from home and stayed several days.

"Of course we had her examined by a doctor when she came home," the mother said. "You know, to make sure that nothing happened."

I assumed she meant sex. *That poor little girl!* I thought. I couldn't imagine such a lack of trust existing between a child and her parents.

"Does anyone have any suggestions?" Dr. Zircon asked the group. We all sat in shocked silence. The psychologist seemed to notice the appalled look on my face. "Mrs. Vandegrift?" he urged.

I shook my head. I wasn't accustomed to pointing out other people's faults. Imagine believing your eleven-year-old daughter might be secretly having sex! I doubted the woman could change her relationship with her child just because I expressed my disapproval. I was confident that my daughter would turn to us, her parents, concerning any traumatic experiences. What could the psychiatrist possibly say to improve the woman's terrible relationship with her

daughter? But he was supposedly the expert with the ability to adjust people's strange attitudes, not me. However even Dr. Zircon seemed unable to think of any suggestion in this instance. Most of the conversation in group therapy was less interesting - about what one might hear at a women's luncheon. I did sometimes tell a few anecdotes about my children in an attempt to cheer up everyone a little. For instance the children in the neighborhood got together and sold Kool-Aid. We parents supplied the Kool-Aid - and then paid the pennies to drink the stuff, all in the interest of training our young entrepreneurs. When Guy was about five, he remarked one evening at dinner,

"Jimmy dropped my lizard in the Kool-Aid today, Mommy." Then he added proudly, "But I got him out and he's O.K."

Apparently the Kool-Aid was O.K. too. We drank it. When I told this story in group therapy, a couple of women who seemed unusually concerned about germs shuddered instead of laughing.

I also told about Sherry, my feminine little-six-year old, preoccupied with fairy tales, who complained, "All the ladies in my story books marry a prince when they grow up, Mommy. But I don't know any princes. Not even one! Are they all used up?"

Sympathizing with a six-year-old's fondness for fairy tales and fantasies about a prince, I suggested, "There are still a few around. Prince Charles of England might be about the right age for you."

She wanted to know all about him as she happily made plans to marry the Prince of Wales. She wondered whether, as the Queen of England, she should wear her crown while sweeping the castle floors. She also speculated about a career, maybe she would do a little ironing to earn extra money, like Mommy did. (*Picture the queen of England doing ironing! The poor lady wouldn't know where to start.*) Sherry's brother became interested in her plans and asked if she would name her firstborn Guy. He wondered if there had ever been a King Guy the First.

"You don't get to name them yourself, silly," She said. "They come with little bracelets on their arms, with the names already on them." A close friend had recently arrived home from the hospital with a new baby, and Sherry had been a fascinated observer of the details. This story was more successful with the ladies in group therapy than the one about the lizard in the Kool-Aid. Other than such anecdotes, I had little to say. I had never been good at small talk, the kind of meaningless conversation many people seem to indulge in just to be sociable. However I was confident I said enough to demonstrate to the psychologist that I didn't have the kind of problems the other women had. While I was in therapy each week, Tony and Dr. Lavalley were in the playroom. Dr. Lavalley wasn't much more talkative than Tony, and Ike and I often wondered what they did together. The first day Dr. Lavalley left the playroom door unlocked, and Tony escaped. I came out of group therapy to find him making a get-away. The psychologist was racing down the hall trying to catch him. Nevertheless after getting used to the clinic, Tony seemed to look forward to his time there.

Tony had amazed us by announcing, "Tony talk. One, two, free, four, five. Tony talk." We were waiting for him to do so. One night he was crying in bed, and I went in to comfort him.

"All-the-way-home hurts," he sobbed.

Looking under his little toe, I found a cut under "the little piggy that went *wee-wee-wee all the way home*". Tony never allowed us to comfort him in ways we had consoled our other children. He was scornful of kisses as treatment for his hurts and preferred to rub catchup or mustard on them. After he began talking more, he occasionally complained about "pictures on the wall" at night. I suspected he'd had a bad dream. Once he came to get me in the middle of the night and led me into his bedroom. He indicated he wanted me to sit on the floor by his crib and hold his hand until he went back to sleep. He didn't want any nonsense such as kissing.

Tony was growing, but his differences from other children were increasingly apparent. Except for infrequent, startling statements, Tony said very little. He seemed to be learning to talk somewhat like an adult learns a foreign language. He was good-looking and of average size, but his appearance was immature. The term neoteny is defined as the retention of infantile traits - a prolongation of the developmental process. Autism has sometimes been suggested as a form of neoteny, and it would certainly have described Tony. In photographs he always appears younger than his actual age, and at the age of four he drooled like an infant.

One afternoon at home Tony found a bucket of paint and painted the washing machine, a neighbor's porch and our dining room floor. When Tony saw our horrified reaction, he ran and got a mop and tried to clean up the mess on the floor. He appeared to realize he'd done something wrong, the closest he ever seemed to come to experiencing guilt. That did seem like progress. Tony hadn't had a temper tantrum for a while. One day shortly before I started group therapy, Tony and I were in the car delivering ironing, and I didn't turn at the corner where he thought I should. He furiously threw himself over into the back seat and landed head-first in a cardboard carton full of ironing. (No seat-belts in those days.) I was in heavy traffic and couldn't stop for a few moments. Meanwhile my little tornado, upside down with his head in the box, was howling and frantically kicking his feet in the air. When I finally stopped the car and pulled Tony out of the carton, he seemed chastened. I hoped landing headfirst in that box had taught him a lesson, and maybe he was learning to control his temper.

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I suspect mass hysteria might sometimes be an aspect of group therapy, with patients competing to see who could offer the most bizarre confessions. However nothing much seemed to be happening in our group. There was no evidence of "transference"; no one seemed to be "falling in love" with the young psychologist. My lack of awe for the psychologist's science may have been apparent. Although I never had much to say, it is possible that my skeptical presence could have exerted some dampening effect upon the group, discouraging the usual psychiatric confessions.

One day Dr. Zircon announced, "We've all sat and complained for three months now. It's time we accomplish something more constructive." He strode to the blackboard, a stern expression on his boyish face, picked up a piece of chalk and drew a circle. "This represents most of our children," he stated. Then after a dramatic pause, he continued, ". . .and this represents most of us, constantly exerting control over them." He drew a slightly smaller circle inside the first and turned to see if we were following his scientific presentation. "They rebel and break out!" With a flourish he erased parts of the larger circle and regarded the group gravely.

"And this," he said, turning back to the blackboard and carefully drawing another big circle, "represents another of our children. We assert no control over this child." The psychologist drew a tiny circle in the middle. "He is frightened and angry." Dr. Zircon seemed to make a concerted effort to avoid looking at any of us. However he then printed my name under these last circles and added the words, FRIGHTENED AND ANGRY. This indictment was apparently too horrific for the psychologist to even look at the culprit, much less repeat my name aloud.

Stunned, I stared at the blackboard. It never occurred to me that the psychologist hadn't recognized my obvious emotional stability by this time. I'd assumed the psychologists were trying to find out if there was something wrong with Tony. *Instead, they apparently concluded that I was the abnormal one – and that my deviation had destroyed Tony's personality!* During my forty-one years people had liked me. I was polite and considerate, and there was no reason why they shouldn't. *Never in my wildest dreams had it occurred to me that anyone might have such an awful opinion of me!* Oh, there was the young Black man in Atlanta who refused to sign my petition. However his look of hatred hadn't hurt. It wasn't personal; it had been directed at something I represented, not me. It had taken me a while to realize what I wanted to do with my life, but being a wife and mother was the role I'd finally chosen. I could have been a good enough architect, but that had been an unimportant, temporary occupation. Being a mother was how I defined myself. When the children became old enough to start school, I'd expected to look for another job as a draftsman. In the meantime I'd found ways to earn money and still remain a stay-at-home mom. Now, after knowing me for three months, Dr. Zircon was calmly and impersonally declaring me to be such an inadequate mother that I had warped my little boy's emotional growth and caused him to be defective. I suppose Dr. Dingle's awful belief should have become obvious to me by this time, but the idea that I might reject my children had been too bizarre a concept to even occur to me. The other women were watching me solemnly. I sat in shocked silence, barely aware of whatever happened during the rest of the hour. "We won't meet again until after New Year," I heard the psychologist say as he dismissed us.

I collected Tony from his play therapy, and we went out on the little porch in front of the clinic to wait for Ike to come for us. The other women said goodbye matter-of-factly, showing no condemnation of me, as though Dr. Dingle's characterization of me as such a terrible mother that I had stunted Tony's growth was nothing unusual. The Army hospital consisted of one story buildings about forty feet apart, with a hall connecting them so people didn't have to go

outside to get from one building to another. As I stood there on the little porch of the Child-Guidance building in my daze of emotions – anger, hurt, resentment and disbelief – I looked down to the next building and saw Dr. Zircon come out the door, and walk back to his car which was parked in front of the Child Guidance Clinic. Had he *gone to all that trouble of walking down the hall and exiting from that other building so as to avoid walking by me?* He must have sensed the explosive turmoil into which his accusation had plunged me, and he wasn't prepared to deal with it. In time, I came to realize that this therapy was as traumatic for Dr. Zircon as it was for me. We were both victims of the bizarre belief that autism was caused by maternal rejection. The psychologist was devoting his life to 20th Century psychology, and the commonly held belief that a person's subconscious thoughts could destroy their sanity. Apparently he was also convinced that my subconscious thoughts were powerful enough to destroy my child.

When Ike arrived, I was still in such a daze that I couldn't bring myself to discuss what Dr. Zircon had said to me. I still hadn't heard the terms "maternal rejection" or "autism", and I didn't have the vocabulary to attempt a psychiatric discussion. I wasn't even sure how some of those psychiatric terms in the psychology books were pronounced. I went home to a miserable Christmas holiday. Acquiring a typewriter was the bright event of that Christmas. It was a little red portable, and I found it in a thrift shop for just a few dollars. I wrapped it and put it under the Christmas tree, claiming it was for the children. It quickly became apparent that typewriter was for my use. From that time, when I couldn't summon the courage to defend myself to the psychologists, I did it at my typewriter. I felt a burning urge to protest against Dr. Zircon's indictment of me. Originally this story was just three pages, and I wasn't much of a writer. However I went over it hundreds of times, adding a word, sentence or paragraph here and there, and writing grew to be one of my most rewarding activities. Writing changed my life, I suppose in the same way that psychologists hope psychotherapy would change people's lives. I managed to become a little more articulate.

I determinedly continued to try to understand psychology books. Finding an outlet for my resentment also allowed me to continue group therapy when it resumed after the first of the year. I valued whatever benefit Tony seeing Dr. Lavalley might have. However, for me, therapy became a dreaded, weekly ordeal. Dr. Zircon often mentioned that we were all too emotionally involved with our children - except one of us wasn't at all involved. Most people would probably consider being "over protective" a lesser fault than "rejection". The other children didn't behave as their mothers wished, but none of them were developing abnormally, so obviously my "rejection" was regarded as more malignant than the other women's treatment of their children. I'm sure the other mothers agreed that loving their children too much was preferable to the monster Dr. Zircon had declared me to be, a mother who felt nothing for her children. In any case, I was determined not to give Dr. Zircon the satisfaction of arguing over his ridiculous allegation. If that was his opinion, after knowing me all this time, I doubted anything I might say would change it. I wasn't particularly verbal to begin with, and that psychologist sitting around waiting to pounce on my every word as a sign of some abnormality didn't

encourage idle chatter. Other than an occasional question or comment to the other women, I sat silently each week and grimly endured the hour. Then I went home and took out my resentment at my typewriter.

One day I reported that Tony didn't seem to have tantrums anymore. An unmistakable look of annoyance passed across Dr. Zircon's face. Why should he be disappointed for Tony to stop having tantrums? *Was he trying to prove some theory? Did he not want Tony to mature, except in response to his psychiatric treatment?* I remembered the silly "cures" of highly intelligent, "withdrawn" children described in old psychology books. When Tony grew up to be such a child, I would feel obligated to protest he was not "cured" by something so absurd as his mother's participation in group therapy.

The group had been meeting for about five months when Dr. Zircon asked all the husbands to come in for an interview. Ike, of course, was willing to do anything that might help Tony. He spoke with the head of the clinic, a Col. Mann. Ike reported that the psychologists were dissatisfied with my behavior in therapy. They protested that I didn't talk, as the other women did. *Surely the psychologists didn't actually approve of all that complaining!* I remembered Dr. Zircon had promised that my attendance in the group was "only to allow Tony to form a relationship with someone outside the family". The thought of his duplicity galled me.

Ike mentioned to Col. Mann that I'd read every psychology book in the local libraries.

"She did? She didn't tell us that!" the colonel exclaimed. "You see! Your wife doesn't tell us anything."

After that Ike went with us to the clinic every week and talked to Col. Mann. Ike didn't mind. In those days mother was considered responsible for a child's emotional development, and no one was really accusing Tony's father of anything. There were very few female therapists at that time. The notion that a mother might warp her child's growth by a subtle, subconscious rejection was a theory initiated by men and inflicted upon women by men. They made the same hurtful accusation against mothers of schizophrenics. But schizophrenia is diagnosed later in life, after the damage was supposedly already done, and mothers of schizophrenics weren't subjected to psychotherapy, as mothers of autistic children were. Still, mothers of schizophrenics must have suffered, fully aware of society's belief that they were considered responsible for their child's illness. Schizophrenics were openly encouraged during therapy to express resentment toward their mothers. The whole concept was blatant sexism, but I wasn't much of a feminist; I was usually content with the role society assigned to women. I certainly didn't feel qualified to argue with such an authority as a psychologist. I sat through group therapy in grim silence each week. Ike, thank heavens, continued to express confidence in my relationship with the children, and I'm not sure I ever managed to make it clear to him exactly what Dr. Zircon was implying. I never felt anything but revulsion at Dr. Zircon's unspecified accusations, but I wonder how many therapists succeeded in convincing mothers that they felt

a secret, subconscious rejection of their autistic child? How many just bought into some complicated, Freudian, psychoanalytic scenario suggested by a therapist?

One day as I listened to the other women, I realized Ike was the only father still coming to the clinic every week. Some of these women had complained about their husbands' treatment of their children. I, on the other hand, had reported Ike to be the kindest, most patient and sensitive of fathers. *Yet Ike seemed to be the only father in therapy! Did they consider us the most dysfunctional family of the group?* Actually, I don't think the term "dysfunctional family" was yet fashionable, but there was no doubt the psychologists believed something was seriously wrong with us. Col. Mann had again protested to Ike that I was uncommunicative, again bringing up the fact that I hadn't even told them I read psychology books. I had started reading psychology books when that first pediatrician seem to suggest a psychiatric interest, and many of those books seemed pretty weird and implausible. I assumed they were out of date, and these psychologists, members of the medical profession, must have more recent scientific information available to them - something that I hadn't yet found in the psychology books. However I didn't feel up to disputing, or even discussing psychology with a certified medical psychologist!

"You don't believe I caused Tony to be abnormal, do you?" I would tearfully ask Ike.

"No, of course not."

"Why won't they tell us what is wrong with Tony? They've said he isn't retarded. They insist he is above average intelligence. What else *could* be wrong with him?"

"I don't know. Why don't you ask Dr. Zircon? Col. Mann complains that you don't talk enough."

Ike had little interest in reading psychology books, and was relying upon the professionals, "the scientific experts", for Tony's diagnosis and treatment. I had never initiated a confrontation with anyone. Oh, I had probably exchanged angry retorts with my siblings when I was small, but that was long ago, and I didn't remember them. If my parents ever indulged in emotional confrontations, they did it in private. I had no experience with such altercations, and I wondered if I would be able to suppress my anger and resentment enough to ask Dr. Zircon such questions without turning it into a shouting match? I couldn't imagine how I might possibly come out ahead in such an exchange with a glib psychologist, someone who was capable of talking circles around me.

Fifty years later, psychiatry has admitted its error, and no longer accuses mothers of rejecting their autistic children. Mental deviations obviously exist. But until we achieve a better understanding of them, perhaps we should be careful about whom we grant the authority to declare people to be "emotionally abnormal".

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Understanding intelligence, and how our brain works, is still primitive. Simon Barron-Cohen's theory that autism involves a super-masculinized, analytical brain would seem to indicate some consensus that a difference presently exists between the average woman's brain and the brain of the average male. We live in a changing society. Today it is becoming more common for women to become doctors, engineers, CEO's and scientists. As men and women lead more similar lives, will those statistical differences between their brains gradually lessen? Will some women be born more analytical, and some men become more intuitive? Today, autism is five times more common in boys than in girls. Will that difference lessen with more girls diagnosed autistic? Do women engage in more masculine activities, such as engineering, because their brains have accidentally changed? Or will their brains change because of their changing life styles?

Question 12: Are psychologists able to scientifically measure parental love? Or its lack?

I couldn't imagine being successful in any verbal confrontation. When emotionally upset, my slow-motion mind seemed to freeze, and prevent me from thinking what I should have said until a week later. The prospect of trying to defend myself to that psychologist, a certified expert at talking, left me weak with fear and dread. I still really didn't know much about psychology. Much of what I read seemed silly, but our scientifically educated society appeared committed to it, and I told myself that it must surely include profound concepts that I hadn't yet encountered. The psychologist was obviously devoting his life to therapy, and he would be offended by my growing suspicion that his "science" might be nonsense. Nevertheless I finally went to group therapy one day determined to try to discuss Tony.

"Do you have evidence children like Tony don't grow up to be normal," I demanded, "or do you object to him merely because he isn't average?"

Dr. Zircon and the other women looked startled at my sudden assertiveness.

"What's wrong with Tony?" I persisted. "Is he mentally retarded?"

"No, he's very bright - extremely bright." At that age Tony didn't display many of the behaviors I've since realized is typical of autistic children. He was actually more similar to what was then called Asperger's (temper, spinning things, echo laic, a fascination with building things with blocks and having mathematically inclined relatives.) but his gaze was always direct and alert, and his interactions with people seemed normal to me. He didn't appear interested in playing with other children, but small talk at women's luncheons wasn't one of my favorite entertainments either. I still had never heard of either autism or Asperger's, but while skeptical

of other things psychologists said, for some reason I always believed them when they declared Tony to be extremely bright.

"How do you know he's very bright? Did you give him an IQ test?"

"Tony isn't testable right now, but we can tell by looking that he is quite alert."

"Do you suspect Tony of being psychotic?"

"Of course not!"

"Then what is wrong with him?"

"He's emotionally retarded."

I had never heard of the term. "My other son was like Tony until he was three. Was he emotionally retarded?" I asked, unable to keep sarcasm out of my voice.

"I think so."

"Oh for heaven's sake," I exclaimed in disgust. *He not only thought I caused Tony to be abnormal, he was declaring my other son, Guy, a child he'd never even met, to be defective. He apparently believed I had the ability to damage children emotionally, and admission of my guilt would be necessary for Tony's recovery. In fact, public confession of one's faults was actually what such recovery was thought to consist of, and supposedly the more dramatic the confession, the more effective the cure.*

I took a deep breath, and trying to suppress my resentment, I forced myself to attempt a less contentious tone.

"Tony hasn't developed much interest in people yet. It's a quality everyone has to differing degrees. Couldn't he have been born that way?"

"No," Dr. Zircon stated. "Children are not born like that.

Most parents soon realize that each of their children are already born with their own distinctive character and personality. Only a bunch of men who probably hadn't spent much time around children could come up with bizarre theories about mothers needing a psychologist to tell them how to be a proper parent.

"You believe I did something to Tony?"

"I believe it was something you didn't do."

Dr. Zircon looked uncomfortable. I should have demanded, "And precisely what is it that you believe I didn't do?" He was obviously referring to his repeated charge that I was not emotionally involved with my children, and I should have insisted that he be explicit, but I couldn't bring myself to force his ridiculous accusation into words. Psychologists described

mothers of autistic children as “cold”. Most psychiatric patients approach a therapist gullibly anticipating exotic, wondrous, scientific treatments. I’m sure a submissive attitude is an essential attitude for therapy. Parents of autistic children seem to share some of their autistic children's personality traits, which might include independence and non-conformity – and a woeful shortage of submissiveness. I might have been timid, but I could think of ways to resist submitting to other people’s beliefs. Mothers of autistic children may not have exhibited the awe and respect to which therapists felt they were entitled, and one can understand why they might regard such mothers as “cold”. At our first meeting Dr. Zircon muttered to himself, “Let's see if we can get a little transference going here.” He was probably also thinking, “Let’s see if we can get a little respect for my expertise.”

I tried to suppress the anger and resentment I felt at his unspecified accusations. “People with emotional problems are unhappy,” I argued. I turned to the other women, who had been sitting in silence, listening to my confrontation with the psychologist. “You are all aware of your unhappiness aren't you?” I asked.

They agreed.

“Well I've usually managed to enjoy life.”

"That seems important to you," the psychologist suggested cunningly.

"Oh, for crying out loud!" He seemed determined to make something sinister out of my every remark. Then I added in exasperation, "I don't understand how you psychologists can believe some little event in a child's life could actually prevent him from growing up normally."

"What do you mean by some little event?" Dr. Zircon persisted.

I glared at him, unwilling to suggest any.

"Why do you think Tony does things like lie down on the floor at Sunday school?" he continued.

"I suppose Sunday school bores him!"

Unlike most of the other women in the group, I didn't try to impose my will upon my children - or anyone else, for that matter. I had accepted the fact that my attitudes often weren't “average”, but I didn't feel compelled to impose them upon anyone. I'd found effective ways of interacting with people, while respecting differences. I was confident I didn't cause Tony to become abnormal, but I realized nothing I might say would matter to this psychologist. He had apparently become committed to some theory before ever seeing Tony or me. *I shouldn't take what he says personally, I kept reminding myself, but surely I was entitled to know my child's diagnosis!*

“Have you never seen another child like Tony?” I asked.

Dr. Zircon shook his head uneasily. The question obviously bothered him. I was convinced there had been other children like Tony. Maybe Dr. Zircon hadn't actually seen another autistic child. I should have asked if he had ever read or heard of such a child, but as usual I didn't figure it out at the time. *The right question always seemed to occur to me a week later!* Nevertheless, I sensed that other doctors suspected some specific diagnosis. They seemed interested in a child who might have an unusual reaction to a fountain pen spinning on the floor; a child who took things apart and whose antecedents went to college, got good grades and professed some unusual attitude toward religion; a child who ignored other children, and one who makes symmetrical designs with blocks.

"When I first spoke to Dr. Berger he didn't seem to think there was *necessarily* anything wrong with Tony," I persisted.

"Just what did Dr. Berger tell you?" Dr. Zircon demanded, getting up from his chair and starting across the room toward me.

Maybe the two psychologists disagreed about Tony. If so, I felt loyalty and gratitude toward Dr. Berger, who hadn't seemed devious.

"Nothing," I mumbled, lowering my eyes. Dr. Berger hadn't actually told me anything. And if he had inadvertently revealed optimism by his tone of voice, I wouldn't tell on him.

The psychologist stood menacingly over me. "You know," he warned sternly, "Tony is not going to grow up! Or talk! Until you do something!"

I cringed, intimidated by his anger. By "do something", he obviously meant confess to some weird subconscious thought. Psychology books described how repressed thoughts about unspeakable matters, such as incest, dominate people's lives, and Dr. Zircon was apparently furious because I refused to confess any such feelings. One way to win an argument is to declare all dissent to be pathological. Psychologists even have a technical name for it - "denial". Dr. Zircon was unable to control his anger at what he regarded as my blatant "denial". I'm sure his fury would have turned to delighted approval if only I'd obligingly remembered some childhood trauma, such as sexual abuse. Our society bestows great authority upon policemen - and also upon doctors. Even I would have had enough sense not to deliberately defy a policeman. But should we really bestow such authority on doctors? (Dr. Zircon was a psychologist, not even a doctor, but I encountered medical doctors just as insistent about Tony needing psychiatric treatment.) The other women, who had momentarily found my encounter with the psychologist more interesting than their own problems, waited a few minutes and then resumed their usual complaints.

Question 13: Is the universe, including life, an automatic, mechanical process, driven by nothing but the laws of physics and chemistry (the materialist position)? Or do other forces play a role, such as mind, consciousness, judgment and volition - most of which we presently have only have limited understanding?

Ike tried to discuss with Colonel Mann what Dr. Zircon had said to me.

"Your wife was mistaken," the colonel told Ike. "Dr. Zircon would never have said such things. And I can assure you he wouldn't get angry." *How could he be so certain Dr. Zircon never experienced anger? Did he consider psychologists immune from such human emotions?* (Col. Mann would soon demonstrate that he was equally capable of anger when his theories weren't taken seriously.)

It had been a year since I first took Tony to the pediatrician. His unexpected behavior had always seemed funny to us. One reason was probably Tony's attitude. Our other two children became offended and cried if we laughed at them too much, but Tony seemed to enjoy it. Full of fun himself, Tony loved to tease. He would sometimes hide in the bushes when I called him from the yard. When I found him, he would laugh with delight at his cleverness. During the time I was attending group therapy, I still tried to find humor in Tony's mischief, but I was often on the verge of tears. He had again broken the glass out of the door when he couldn't get it open. Again, Ike had replaced it. We tried to discipline him, but were unable to find effective punishments. We had to be careful not to punish him to relieve our fear and frustration, or to satisfy people who considered him spoiled. How does one cope with children who don't respond to conventional discipline? The origin of a myth that child abuse can cause retardation is understandable. Undoubtedly retardation can cause parental frustration, and might have sometimes led to excessive punishment.

My mother had knit Tony a pillow which looked like a big bug. Tony, nearly five, was still in diapers. He would run and get his pillow and lie on the floor with it under his head while I changed his diapers.

"Will you expect me to change your diapers after you start riding your first motorcycle, you rascal?" I sometimes exclaimed.

Tony, his head on his pillow, would smile impishly. He also slept with his pillow.

"Find piddow," Tony said one night at bedtime. I searched the house. Tony followed me repeating "find piddow" more insistently.

"Everyone help find Tony's pillow," I urged, and we began looking in the yard. It was getting dark and we couldn't find a flashlight. (Flashlights were one of the things Tony kept dismantled.) By this time Tony was in tears and screaming, "Find piddow! Find piddow!"

"Maybe we can use candles," I suggested. "If that pillow comforts Tony at night, we must find it."

Insecure was not a way I would have described Tony. Nevertheless it was one of child psychology's favorite themes. I was determined to do everything possible to avoid any accusation of causing Tony to be insecure. Keeping candles lit while walking around the yard was difficult. We improvised cardboard windbreaks and searched for more than an hour. Tony began to enjoy us all stumbling around by candlelight and he stopped crying. Although we didn't find the pillow, he finally went to bed without it. We found it the next morning, in plain sight up in a tree, where Tony spent much of his time playing.

The next evening at bedtime Tony asked for his pillow, and I took it from a closet where I'd kept it safely hidden all day.

"No!" he objected as he grabbed it from me and ran and threw it out the door. "Find piddow," he repeated.

"No, Tony, no candles tonight," I told him. "Go out and get your pillow if you want to sleep with it." Tony went to bed without his pillow and seemed indifferent about sleeping with it after that.

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Tony used to stop up the toilet by flushing down his blocks. We'd call the Roto-Rooter man to dislodge them. One evening we were in the bathroom watching the Roto-Rooter machine and heard a noise in the living room. Rushing out we found Tony with a hack saw from the Roto-Rooter man's tool box, enthusiastically sawing on a table leg. In that moment of confusion the Rotor-Roter man decided he couldn't do the job this time. We'd have to call a plumber. He said he wouldn't charge for his unsuccessful efforts.

"If you don't want money, we might give you Tony," we joked.

Tony was so cute and bright looking no one could resist laughing, and the Roto-Rooter man laughed too. He retreated in mock alarm, declaring, "The only people who might have use for that young man would be some demolition company."

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Tony was rarely sick. His few childhood illnesses were so mild as to be almost unnoticeable. However he got a bad cold that spring, and I took him to the pediatric clinic. While we were waiting, he investigated the scales by the reception desk. After a couple of minutes he came and handed me a piece of it. I tried to replace the piece of metal but couldn't find where it fit. I gave it to the nurse and apologized. She tried to replace it on the scales but decided a screw must be missing. Surely Tony hadn't been near those scales long enough to unscrew anything. Sometimes though mechanical devices seemed to disintegrate spontaneously whenever Tony approached!

We went in to see the doctor. When she tried to look down Tony's throat, he bit the tongue depressor in two and kicked the doctor in the face.

"He shouldn't act like this at his age," she exclaimed.

"We go to psychologists every week," I said.

"That's good," she said, and continued to examine Tony while keeping out of range of his feet. "How do you like the Child Guidance Clinic?"

"I hate it."

"You should be grateful for such help," she scolded.

"I can force myself to go; I can't make myself like it," I protested. Then I exclaimed in exasperation, "I always thought one should be frank and open when dealing with psychiatry. But that psychologist goes into a big old purple funk whenever I try to start a candid discussion. He acts like he's about to hide under his desk!"

The doctor laughed at my vehemence and obvious exaggeration. It was refreshing to see a doctor laugh. There wasn't much gaiety around the psychiatric clinic. Everyone, doctors and patients, were grimly taking themselves and their emotions so very, very seriously.

"They've said Tony is extremely bright and he isn't psychotic," I said. "Do you know of anything else that might be wrong with him?"

"Well, childhood schizophrenia."

"But they said he isn't psychotic."

"The psychiatrists would know more about that than I would," she said, turning her attention back to Tony. The doctor treated Tony's cold without further comment. As we went out through the waiting room, several people were on their hands and knees around the scales, presumably still searching for that missing screw. I'd already done all the apologizing I could stomach for one day, and I took Tony's hand and hurried out the door with him.

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Food was an important item in Tony's life, and cookies were near the top of his list. He could enter any kitchen and spot the cookie jar, regardless of its disguise. Once at the psychiatric clinic, a doctor walked across the waiting room with a big cookie in his hand down by his side. Suddenly he stopped and stared at his empty hand. Tony had managed to dart up and unobtrusively snatch the cookie. He was back climbing into my lap before either the doctor or I realized what was happening. Tony had seen only the cookie. He gave no thought to the human attached to it. This particular human happened to be a psychologist. As a grown man in a dispute with a four-year-old over a cookie, he did seem a little embarrassed by the whole thing, but in the spirit of teaching boys a lesson, I suppose, the doctor insisted upon having his

cookie returned. Searching for cookies may have been what Tony had in mind the day he got into more serious trouble. For me it was a last straw.

On this particular afternoon I couldn't find him in the yard. I ran up the hill behind the house calling him and met a man leading him down the road by the hand. Tony was crying. The man declared indignantly,

"He scared me to death! I thought he was a burglar. He walked right into my house. I had a gun. I almost shot him!"

I apologized and took Tony home. In a few minutes a policeman knocked on the door.

"Do you have a boy named Anthony here?" he asked. I nodded, shocked speechless at the thought of a policeman coming for Tony. "An escapee from juvenile hall?" he continued.

Tony, traces of tears still on his dusty little cheeks, stamped his foot and made threatening motions at the policeman. "Get out a here," Tony warned, as he advanced menacingly. He stopped just out of the policeman's reach and stamped his little foot again. "Bad man! Get out a here!"

"He's only four years old! How could he have escaped from juvenile hall?" I asked exasperatedly.

The policeman stood in the door with a look of disapproval on his face, watching Tony's efforts to drive him away. I doubt he was really searching for an escapee from juvenile hall. Surely four-year-olds would be incapable of such break-outs. Perhaps the man whose house Tony entered had called the police before discovering how small his "burglar" was. Maybe the policeman was trying to emphasize that housebreaking was a serious offense, and was trying to impress upon mother that she should do something about her young delinquent - or he *might* end up in juvenile hall.

"That young man needs a good spanking," the policeman said, as he turned and left.

Psychologists apparently weren't the only ones who felt I should do something about Tony. I tried to laugh about the predicaments my four year old could get himself into, but found myself crying again. *What did the psychologists think might happen to Tony?* He was a notorious cookie snatcher. Did they think he might grow up to be a criminal, for heaven's sake? Surely somewhere I could find a doctor who would discuss this mysterious thing doctors seemed to think might be wrong with my little boy. A friend recommended a civilian pediatrician. As I met the new doctor in his office, I tried to explain that the psychologists claimed my child was extremely bright and wasn't psychotic. By this time I was unable to talk about Tony without crying.

"What else might be wrong with him when he grows up?" I asked, struggling with tears.

"Well, he might not get married - or something like that," the doctor said. He seemed puzzled at the bitterness with which I spoke of Dr. Zircon. "If you are undergoing therapy somewhere

and are angry at a psychologist, you should tell him," he said. "In therapy feelings of anger must be brought into the open."

The pediatrician didn't feel qualified to discuss Tony's diagnosis and obtained an appointment for me with a well-known child-psychiatrist. I rather hoped Tony would get married when he grew up. But if he didn't? Well, people could surely suffer worse tragedies than not getting married. In any case, it seemed a silly thing to worry about while he was only four years old.

I would have found it difficult to worry about Tony's sexual orientation, if that was what the pediatrician was questioning when he suggested Tony might not get married. Even at the age of four Tony's every movement and gesture seemed to indicate exaggerated masculinity. So far I'd only talked to psychologists and pediatricians. A psychiatrist was also a medical doctor, in addition to being an authority on what people think and feel. Perhaps a child psychiatrist would be more knowledgeable than mere psychologists. I hoped he would be able to tell me something that would make more sense.

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Was that doctor hinting at sexual deviation? I'd read Freud was the first to suggest a mother was responsible for her son's homosexuality. One way he made this discovery was by psychoanalyzing Leonardo da Vinci, who had been dead for some five hundred years and was reportedly homosexual. Leonardo didn't write an autobiography, but he apparently did leave one account of a dream. Dreams were Freud's specialty. There had been other dream-analyzers, but Freud claimed to be the first to do it scientifically. (Freud expressed disappointment that he never received a Nobel Prize for his scientific discoveries.) Leonardo reportedly dreamed a vulture came and flicked its tail on his lips. Freud had made the scientific discovery that a bird's tail, as well as a snake, a cigar and just about any other similarly shaped object, is a symbol for a penis. (Poor Freud must have felt threatened by penises from all directions.) In Egyptian hieroglyphics a vulture is also the symbol for mother. Leonardo was Italian, but Freud thought he might know Egyptian hieroglyphics. (Actually, the Rosetta Stone hadn't been translated, and no one knew Egyptian hieroglyphics in Leonardo's time.) Nevertheless according to Freud's analysis, Leonardo's dream indicated his mother had stolen his manhood, thus accounting for Mona Lisa's smug smile. Someone later discovered Freud had used a faulty translation, from Italian to German, of Leonardo's dream. The bird in Leonardo's dream wasn't even a vulture. It was a kite. In Egyptian hieroglyphics a kite is only a

symbol for that species of bird, and not a symbol for mother. It was further asserted that Leonardo, who was illegitimate, spent his infancy and childhood with his father and stepmother, not his mother. However Freud found a painting by Leonardo with two Mona Lisa's, both sporting smug smiles. For many years the cause of homosexuality was stated as “a strong mother and a weak or absent father”. (I wonder what gives psychologists the ability to distinguish weak people from strong people. Which word would they use to describe me, for instance? If I was ever "weak", I was definitely "strong" after surviving all that traumatic psychotherapy.) Finally homosexuals rebelled and insisted their sexual preference was not an illness, and they were not seeking a cure. However mothers remained the official cause of most other conditions psychiatry defined as “mental illness”.

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The human organism consists of 100 trillion cells, plus ten times that number of symbiotic microbes, which colonize our gastrointestinal tract and skin. Science has discovered that those microbes affect many aspects of human physiology, including immune cell development, digestion, metabolism and even regulation of memory, mood and well-being. They are a part of the human biota, essential to our functioning, and some force (or forces) unites them all, along with our cells, to form a subconscious, functioning organism. (In humans we've concluded it also includes conscious minds. (Do we know whether other forms of life include conscious minds?) If all that activity is dictated by the laws of physics and chemistry, no one has been specific about such laws. Reality probably includes many forces we don't presently understand. We speculate, and psychiatric speculations are often the most elaborate. But any explanation of a relationship between a physical brain and a thought or emotion is pure speculation. Personally, I don't find mechanical guesses any more believable than religious ones, and I'm more comfortable acknowledging something is unknown than I am with some obviously contrived mechanistic explanation.

Question 14: Should doctors and scientists refrain from expressing skepticism about theories of colleagues in other fields?

I went for the appointment with the child psychiatrist. His office was on San Francisco Bay, overlooking a small boat harbor, Gerald Jampolsky - author of popular books on child psychiatry. My encounter with him was brief and straight forward, and Jampolsky is his real name. *Please, please let this psychiatrist at least be candid!* I thought, as I parked the car and took Tony with me into the psychiatrist's office. How could I trust doctors who seemed to be keeping something from us? Why was the medical profession suddenly behaving so deviously?

Doctor Jampolsky invited me to leave Tony in the waiting room and come into his office.

Leave Tony in the waiting room? *Alone?* The psychiatrist didn't seem to have a receptionist. A couple of chairs and a lamp seemed to be the only furniture. Maybe there wasn't much for Tony to destroy or dismantle. "Be a good boy," I admonished with a heroic display of confidence, as I put him on a chair. There was no telling what Tony might do if left alone, but sometimes circumstances demand that we live dangerously, I decided. Tony looked angelic as I left him sitting in the waiting room. Although alert looking and curious about everything, there was never a trace of guile on his bright, innocent little face.

A big window with its spectacular view of yachts took up one side of the psychiatrist's office. I seated myself in a big comfortable chair. At least it wasn't a couch. I always dreaded the possibility that I might be asked to talk to a psychiatrist from such a submissive position. The psychiatrist, a personable, obviously intelligent man, listened as I told about the Child Guidance Clinic and my disagreements with Dr. Zircon.

"Dr. Zircon says Tony is very bright," I explained.

The psychiatrist sat waiting for me to continue.

"Extremely bright!" I emphasized.

The psychiatrist still didn't react. Probably all mothers who consulted him considered their children to be extremely bright. I didn't know how to suggest Tony's superior intelligence seemed to have some mysterious relationship to his unusual development. When I tried to talk about some of Tony's mischief, the psychiatrist kept glancing uneasily toward his waiting room, where I hoped Tony was still sitting unattended.

"I honestly don't understand why you consulted me," he finally said.

"I want to know what might happen to Tony."

"I've seen many of these children end up in institutions," he said gravely. I stared at him in horror, too shocked to ask what he meant. I couldn't think of any reason for putting people in institutions other than retardation, psychosis or criminal acts.

"Do you believe children are born like Tony, or do you think their condition is caused by something in their environment?" I finally managed to ask. '*Mother*' was obviously the environmental cause psychiatrists seemed to agree upon, but like most of the doctors, I couldn't bring myself to come right out and put the awful accusation into words.

"There are psychiatrists who believe children are born like this. I'm not one of them."

That was at least an honest answer. *I was impressed by this doctor conceding that people might disagree with him!* Disagreement was something Dr. Dingle apparently couldn't tolerate. I wondered if he would take offense if I asked where I might find one of those disagreeing psychiatrists. The request probably wouldn't be tactful, I decided, and I tried to figure out how I might word it so as to not offend him.

"The purpose of psychotherapy is to get to know yourself," the psychiatrist said, apparently still puzzled about what I wanted from him.

"But I already know myself as well as most people do. And it's damned unpleasant having that psychologist sit around waiting to pounce upon one of my alleged emotional problems."

"Therapy is not like a social relationship. If you are angry at the psychologist, don't keep your feelings to yourself. Tell him exactly what you think of him!" After a moment's hesitation he added, "What would you like to tell him?"

"I'd like to tell that pompous little fugitive from the Organization Man he has more emotional problems than I have!" I declared. A recent book, *The Organization Man*, criticized psychological tests among other things. Most psychiatric theories were accepted with religious fervor in those days, but I had begun to search out anything I could find that was critical of either psychology or psychologists. I wasn't in the habit of "telling people off", though, and wouldn't even know where to begin. "But what could 'telling that psychologist off' possibly accomplish?" I asked helplessly.

The psychiatrist stared at me. Not a muscle of his face moved. He just sat staring at me.

"Is Tony a rocker?" the psychiatrist asked with sudden heightened interest. "Or have you ever noticed him attach something to a piece of string and spin it?"

I was reminded of the time a year ago in the first pediatrician's office. Something about me, my grades in school, had seemed to suggest Tony's mysterious diagnosis. Other people's thoughts had always been inscrutable to me. I've since read descriptions of the difference between analytical brains and intuitive brains, and have decided that my brain is on the analytical side. However I've also read that the difference lessens as we grow older, and analytical thinkers sometimes acquire more intuitive abilities. Under the awful trauma of the past year, my mind might have made a quantum leap. To my surprise I felt sudden insight into this psychiatrist's thinking. He was finally recognizing Tony's mysterious diagnosis, I decided.

"He rocks his head back and forth before he goes to sleep, and he spends a lot of time walking around vigorously shaking a limber stick," I answered, "in a way that sort of resembles spinning something."

"Did you work before you were married?" That first pediatrician had wanted to know what type of work I did in Alaska. *What was it about the kind of work Ike and I did that could be relevant to Tony's diagnosis?*

"I was an architectural draftsman."

"And your husband?"

"He used to be a newspaper reporter."

The psychiatrist smiled and nodded. He continued sympathetically, "You consulted me because you don't believe they have been honest with you at the psychiatric clinic, didn't you?"

"They have refused to tell us anything."

The psychiatrist suggested I try another psychiatric clinic, Langley Porter in San Francisco. The last thing I wanted was to be treated at another psychiatric clinic. I was looking for someone to tell me all they knew about this mysterious diagnosis they suspected.

"Would you be willing to take Tony as a patient?" I asked. This doctor also appeared to be suddenly suspecting some diagnosis about which he wasn't being explicit, but he didn't seem devious. He actually appeared to disapprove of Dr. Zircon's deviousness.

"Do you think you could afford my fees, several hundred dollars a month?" he asked.

"We have some money saved. I would pay almost anything to learn something definite about Tony."

"Well, I don't have any free time right now. But if you'll give me the name of your psychologist, I'd like to phone him."

"Please don't do that!" I exclaimed. "He's already angry at me. He'd probably kick Tony right out of the clinic."

"I don't think you have to worry about that!" He spoke as if treating Tony was considered a privilege that no therapist would willingly relinquish. (Or maybe we were involved in a scientific study, from which Dr. Zircon wasn't permitted to expel us.) "No, I'm going to phone him," the psychiatrist repeated, and he sounded provoked.

Not again! Please not again! The psychologist's annoyance did seem directed at Dr. Zircon, not at me. Nevertheless this doctor visit was going to be as futile as the others. It was like a nightmare, where one is aware of dreaming, but was powerless to stop the terrible events from running their awful course. If only there were something I could say to stop this doctor from dismissing me without discussing Tony!

"I read every psychology book in the local libraries," I confessed, remembering that Col. Mann complained to Ike that I didn't tell them I read psychology books.

Dr. Jampolsky looked startled. "Now I'm not going to charge you full price for your consultation today," he said, ignoring my confession. "Fifteen dollars will be enough."

It had happened again. He expected me to leave!

"I think I've made a wonderful adjustment to life, considering the way I am," I defended myself. "I could have been an alcoholic like my father."

There! No one could accuse me of withholding information now! I'd revealed both my habit of reading psychology books and my father's alcoholism. Secretly, though, I still preferred

"however I was" to being whatever the psychologists defined as "normal", and that was the truth! We are all a mixture of talents and deficits. I was grateful for my talents and willing to work on my defects. Skepticism, which I regarded as one of my talents, was overwhelming me with serious doubts that these professional "people fixers" actually possessed the skills they were claiming. They misread Tony's emotions and they seemed oblivious of my anger and resentment.

The psychiatrist only looked a little bewildered. Reluctantly, and feeling defeated, I got up and collected Tony from the waiting room. Thank heavens he was still sitting in the chair and hadn't found anything to dismantle. I had apparently hit bargain-day, and the psychiatrist had only charged me half-price. However economizing on doctor's fees wasn't one of my priorities at the moment. I'd hoped this doctor would at least be candid. But the only advice he'd given was to go tell Dr. Zircon exactly what I thought of him. The psychiatrist apparently planned to reveal my feelings over the phone, and besides, Dr. Zircon was undoubtedly already aware of my anger. Doctor Jampolsky's disapproval appeared to be directed at Dr. Zircon, not at me. I had been attending Dr. Dingle's group for nearly a year. Surely Ike and I were surely entitled to know our child's diagnoses. At first Dr. Zircon may have felt that by keeping me ignorant of details, I might become frightened into cooperating with his treatment - more likely to confess some of his neuroses. By this time Dr. Zircon might have been willing to discuss autism. Maybe he didn't want to talk about it in the group, and was waiting for me to consult him privately. But I no longer trusted psychologists. Col. Mann insisted Dr. Zircon didn't say things I heard him say, and I preferred to talk to any psychologist in front of witnesses. During that time, I made other attempts to find a doctor who would talk to me. The results were always similar. Psychiatrists would not contradict each other, and medical doctors would not interfere with their colleagues, the psychiatrists. During those years some doctors may have had reservations about psychiatric treatment for mothers of autistic children, but they remained silent. The only treatment available to Tony seemed to be psychotherapy for his mother.

*_*_*

As a nonconformist I'm accustomed to finding people who disagree with me. Authorities sometimes become upset when people challenge their beliefs. Those few biologists who dare to question the creative power of Natural Selection, for instance, are accused of being "ignorant creationists". Ben Stein narrated a movie, *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed*, documenting how scientists who question Neo-Darwinism can be denied tenure, and sometimes even lose their jobs. Perhaps challenges to entrenched orthodoxies sometimes have to originate outside the establishment.

Question 15: Do people generally choose the challenges which force them to grow?

As I read psychiatry books, I came to realize most psychiatric patients are convinced they were starved for affection during an unhappy childhood. Dr. Zircon would not have approved of my childhood, but I honestly didn't remember it as unhappy. On the contrary, I had many happy childhood memories. I was the eldest of four children. Mother was busy doing all the work required of housewives in those days. No one worried about how we related to our peer group or whether we were living up to our capabilities. Unaware of the formulas of child psychology, my parents accepted our deviations from average, allowed us to make decisions, and assumed growing up came naturally. We attended school, did our household chores and would have been amazed at the thought of adults trying to "understand" us. We enjoyed the freedom of living in a small town. Pulling our wagon around the hills and pastures, we pretended to be explorers on dangerous journeys. We dammed the creeks and waded in them. My earliest happy memories include the sounds of birds and small animals in the quiet of the woods, wild flowers and the different smells of spring and summer in the sunny fields. We built a tree house up in an oak tree, where we published a newspaper. We sat up in that tree and made up scandals involving the neighbors. Then we delivered our "newspapers" to everyone's porch, which I'm sure (at least, I can hope) disappeared into the trash unread. In the winter we entertained ourselves by cutting paper-dolls from catalogs. Copying the crises ridden lives of radio, soap-opera characters, we enacted stories with them.

One of my first memories is from when I was about five. I suddenly felt an urge to examine the contents of a jewelry box Mother kept on her dresser. Mother confined us to her bedroom when we misbehaved, and it occurred to me that such punishment might offer opportunity for a leisurely examination of the treasures in that box. I asked for a glass of milk and dropped it on the floor. Mother got a mop and began to clean up the mess.

"Dam milk," I said. I'd never uttered this word before and was confident it would result in punishment.

"Little girls shouldn't swear," Mother scolded absently.

I pulled a stack of pots and pans off a shelf, scattering them over the floor with a loud bang and clatter.

"What has gotten in to you today?" Mother exclaimed. She felt my forehead to see if I was feverish.

I deliberately knocked my sister down, making her cry.

"Go to my room and stay there until you can behave," Mother finally ordered. Suspicious of my quick compliance, she checked after a few minutes and found me sitting on top of the dresser, draped with chains, pins, rings and necklaces. She lost patience and spanked me.

One day my brother and sister and I were playing store. Our merchandise consisted of cans of acorns on an assortment of boards, stacked on bricks and boxes. Unaccustomed to adults participating in our games, we were surprised when two Indian women in long, calico skirts stopped to examine our store. There was an Indian reservation somewhere near Ukiah, although I'm not sure exactly where it was. We were used to seeing Indians around town, usually sitting on benches around the courthouse. The two cultures rarely seemed to interact much. No Indian children attended our schools or churches. At the movie theater the Indians were made to sit in the balcony, our version of segregation. I can't imagine why people weren't more curious about their lives. These Indian women were accompanied by a couple of children our age, who watched us with solemn, big, brown eyes. The women were talking in their language. We ceased playing, three barefoot, scruffy, little kids, and stood silently as they discussed our store.

How much?" one of the women asked in English.

"Pennies?" suggested my enterprising brother. We had been using rocks for money.

They conferred, and then offered us three real copper pennies in exchange for our entire stock of acorns. We eagerly accepted.

"We come back tomorrow," they promised.

We spent the rest of the day scampering around the hills gathering buckets of acorns, thrilled to be able to sell something so freely available. It was like finding someone to whom we could sell mud pies. I don't know if we were the only individuals to be thus exploited by Indians. Their children apparently weren't interested in picking up acorns at that price. However for several summers we were happy to gather them for a penny a bucket. A couple of years later a man who kept deer as pets paid us the magnificent sum of ten cents a bucket.

In addition to all our cats, dogs and hamsters, we also kept wild animals such as chipmunks, raccoons and salamanders as pets. We even played with a catfish in a tub of water for a few days, until mother cooked it for dinner. Once, Daddy came home from a fishing trip with a box of bats for us. They escaped and flew all over the house. It was hours before we got rid of them. None of us thought they were cute.

As we grew older we enjoyed working. We pulled our wagon around town, selling produce from the family vegetable garden. We baby-sat, did chores for the neighbors, sold magazines, worked in the movie theater and picked prunes. A few migrant farm workers came from the South each year, but local people did most of the farm work in those days. The entire town, including children, was happy to turn out to earn a few dollars helping with the harvest in the fall, and school didn't start until late September to accommodate such work. We undoubtedly had less money than most people in town, but we didn't feel poor. We took a can of food to

church at Christmas for the poor people. If we ever became the recipients of any food collected for the poor people, my parents never told us.

We always had enough to eat. My father liked to hunt and fish, and during the depression we ate illegal fish and game. We all enjoyed family camping trips, and the most exciting were those times we thought the game warden might be pursuing us. I've since learned many people in town were aware of Daddy's illegal hunting. If the game warden had wanted, he surely would have had no trouble catching my parents, four children, baby bottles and diapers, two hound dogs, a cat, a canary and our camping gear piled into an old open touring car. (Mother, reluctant to leave Tweety Bird alone in an empty house, took the canary on camping trips that lasted more than a couple of days.) We spent time in the car like normal rowdy kids - until we had a flat tire or broke down. Then we got out and sat by the side of the road, silently, and without moving. Daddy's temper was on a short leash when the car wasn't running properly. Once the car was fixed, we continued on our way with our usual noisy bickering and teasing.

I wouldn't want to give the impression we were just a happy, carefree, fun-loving family. Daddy was uncommunicative and must have found it difficult to express himself, or to show emotion. He used to read at the dinner table. He claimed the doctor prescribed it as a way to help his indigestion. I suspect the truth was, Daddy just lacked talent or tolerance for the kind of chatter that went on during mealtime with four noisy children. My father was an alcoholic. His drinking seemed a part of my earliest memories. We would awaken in the middle of the night. Sometimes Mother would get us out of bed, and all of us except Daddy would go stay with friends for a while. Neither my parents nor their friends were sophisticated enough to be aware such experiences might damage a child's psyche. They wouldn't have known the meaning of the word '*psyche*'. We were pretty much ignored during such episodes. Actually, children are adaptable, and we learned to cope. We accepted disruptions in our lives and sometimes found the visits an entertaining break from routine. After we had lived with friends a few days, Daddy would show up and persuade Mother to return home. Daddy might work on one of his inventions and apparently wouldn't drink for a while. Sometimes during one of these more harmonious periods, we made exciting plans to go live in the mountains and earn our living prospecting for gold - or some other grandiose scheme to become rich.

Another disruptive element in our childhood was my maternal grandmother, who divided her time by living with each of her two children. In both families she chose one grandchild upon whom she lavished love and gifts, and regarded the others as antagonists. My sister was the recipient of her affection in our family. Mother would call us together and warn us Gram was coming. "Try to behave," she would beg us.

My brother and I would regard each other with sudden agreement, forgetting all personal differences. We wouldn't have dared do anything to Gram, but we could torment our sister, Gram's favorite. My brother and I remained united until the day Gram finally returned to my uncle's family. (Our baby sister, nine years younger than I, wasn't yet involved.) Gram's

husband, my maternal grandfather, died when I was three, and I never knew him. His children always spoke of him with respect and affection. Housing his family in a covered wagon, he had earned a living as a traveling photographer. When he became older, he went off and lived alone in the Arizona desert, near his son's family. Considering Gram's sharp, caustic tongue and cantankerous disposition, one might understand his desire to escape. Gram was scornful of the preacher. Once when he called, Gram got a glass of water and sat smacking her lips over it, pretending it was gin. Mother may have been embarrassed, but she seemed to have endless patience with Gram. When we were small we fought and bickered like a bunch of puppies, and Gram participated in the turmoil. Daddy, for whom she never had a kind thought, usually suffered in silence, but once she must have gone too far, and he told her to leave. She wasn't ready to return to my uncle's house. She put a tent up in the back yard and camped out there until she wore Daddy down with her sarcastic remarks, and he allowed her back into the house. Today I can feel compassion for them all, as I try to imagine having to live with my grown children and sleeping on a cot in the dining room. In her later years Gram had to work as a "practical nurse" for what little money she could earn. The day she turned sixty five, and the State granted her an old-age stipend, she went to bed and stayed there until her death some ten years later.

Mother was friendly, out-going, tolerant and non-judgmental. Crippled by rheumatoid arthritis since the age of thirty, she was cheerful and affectionate in spite of constant pain. Everyone liked and admired her. I'm sure she didn't regard her life as unhappy. I remember her laughing and joking with friends. She seemed proud of how she kept the house clean, the clothes she made for us, food she canned and the meals she cooked. She was an enthusiastic camper, making our hunting trips exciting. Once she made yeast doughnuts over a campfire and shared them with other campers, including some Indians camping near us. Those doughnuts, fresh from a pot of oil boiling over a campfire were delicious, and it was the closest we ever came to having a social interaction with Indians. As we grew older, mother was supportive of our aspirations and decisions. (Although she surely must have felt skeptical about some of mine – such as sailing off to Alaska.) My mother provided all the love and understanding necessary for a happy childhood. Her remarkable cheerfulness was most apparent later, near the end of her life. She became severely crippled with arthritis. Nevertheless she managed to live a successful life in a nursing home. It was the first nursing home in Ukiah, and most people regarded it as luxurious, compared to the boarding house where Mother and Gram had been staying. Mother became a baseball fan and shared her enthusiasm with other residents, quoting baseball statistics and convincing everyone to watch games on television. She also conducted a business from the nursing home; she crocheted and sold baby outfits. Many a new-born went home from Ukiah hospital in Mother's exquisite little sweaters, caps and booties. She once fell and broke her hip, and was told she would never walk again. She exercised, though, secretly, under the covers, and she did walk again. Her enthusiasm for life lasted until her death at the age of eighty four. Anyone believing a mother creates her child's emotional health would have a hard

time explaining how, with a mother like Gram, my mother turned out to be such a remarkable person.

As teenagers, the highlight of our life was a church summer-camp for which we worked all year to earn the money. One evening at camp, six of us - all girls - decided to do the most daring, outrageous thing our imaginations could devise. Pulling the blinds and locking the door of the cabin - *we played strip poker!* The Methodists running the camp learned of our escapade and announced our scandalous behavior publicly. They stood us up in front of assembly, and everyone prayed we would repent our sins. Such humiliation might have been painful if there hadn't been six of us. Together, we just obligingly repented and allowed ourselves to become "saved", creating a big emotional event for everyone. None of us had actually considered ourselves "lost", but our contrition and forgiveness was the most magnificent climax for a summer-camp that anyone could remember.

I embraced my salvation enthusiastically, and when I got home I looked around for someone to proselytize. My father had never to my knowledge been to church. At my question of, "Have you considered accepting Christ into your life?" my inarticulate father shot me a startled glance and got up and left the room without answering. I didn't remain preoccupied with religion for long though. No matter the religion or sect, I'd never heard of a deity known for his sense of humor, and I was committed to fun. I remember an aunt's evasive answers when I asked why she didn't go to church, but I never had serious doubts about religion until I reached the university, where the 20th Century, scientific materialists were waiting to challenge all religious beliefs. Many people who become skeptical of religious myths and legends turn to materialism, under the impression that is the only alternative to Theism. Some materialists promote Atheism and become just as zealously evangelical about their newly found "scientific truth" as any religious fundamentalist. They insist the universe is merely the result of accidental, mechanical processes, all mysteriously popping into existence without design, plan or purpose, and that life consists of nothing but matter and deterministic, physical forces. Some materialists even insist that free-will is an illusion. They point to life's imperfections as an argument against the existence of purpose and design in nature.

I've always suspected that the way things are, is the way the universe is supposed to be. Surely Heaven (no evil or suffering) would be too boring for human tolerance, and would soon cause most of us to self-destruct. Or take up drugs. I don't regard imperfection, injustice, sin or suffering as examples of nature's foul-ups. Imperfections exist, so they are obviously essential aspects of reality. A perfect society would be incapable of growth, static rather than dynamic. In other words, dead! Perfect organisms would have no reason to evolve, and perfect people would have no reason to grow. Regardless of where we start in life, all of us are capable of some improvement, and personal growth seems like one of our most satisfying achievements. "Resting on one's laurels" might even be a handicap for someone born with an excess of talents. If self-regulating systems such as life are designed, (or self-designed by individual organisms striving to adapt) I'm confident imperfection is an essential aspect of the process.

People who survive unusual experiences sometimes write books about their lives. Such accounts often include more difficult childhoods than mine. Contrary to psychological orthodoxy, some people seem proud of surviving a challenging childhood, rather than feeling damaged. The most traumatic event of my childhood happened when I was twenty three. Some people might be adults at that age, but I still had lots of growing to do. Mother left my father, again, and came to live with me in Berkeley. She bought a house with the money my brother in the Navy was sending her. When I decided to go to Alaska, I took a bus trip to the town where my father lived to tell him goodbye. Daddy walked out of the garage where he worked and stood silently, his eyes on the ground, while I explained why I'd come.

"Go away," he said, glancing at up me with bitterness. "I'm not interested in where you go. Your mother has been with you for months now, and I haven't heard a word from you."

"I'm sorry, I--"

"Just go away. I don't want to see you again."

He turned and walked away from me. His back and lowered head disappeared into the busy garage. I stood there a moment, overcome with terrible, confused feelings of anger, shame, guilt and regret. (None of those feelings were the least bit subconscious; I was painfully aware of them). Then I got on the bus and returned to Berkeley. I had been focused upon my own life, and it hadn't occurred to me that my father might want to see me after Mother left him. During college I'd made trips home several times a year. My father, with problems of his own, never had much to say. Mother was the one who showed affection and expressed interest in our lives. At the age of twenty three, I had the rest of my life to sort out my thoughts and feelings, but my last sight of my father was his back disappearing into that garage. Daddy died a few months later, while I was in Alaska, and I was left with the pain of all the things I might have said to him. Self-centered at that age, I didn't understand much about suffering. So far my cheerful, optimistic nature had allowed me to sail through life unscathed. As the years passed and I gained understanding, I realized how lonely and abandoned Daddy must have felt. He was inarticulate. I have no clear picture of what he thought or believed. I don't think he even had real conversations with my mother. I never heard any. However Daddy wouldn't have stayed and worked to earn a living all those years if he hadn't loved us. The worst thing he did while drunk was fall down. I remembered incidents which must have been his way of showing affection. For instance my sister once forgot her kitten on a camping trip. Daddy turned the car around and drove fifty miles back into the mountains to search for it.

Oh, I had painful childhood memories all right. Every year that memory of the suffering I inflicted upon Daddy by my thoughtless concern with my own life has become more painful. If only I had acquired more wisdom and understanding by that age! I experienced all the violent emotions of childhood: anger, resentment, jealousy and envy - and I suffered them consciously, not subconsciously. I remembered occasions when I was dishonest and hurtful. And then, after some well-deserved punishment, I remember fantasies of tragically expiring - *and that would*

make everyone sorry for the way they had treated me! I have since become aware of some of my own traits, such as my nonconformist tendencies, which I felt I inherited from my father. I'd seen Daddy's algebra and trigonometry books. He didn't even finish high school, but I knew he'd taught himself a lot of mathematics. I, and each of my siblings, inherited a bit of our father's nature. None of us are extroverts. Relating to people has sometimes required effort for all of us. Everyone has some ability to change and grow. Talents are gifts, and we should take no credit for them; overcoming deficiencies are achievements for which we can be justifiably proud. I sometimes wish I had exerted more effort to develop a few extrovert talents for myself. Much of the growth I've achieved was stimulated by resentment of that misguided therapy that was imposed upon me, rather than by any innate urge to achieve. Nevertheless my siblings and I have all been more successful than our poor father was, and I don't regret the way I was born. Our father was apparently unable to bring about much change to his nature, but I'm sure he tried. Perhaps just being a part of his struggles helped us, his children, to be more successful in dealing with our own imperfections.

But while I had painful memories, I also remembered birthday parties, the circus coming to town, and Mother making me a new dress. I recall hot summer afternoons when we walked two miles for a swim in the river. I remember Daddy coming up with the price of a quart of ice cream on a sweltering summer evening. We all slept outside during hot weather, and I can still recall the delicious, cool nights when we first moved our beds into the back yard at the beginning of summer. As a teenager I remember boyfriends, picnics, dances, football games and stealing watermelons from farmers' fields. We lived by the railroad track, where the rent was cheap. One summer a boxcar load of watermelons was damaged, and we were allowed to steal all we wanted. I also have joyful recollections of singing *Shine on Harvest Moon* or *My Gal Sal* at the top of our lungs on balmy evenings, while chugging down a country lane in a jalopy overflowing with seventeen-year-olds. I remember laughing until we collapsed at things adults didn't seem to consider funny.

There was the time I sent for travel brochures from magazines in the library. The mailman delivered our mail in a carton for a few weeks. I spent hours of exquisite fantasy in exotic places like Ceylon and Maracaibo and, of course, being rescued from a never-ending series of perils by a stalwart hero on a white horse. (It would be difficult to reach the Seychelles on a horse, and my hero often rode a yacht.) Believing myself to be the only person living a fantasy life, I never admitted to such a pastime. Mother fussed because I absentmindedly put the dust pan in the icebox and the butter in the broom closet. Meanwhile I floated serenely down the Congo. Crocodiles frolicked in the muddy water and naked pygmies hid behind banana trees along the shore. Tarzan lurked up in the taller trees, ready to rescue me from perils. Throughout my life I've maintained such daydreams to which I could retreat when nothing else required my attention. It's how I put myself to sleep at night. I don't know if it's a normal practice, but I'm glad no psychologist ever cured me of it. I have always been confident that I was "normal".

Question 16: How can we claim to scientifically manipulate thoughts and emotions if we don't even understand how such elusive phenomena relate to physical reality?

I met with Dr. Zircon one more time. When group therapy ended in the spring, we were told to each report to the psychologist's office for a concluding interview. I had continued group therapy, most of the time as a grim observer. Dr. Dingle had assured me that my attendance in the group was merely so Tony could spend an hour with Dr. Lavalley. Pretending therapy felt a little dishonest, but I did what I was told. When I arrived for my concluding appointment, the psychologist acted as uncomfortable with me as I felt with him.

"Well now," Dr. Zircon began, "how is Tony doing?"

"He's doing fine." I answered. I had stopped reporting any of Tony's deficiencies to the psychologist when I discovered he blamed them all on me. We both struggled with a heavy silence. Finally, I attempted to fill it, "You know, when I agreed to join the group, I thought that if I came here each week, that. . . that. . ."

"Yes . . .?"

"I thought that after you got to know me. . .well. . ."

"You thought I would realize that you didn't need any psychiatric treatment!" he finished for me.

"Yes," I agreed. Psychotherapy is supposed to help achieve insights. The psychologist spoke as if he just had one. Could he have been suddenly struck with a doubt that I rejected Tony? He then suggested rather tentatively, maybe even hopefully, that perhaps I might decide to quit therapy?

I responded with a resolute, "No!" Although I detested therapy, this was the only treatment the medical profession was offering for Tony. I was willing to endure the awful experience in exchange for whatever possible benefit Tony's time with Dr. Lavalley might accomplish.

"Well then, Tony should continue with Dr. Lavalley," he said, "but you certainly don't need any psychiatric treatment." He gave an unconvincing little laugh, blushed, and looked away from my distrustful scrutiny. Then, fumbling with some papers on his desk, he continued, "I'm being transferred in a few weeks, but in the future I suggest you come in occasionally with your husband and report Tony's progress to Colonel Mann."

Colonel Mann took a vacation. For a while that summer neither Ike nor I talked to a psychologist, although we continued to take Tony for what they called his 'play therapy'. One day as I waited in the clinic for Tony, Colonel Mann, back from his holiday, came out of his office and spoke to me.

"Tell your husband I'm back. I'll see him next week at the usual time."

"Do you want me to come too?" The psychologist hesitated as if trying to make up his mind.

"Dr. Zircon said --" I began.

"Oh, I suppose you can come along if you want," he conceded indifferently. Thus Ike and I began our second year of psychotherapy.

"Tony's prospects are very bright if we all cooperate here," Colonel Mann said at our first session. "His future looks bleak if we don't."

Apparently some children like Tony grow up just fine, but having experienced a sample of their "treatment", I was beginning to doubt that psychotherapy ever "cured" anything. The children had surely just been slow to mature.

"What's wrong with Tony?" I asked.

"There is nothing physically wrong with him," Colonel Mann answered.

Tony hadn't been given a physical examination. Doctors, I had learned, give many tests to children suspected of mental retardation. I'd read of electroencephalograms, skull X-rays, blood and urine tests, and basal metabolism tests. (DNA testing was not yet a reality.) The clinic was part of Letterman Army Hospital, a large, well equipped, highly respected facility. Since no one had suggested any such tests, the psychologists must know Tony was not retarded. Doctors appeared to recognize some specific diagnosis that ruled out retardation.

"The idea is to frustrate Tony - and then reward him," Colonel Mann would expound. The psychologist would put his foot up on the desk so Tony couldn't reach the drawer where he kept candy. Tony did not question the strange ways of psychologists, and he had single-minded determination about sweets. He cheerfully pushed and pulled on the psychologist, trying to crawl over and under him, until Colonel Mann finally allowed him to get to the candy.

"See, I'm making myself important to Tony by giving him candy. Now Mommy must think of ways to make herself important," the psychologist would expound. "Then Tony will stop rejecting Mommy."

"Tony doesn't reject me." I tried to conceal my disgust.

"We're going to teach Mommy to understand Tony," he promised, ignoring my protest.

"I understand Tony pretty well," I insisted.

"He wouldn't act as he does if you understood him! When you learn to understand Tony he'll act like other children. Sometimes I wonder if you comprehend how different your child is. Why he doesn't even compare favorably with most two-year-olds!"

I was painfully aware. During the past year Tony's differences from other children had become increasingly apparent. He was still in diapers. I had assumed that when Tony's understanding matured sufficiently, he would toilet-train himself. That's what my other children did. Shortly before his fifth birthday we persuaded Tony to urinate in the toilet by feeding him full of watermelon. Then the entire family cooperated to entertain him as we stood him in the bathroom without trousers. When he finally urinated into the toilet, we cheered. Tony laughed with delight. Urinating at things became a newly found weapon - one of his games. We had no success with bowel movements. I might have appreciated suggestions from these child-specialists about toilet-training, but they seemed to have little interest in that subject.

"Perhaps Tony doesn't think highly enough of himself to want to give away part of his body," was Colonel Mann's only suggestion.

Imagine any toddler *"not thinking highly enough of himself to want to give away part of his body!"* Psychologists might suffer over their lack of self-esteem, but I doubt such a concept ever occurred to any four-year-old. I had recently read a psychiatric theory claiming Man's first love, even before love of mother, was love of his own excrement. I suspected some people might consider such a theory an obscenity if anyone but a psychiatrist uttered it. Nevertheless I resolved not to argue. I tried to sit quietly each week and endure Colonel Mann's psychology. I now had my typewriter, where I could take out my frustration by writing accounts of the ridiculous things psychologists said.

As Tony's fifth birthday neared, I realized he would not be mature enough to attend kindergarten, and I looked for a nursery school. One turned out to be a ballet class for four year olds. Tony would have considered ballet a preposterous activity, and we laughed at the thought of independent, super-masculine Tony in a ballet class. However no nursery school would accept a child with a problem. They were especially suspicious when I said Tony wasn't retarded, but I didn't know what was wrong with him. At a Marin County public nursery-school for retarded children, I tried to describe Tony to the teacher. She suggested he sounded antisocial. She pointed to a little boy who sat laughing to himself. He was a bundle of constant motion, playing with blocks with one hand and furiously twirling something with the other.

"That little boy lives in a world of his own," she said. "He's schizophrenic."

We asked Dr. Lavalley to mail a report about Tony to the Marin County school psychologist. Then Ike and I went to discuss the possibility of him attending the class. Dr. Lavalley's report lay on the desk before the school psychologist. I looked longingly at the folder. *How I wished we - Tony's parents - were permitted to read what the authorities wrote about our child!*

"Tony doesn't qualify for this program," explained the psychologist. "He's not mentally retarded. Children like your son are smart enough; they are just emotionally immature."

The class for retarded children would have been good for Tony. There were other handicapped classes Tony might have attended, but he was denied admittance to all the ones we were able

to find. Life would have been easier for all of us during the next few years if he could have attended school. We should have fought for his acceptance in this special-education class. Maybe, like many people, we harbored a suspicion that retardation might be contagious. We were probably relieved not to expose Tony to the harmful influence of a class of subnormal children. I did feel a secret triumph at having his lack of retardation stated so officially, confirming my belief that doctors recognized some specific diagnosis. Finally I found a nursery school on an Army post. The teacher was a compassionate woman. I promised to stay by the telephone, ready to come for him if he ever became a problem, and my ardent gratitude seemed to compensate her for any extra trouble Tony might have caused.

While passing out cupcakes for PTA at Guy's and Sherry's school one afternoon, I heard of another unusual child. I got the mother's name and phoned her. We talked a long time and discovered our children had similarities. Both were slow to talk, toilet train and learn the things children accomplish before school age. Both liked to play by themselves. Her experience became painful when her pediatrician suggested her child's problems were caused because she and her husband weren't really happy. After listening to her doctor repeat that suggestion for several months, she and her husband weren't very happy. In fact they were sometimes at each other's throats over what to do for the child. They finally took him to a March-of-Dimes, birth-defects clinic, where he was diagnosed as suffering from minimal brain damage, or neurological dysfunction. The parents were told their child had an excellent chance of living a normal life. There was no medical treatment for the condition.

"Obtaining a positive diagnosis was a relief," the mother said. I was aware of the pain of not knowing. "They said Eric is artistic," she added. (*'Artistic'* was what I heard; I still hadn't encountered the term, *'autistic'*.)

Tony was artistic, I thought to myself. He painted pictures on the windows with catsup and mayonnaise. He even made proper use of perspective. (An ability he later lost.) I'd never heard of artistic ability being regarded as an abnormality though. I envied Eric's mother her peace of mind. Any diagnosis would have been easier to live with than this mysterious unknown. Nevertheless I couldn't imagine Tony's diagnosis being neurological damage. He had a hypersensitive nervous system, he was responsive and alert, and his reactions were faster than those of the average child. His coordination was exceptional. He could turn his tricycle upside down and balance himself on the pedals while trying to rotate them. And he could scamper up any tree.

Ike's and my weekly talks with Colonel Mann dragged on. I hated the uncomfortable silences and struggled against an urge to blurt out something to fill them. Ike was usually able to think of some comment to save me from such impulses. One day no one could think of anything to say. Finally Colonel Mann turned to me,

"I don't know what your differences with Dr. Zircon were. Maybe they were just philosophical?"

I didn't say anything, but the truth was, I couldn't remember having any philosophical discussions with Dr. Zircon. In any case it sounded like a glib dismissal of that entire, awful year of group therapy. The thought struck me that maybe the psychologist had given up on us, and was about offer us an excuse to quit therapy. I didn't really believe spending time in a playroom with a psychologist was going to cure Tony of anything. However most parents try to provide a variety of experiences for all their children, and if Dr. Lavalley was willing to "treat" him for an hour each week, Tony seemed to enjoy his time at the clinic.

"This has been hard on my wife," Ike said. "I've tried to explain that it was a sort of probing to find out if there could be a problem in our family."

I remained silent. Ike was an admirer of my emotional stability and felt it must also be obvious to the psychologist. Ike didn't seem to understand how offended I felt by all this psychiatric "probing". I wondered if he'd feel such tolerant acceptance if the probing had been directed at him. We were all aware that Mother was the one considered responsible for a child's emotional problems.

"And of course you take an especially close look at the mother when you suspect emotional problems," Ike conceded understandingly.

I felt I at least deserved an acknowledgment that all the probing had not revealed any sinister flaw in my personality. The psychologist was staring glumly out the window. Col. Mann was probably irritated by my "self-esteem", which probably wasn't typical of other psychiatric patients. The silence dragged on. The psychologist wasn't agreeing with Ike, I realized. He still believed my mistreatment had caused Tony to be abnormal, but maybe he had decided to stop trying to convince us. *Sitting through these two awful years of psychology had accomplished nothing! Our demonstration of obvious emotional stability had had absolutely no effect upon any of these psychologists, I realized! Perhaps the psychologist was about to give up on us, to declare me "cured", and look for women easier to persuade of their abnormalities?* Something in me snapped. I didn't want to be dismissed without an admission that I was normal. In that moment my personality underwent a dramatic change. Maybe it was what some people call an epiphany. Col. Mann's ability to intimidate me disappeared, completely evaporated, and I was startled to suddenly hear myself boldly challenge him,

"You used the term mentally retarded last week. If you suspect retardation, why hasn't Tony been given tests?"

"The term mentally retarded doesn't necessarily mean mentally defective," the psychologist explained, ignoring the hostility in my voice. "Tony's development is retarded, but we can tell by looking that he's not mentally defective. The hands and feet of defective children sometimes develop differently for instance." I wondered why doctors bothered with any tests, if psychologists could determine retardation by just looking. "Besides," the psychologist continued, "we'll soon be able to give Tony an intelligence test."

"Intelligence test!" I repeated scornfully.

Ike looked a little startled. The psychologist looked annoyed. I actually had no specific criticism of IQ tests. The change I was undergoing was surprising to even me. From that moment I began to shed the overpowering feeling of intimidation I felt in the presence of doctors - or anyone else for that matter. If I hadn't encountered the psychologists, would something else have caused me to overcome my tendency to feel intimidated? Who knows? If I was undergoing a personality mutation, it certainly was not a random one; it was in direct response to my realization that psychologists were no more capable than the rest of us of judging a parent's feelings, such as love or rejection for their children.

"For a year and a half I've listened to you psychologists accuse me of being a terrible mother. Now I want to know about those other children like Tony. What happens to them when they grow up?" I demanded.

"You are right," the psychologist agreed, ignoring my question. "We've said harsh things to you. It was necessary. We had to make Mommy do something about Tony."

What gave him such a right, I wondered. I was also fed up with listening to the psychologist's patronizing habit of calling me "Mommy". Could anyone imagine anything more bizarre than being called "Mommy" by a psychologist!

"It's important to remember we are all trying to help Tony," Ike cautioned, eyeing me uncertainly, and obviously shocked by such an aggressive manner from his usually diffident wife.

I glared at him. "I don't know how to talk to psychologists," I said. "Other people just say what they mean."

"Don't you think I mean what I say?" the psychologist asked.

"I never know what you are up to. Most of the time you seem to be trying to maneuver me, hoping your psychology will have some effect upon me."

"Well, now --" Ike said.

"Oh, we've given up hope of having any effect upon you," Colonel Mann said. "In fact it's a damned shame how much time and money we've wasted on you without accomplishing anything, isn't it?" Psychoanalysis is an expensive procedure, for which many people were happy to pay. The psychologist probably felt I should show more gratitude. But just because something costs a lot of money doesn't necessarily mean everyone wants some of it.

I scowled at him and continued, "No one will answer my question about what might happen to Tony. I'll bet the truth is, all those withdrawn children - or whatever they are called - grow up to be alright."

The psychologist shrugged.

“Dr. Zircon was willing to use anything short of a rubber hose to make me admit I wasn't emotionally involved with my children,” I continued. “If something terrible happens to children like Tony, he'd have been delighted to tell me.”

“Maybe they grow up all right, but maybe they don't grow up to be such desirable people.”

“I'm not asking what you think might have happened to them. I'm asking what did happen to them - if you even know.”

“Yes,” Ike agreed, “what did--”

“Besides,” I said, “I've decided what you consider desirable, and what I consider desirable, might be two different things. Who do you psychologists think you are anyway, to decide what people should and shouldn't be?”

“Would you consider it desirable if Tony grows up to steal cars?” Col. Mann demanded.

“I'll buy him a c--” Ike tried to offer, as he watched me and the psychologist with an incredulous look on his face.

I was aware that I was making Ike uncomfortable, but I seemed powerless to stop myself. “I don't for one moment think he will steal cars,” I said. “Maybe he is just going to grow up to be like me. You might not approve, but it's none of your damned business.”

“Yes! Except you talk!” Then he muttered under his breath, “. . .unfortunately.”

“I have an appointment,” Ike said, with a desperate glance toward the door.

Later, much later, Ike would say he admired me for standing up to the psychologist. At the time, however, he only felt dismay at the acrimony that had suddenly erupted. A part of me was actually as startled as Ike was by the change that seemed to have overcome me. Neither Ike nor I indulged in confrontations. We tried to be polite and considerate of everyone. Doctors and psychiatrists had been urging me to express my emotions openly, but consideration and civility were basic aspects of Ike's and my personalities. Having exploded, I seemed unable “to push the Genie back into the bottle.” I recently read of a Dr. Gabor Matè arguing that repressed anger can contribute to all sorts of ailments, including cancer, heart disease, diabetes, multiple sclerosis and arthritis. Dr. Matè insists that emotions are a part of the body's natural defense system, and when we repress them, we interfere with our entire, complex immune system - and shorten our lives. He claims studies have shown that women in unhappy marriages, who express their anger, live longer than those who suffer in silence. If all that is true, then the moment in Col. Mann's office when my anger erupted may have added decades to my life, for I am ninety-six now. That psychologist may not have appreciated the particular emotions I expressed, but expressing emotion was definitely what I was doing.

"Is Tony psychotic?" I demanded.

"That word is difficult to define."

"Do you consider him schizophrenic?"

"We considered it!"

". . . schizophrenic?" Ike repeated in a shocked voice.

"And what conclusion did you come to?" I persisted.

"Well, we don't like to use labels."

"Does or doesn't the term 'childhood schizophrenia' apply to Tony?"

"YES!" the psychologist shouted.

There was a moment of stunned silence. Our psychotherapy had achieved one purpose; I had lost all of my inhibitions. I no longer feared the psychologist. However the psychologist didn't seem to know how to deal with his newly liberated patient.

"I have an appointment," Ike again repeated. I knew Ike didn't have an appointment. He just wanted to escape from this embarrassing fracas. The psychologist had been about to continue, but stopped and looked at Ike.

"We have accomplished one thing for you in therapy," he said. "We've pointed out a difference of opinion that seems to exist between you and your wife."

"My husband and I are capable of living with differences of opinion," I snapped. "We don't try to stuff our beliefs down each other's throats."

Ike and I got Tony from the playroom and left. In the waiting room I noticed people eye us with curiosity. At times our therapy had probably become so loud everyone in the clinic had heard - and been entertained by it.

In the car I accused Ike, "I suppose you agree that I need a psychologist to tell me how to treat the children?"

"I didn't say that."

"You said--"

"Don't start telling me what I said. I couldn't even get in a word."

"That damned psychologist said Tony hasn't grown up because of me, and you didn't disagree."

"I didn't hear him say that!"

"It's what he really meant!"

“How the hell do you know what he really meant?”

“The Goddamn psy--”

Tony, frightened, reached over from the back seat and tried to hold his hand over my mouth. Ike and I stopped shouting and drove home in smoldering silence. During the next week we erupted into argument whenever we tried to discuss Tony. I had come across the term childhood schizophrenia and had read that it was unrelated to adult schizophrenia. I'd read some children outgrow childhood schizophrenia, but had been unable to find out what happened to those who didn't.

When we returned to the clinic the following week, Colonel Mann apologized. “I'm afraid I said things I didn't mean last week,” he said.

“And I'm sorry I became angry,” I said. “I know you've meant to be helpful, but I have hated every minute of this therapy.”

Ike asked again if the term childhood schizophrenia applied to Tony.

“Yes. But remember, there are different degrees of it,” Colonel Mann cautioned.

I felt a stab of fear. I was hoping that calling Tony schizophrenic was one of the things the psychologist hadn't meant to say. I'd never met a schizophrenic person, but even a mild case sounded ominous and terrifying to me.

Then Colonel Mann turned to me. “I've stated that if you want to know the cause of Tony's illness, you must look to yourself. However I want to emphasize again that we do not blame Mommy for what has happened to her child.”

Now that's big of you, I was tempted to retort sarcastically. I knew psychologists felt smug about not blaming mothers who don't love their children. According to their psychology no one was responsible for their own lack of abilities; our faults were all the result of someone's psychological mistreatment (specifically mother's). We would all be emotionally perfect until someone "damaged" us. Dr. Zircon sat unperturbed while some of the women in the group expressed resentment about aspects of their lives. The only thing that really seemed to anger him was my insistence that I didn't harbor any such feelings. My hostility toward psychologists was apparent by this time, so I understood what hostility was, but I knew for certain that I felt no hostility toward Tony.

“Tony certainly does have emotional problems,” protested the psychologist indignantly. “We wouldn't treat him here at the clinic if he didn't.”

“Tony is obviously a happy child,” Ike pointed out.

“Don't let that happy smile on his face fool you,” the psychologist said. “There is absolutely no doubt Tony either is - or has been - extremely unhappy.”

He didn't know whether Tony was presently unhappy or whether his unhappiness was something that occurred in the past? Was the psychologist admitting he wouldn't recognize an unhappy child when he saw one? However, as usual, I didn't think to make the point at the time.

"There are doctors who disagree," I objected, remembering Dr. Jampolsky's admission that, while he wasn't one of them, there were doctors who believed children were born like Tony.

"I never heard of any. That psychiatrist you consulted last year sure got Tony's number fast. He phoned us here and asked about this autistic child we were treating.. ."

The psychologist continued to talk, but I wasn't listening.

Autistic! *AUTISTIC!!*

I'll bet that's what the mother I spoke to on the phone said about her little boy, Eric. He was autistic - not artistic. Maybe Tony had more in common with her child than I had thought.

It was nearly two years since I'd first taken Tony to a doctor, and this was the first time I became aware of the term '*autistic*'. Psychologists had reason for their reluctance to use the term openly. With the phrase "not emotionally involved", they were trying to state everything euphemistically. Psychiatric journals stated bluntly that autism was caused by "maternal rejection", but most parents didn't read psychiatric journals. However, some parents of autistic children were themselves doctors. Those parents did read psychiatric journals, and they vigorously protested the awful accusation. Plenty of rejection occurred alright, but it was mainly rejection of psychiatric theories by parents.

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Today some people are speculating about the nature of consciousness. Is it an aspect of reality? How might it interact with physical reality? Consciousness and self-consciousness are two different things. Our bodies are capable of subtle adaptations of which we are not always consciously aware. The psychologists were devoting their lives to our subconscious, but they apparently believed it only causes pathology, such as neuroses and mental illness. My understanding of such matters are as limited as that of everyone else, but maybe someday such speculations will lead to a more sophisticated understanding of reality. Some evangelical atheists, probably fearing speculations about purpose might somehow offer credence to religion, want to forbid scientists from indulging in speculations about design as an aspect of nature. I wouldn't want to limit anyone's speculations – just so they don't try to impose them upon the rest of us as a "scientific fact", a "truth" that no one is permitted to question.

Question 17: What is faith? If belief that God organized the universe is a matter of faith, why isn't the materialist belief that the universe came together by some accidental, mechanical process also a matter of faith? (Or, the Buddhist belief in self-organization.)

That evening I suggested to Ike that we quit the psychologists. I wanted to take Tony to the Birth-defects Clinic, where that mother told me on the phone that her little boy, Eric, was diagnosed autistic with minimal brain damage.

"Remember," Ike cautioned, "that clinic offered no treatment for the child."

"You've seen a sample of psychotherapy. Surely you don't believe it's going to cure Tony of anything. Think what a relief it would be to find someone who would discuss his diagnosis."

Ike finally agreed.

"Why do you want to take Tony there?" the psychologist objected when we requested a referral at our next session. "We've already told you there is nothing physically wrong with him."

"But you've never given him a physical examination," I said.

He frowned but otherwise ignored the point. "They might not be willing to see Tony when they learn we've been treating you for nearly two years," he said.

What a silly notion! Did he think the psychiatric clinic owned us? In any case, we could try. I was determined to search for a diagnosis. Finally, seemingly resigned that he couldn't dissuade us, the psychologist said,

"Children like your son get upset if their routine is disturbed. It would be unwise to interrupt his play therapy. We hope you'll continue bringing Tony for his sessions with Dr. Lavalley, although you should probably stop therapy while seeing another doctor."

We thanked him. Maybe we were naive not to realize we should break all ties with the Child Guidance Clinic before consulting another doctor. Nevertheless in this case it probably would not have mattered. Unbeknownst to us, autism had recently become the subject of intensive research. Many people considered scientific research more important than the sensitivities of individual patients. I was learning that if a psychologist said I rejected my autistic child, the medical profession would pay no attention to my protests. Col. Mann may have been willing for me to blame my dislike of therapy upon "philosophical differences", but I'd dismissed the suggestion. If he wanted to accuse me of "maternal rejection", I was determined that he'd have to do so in plain English, rather than conceal it in psychiatric terminology. However we would soon learn that the Child Guidance Clinic actually did exert a mysterious ownership over us that other doctors seemed to respect. In fact, the entire medical profession seemed to cooperate in trying to drive us back into psychiatric treatment.

Colonel Mann claimed he was unable to refer Tony to the Birth-Defects Clinic himself, but he told us the name of the woman in charge, a well-known pediatrician who also had a private practice. He suggested we make an appointment with her to have Tony evaluated at that clinic.

When we met the new doctor at her office, her common-sense manner invited confidence. She was older than me, and there weren't many women doctors when she completed medical school. She must be an exceptional woman, and her outstanding reputation must surely be justified.

"It's not that I don't believe in emotional problems," I told her. "However I don't believe emotional problems are causing Tony's slow development."

"The trouble with psychiatry is they have misinterpreted Freud," she said.

"Yes!" I exclaimed, eager to agree with anyone who suggested psychiatry might have misinterpreted something.

She examined Tony briefly and then commented, "Tony may not be an Einstein, but I see no reason why he can't be educated to lead a happy, useful life. Before doing anything else however, let's evaluate your son at the Birth-Defects Clinic and determine how much he is perceiving." She gave us an appointment.

The Birth-Defects Clinic apparently had some test to determine how much children perceived. If 'perceiving' meant noticing things, I suspected Tony did more of it than most children, but this was the first doctor to suggest our child wasn't extremely bright. Loss of faith in recognized authority is a frightening experience. Most people, reluctant to endure such insecurity, stubbornly resist liberation. I had managed to live without a conventional religion, but was clinging to my faith in scientific medicine. This pediatrician seemed straightforward and unimpressed with psychotherapy as a treatment for illness. I desperately wanted to trust a doctor and was prepared to believe whatever she said. The pediatrician had suggested doctors and psychologists were misinterpreting Freud. (I suppose declaring him to be just plain wrong would have been unthinkable in those days.) I certainly never found anything in Freud's obscure, convoluted, wordy formulas that felt relevant to me. Freud often insisted that the most likely cause of neuroses was an infant witnessing the human sex act. He apparently believed that just catching a glimpse of adults copulating could completely destroy a child's personality. Too much excitement for an undeveloped psyche, I suppose. Freud once had a patient, Princess Marie Bonaparte, so emotionally messed up that he was convinced she must have seen someone having sex when she was an infant.

Her mother died soon after her birth, she assured him. She was raised by her father and grandmother, and no sex took place where she was an infant.

Freud continued to insist that only witnessing the human sex act could cause such extreme neurosis, and she investigated the circumstances of her infancy. When she interrogated one of

her father's former grooms, he confessed to an affair with her wet nurse before Marie was a year old. Freud felt satisfied that her damaged psyche was thus explained.

I thought of my son Guy's attitude toward sex. When about six, after watching the squirrels in the yard, he asked, "How can you tell a mommy squirrel from a daddy squirrel?"

"Personally, I can't," I answered, not eager to get into such a discussion with a six-year-old.

"I guess squirrels must be able to tell the difference, even if people can't," he mused.

"Otherwise you'd have two daddy squirrels sitting around in the same tree, each waiting for the other one to have a baby squirrel." I didn't correct him. Our family had all the inhibitions of our time. Unbelievable in today's society, we didn't even use the word penis. We called it a 'whot-tossie'. (Today everyone watches sex simulated on television, without apparent damage to anyone's psyche.)

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While awaiting our appointment at the Birth-Defects Clinic, I tried to learn the meanings of the terms *autism* and *childhood schizophrenia*. I found psychiatric journals at the University of California psychology library, and spent several afternoons plowing through those ponderous volumes. I would have looked here sooner, but I wouldn't have known what to look for. I had only recently heard Col. Mann say the word "autism". In 1943, Leo Kanner, a psychiatrist at John Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, described a few young children with startling and unique characteristics. He called the condition *early infantile autism*. Although retarded in their mental development, the children appeared bright and alert. Their coordination was good, and sometimes superior. From infancy they showed aversion to being held or cuddled; they were not responsive to people and did not form emotional attachments to anyone. They displayed an obsessive desire for their environment to remain the same. Autistic children became upset, for instance, if the furniture was rearranged. Some had unusual musical talent and prodigious memories for such things as numbers. One child could quickly memorize entire scores of operas. They had little ability for abstract thinking. Some did not talk, and those who spoke were often *echo laic*, parroting back whatever was said to them. Their parents were highly-educated, and were described by psychiatrists as "cold". Like me, most mothers of autistic children were reported to resist psychiatric treatment, an attitude psychiatrists viewed as pathological.

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My medical literature search was interrupted by the unexpected arrival of Ike's overseas orders. We had forgotten that Ike, still a few years before retirement, could be transferred. New assignments had once seemed exciting. Some people might regard moving every three years a chore, but it was a life that suited Ike and me. However in our present turmoil such an undertaking now loomed as an overwhelming complication. Ike wrote the Department of the Army, seeking a postponement of the orders, and asked Colonel Mann to write a letter

supporting his request. Colonel Mann agreed to write the letter but didn't show it to Ike, sending it directly to the Personnel Department. We wondered if Colonel Mann had revealed Tony's diagnosis. Knowing a sergeant in the Personnel Department, Ike managed to obtain a copy. There was an uncertain look on his face as he handed it to me. As I read it I understood, for I found the language offensive. Colonel Mann's letter read:

1. Anthony Vandegrift, five-year-old dependent son of Sgt. and Mrs. Vandegrift, has been under treatment at this child guidance clinic since May 1961. Presenting symptoms were those of an autistic child in that Anthony was socially withdrawn, fearful of people, essentially nonverbal, behaviorally inappropriate and indifferent to efforts at socialization. Difficulties were made apparent to the mother who nevertheless attempted to deny the severity of the boy's problem, which began at the age of three, during the father's assignment to Greenland for 13 months.

2. Treatment was initiated with the mother and son with only limited effect until the father's return 15 months ago. Since his return to the family, and with the aid of parental counseling in the Child Guidance clinic, there has been a slow but steady improvement in Anthony's adjustment, most apparent in increased verbalization, response to parental requests, and security in new situations. Anthony's change from indifference to interest in the world and people has been in large measure due to the presence of the father, who more than the mother has understood his son's problems and special needs.

3. Sgt. Vandegrift is now subject to overseas assignment to Germany where suitable educational and treatment facilities for emotionally disturbed children, like his son, are not available. Should the father go overseas alone, however, his son would be left without a principal source of security, understanding and model for learning in the family.

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I never dreamed the medical profession indulged in such dishonesty. Much of it might be blamed on lack of objectivity. Psychologists see whatever they want to see. However it was blatantly untrue that I had started treatment, "with limited effect", before Ike's return from Greenland. Perhaps Colonel Mann described me as unfit to be left alone with Tony only as a favor to Ike - maybe his words were merely for the purpose of helping cancel Ike's overseas orders. But if Colonel Mann would lie to the Army as a favor to Ike, how could anyone believe anything he said?

Several years later I again managed to get my hands on some of Tony's medical records. They were sealed, but I pried out the staples and covertly read another report from the Child Guidance Clinic. That report was signed by some doctor I'd never met - written by someone who had never spoken to either Ike or me. It claimed Tony had been very ill when he first came to the clinic. The report stated that psychotherapy had helped Tony improve, but each time he returned to the family situation, he regressed - and that as soon as this became apparent to the mother, she suddenly withdrew the child from treatment.

Suddenly? After two years? How on earth did he define the word, 'suddenly'?

I had no idea why this unknown doctor would say something so far from the truth. It sounded almost vindictive. The report said they had diagnosed Tony as autistic but later changed their diagnosis to childhood schizophrenia. (*Without ever informing us!*) In the years after we quit the Child Guidance Clinic, we were never able to free ourselves from these psychiatric reports. Every time we consulted a new doctor, or tried to enroll Tony in a school, reports were required from everyone who had ever examined him. It was frustrating to know such defamatory distortions followed us. We couldn't refute them without admitting we had read them, and parents were never permitted to read what doctors and psychologists wrote about them or their children. I'd found Army medicine to be comparable to civilian practice. The people we dealt with were not bad psychologists. They were well-intentioned men, zealously promoting flawed theories. I am acquainted with other parents of autistic children who were receiving similar treatment in civilian psychiatric clinics. I knew of several mothers who managed to get a glimpse of their children's psychiatric reports, and were equally shocked at how psychologists can malign parents with little regard for facts. Psychologists have no special knowledge or talent that enables them to determine whether parents love or reject their children. They judge people the same way the rest of us do. How do I know? Because I read dozens, maybe hundreds, of psychology books and I never found anything giving *me* a special ability to understand the mental health of individuals. The devotion of psychotherapists to their beliefs is sincere, and their indignation when people don't acknowledge the validity of their accusations of 'maternal rejection' is understandable. However Colonel Mann did admit he was unable to determine whether Tony was presently unhappy, or if his supposed unhappiness occurred at some unknown time in the past.

Because of Colonel Mann's letter, the Army canceled Ike's overseas orders. For that, we were thankful. We continued taking Tony to Dr. Lavalley. The next week as Tony and I were leaving the clinic after his play therapy, I looked up and saw Colonel Mann come out of his office. He started across the waiting room toward me with a huge smile on his face, suggesting a friendliness I viewed with suspicion. I realized I should be grateful to him for writing the letter for Ike, but how could I pretend gratitude toward a man who had described me as such a terrible mother? I had survived my confrontation with him, but I hadn't enjoyed it, and had no desire to repeat the experience.

Oh, let Ike thank him, I decided. Grabbing Tony by the hand, I turned and hurried out of the clinic, leaving the psychologist standing in the middle of the waiting room with his big welcoming smile on his face. I hadn't yet lost my faith in all authorities, but I had lost all my faith in these particular scientific experts – psychologists.

Question 18: Are living creatures constantly evolving as they strive to grow and adapt? Or must evolutionary adaptations passively wait around for a random mutation to accidentally pop up in someone's genome?

We took Tony for his evaluation at the March-of-Dimes clinic. Specialists observed Tony, and a psychiatric social worker interviewed Ike and me. Later, I would again meet this very same social worker when applying for Tony's admittance to a school for atypical children. I eventually concluded that he was part of a research project, and one of his duties was to ensure that any child diagnosed "disturbed" didn't acquire another diagnosis, and thus allow the parents to escape from their psychiatric treatment. However at that time it would have never occurred to us that he might be anything more than he appeared to be - a participant in this diagnostic team - and we answered all his questions to the best of our ability. At the end of the day the pediatrician in charge of the clinic spoke with us.

"It may take many more tests, and several more days here at the clinic, to diagnose your son," she told us. "What did the Army clinic suggest?"

"They never really mentioned anything specific," Ike answered

"I think I've met the psychiatrist in charge at Letterman. I'll give him a call." She asked us to sign a release, allowing her to send for Tony's records from the Child Guidance Clinic.

This pediatrician had expressed skepticism about psychiatry, claiming Freud had been misinterpreted. Surely she had enough common sense not to be influenced by whatever the psychologists might say about us. In any case, we felt we had no choice but to sign the release. However in a few days the pediatrician phoned and asked us to return - not to the March-of-Dimes clinic for more tests, but to her office where we'd first spoken to her. She was nervously looking through Tony's records when we arrived.

"The government is doing more every day for the retarded," she declared. "In a few years we'll have some kind of guardianship for these children. The way things are now, the children grow up and commit some crime for which they aren't really responsible. Then the state demands they be sent to the gas chamber. It's a ridiculous system!"

What was she implying? Death in the gas chamber was a shocking possibility for a doctor to mention to the parents of any five-year-old child. The remark seemed out of character for such an obviously intelligent, compassionate woman, and I even sensed her own unease with the appalling words. *Did she feel obligated to frighten us for some strange reason?*

"Is Tony mentally retarded?" I asked, trying to ignore her alarming statement.

"What does that term mean?" the doctor countered. "Recently I spoke before a group of parents. Most of them thought mental retardation just means Down syndrome. Oh, your child is not mentally defective. We can tell that by looking."

During our first appointment she had felt unable to determine retardation by looking. She said many tests would be required to determine Tony's diagnosis. What had happened to change her mind? She had seemed so reasonable and candid before. *Did Col. Mann, or someone at the Child Guidance Clinic, tell her something terrible about us that changed her attitude?*

"I guess you don't know Tony's diagnosis," I said, struggling with a feeling of wrenching disappointment.

"No. He could be emotionally disturbed," she said. "I urge you to continue psychiatric treatment." During our first appointment, she hadn't believed emotional problems could cause retarded development. As she watched me fight back tears, her grim expression seemed to melt a little, and she added sympathetically, "It could be in his genes. Or his brain. We know so little about the human brain."

"What about childhood schizophrenia?" I asked.

"Who knows why some people break down under conditions others survive?" She turned impatiently to Ike. "You've been through the war, Sergeant. You must have seen men break down under pressure. You must realize we don't know."

"Is Tony schizophrenic?" I asked again. The pediatrician hesitated. Again I caught a look of sympathy in her face. "Pseudo schizophrenia, that's what I call it," she finally said apologetically.

"That term autism--"

"Oh that doesn't mean anything," the doctor said hastily. "Just that some children relate to people differently."

"Is Tony brain damaged?" I asked. This same pediatrician had told the mother I spoke to on the phone her little boy, Eric, was autistic with minimal brain damage.

"If you ask a neurologist, he'll say these children are all brain damaged. If you ask a psychiatrist, he'll say they are emotionally disturbed." Then she muttered almost to herself, "Late developers, that's what I call them."

I sat, numbed, and held Tony on my lap. The doctor talked some more to Ike, but I sank into a silent, dazed defeat. Colonel Mann had suggested other doctors might refuse to examine Tony when they learned the Child Guidance Clinic had treated us for two years. I had considered his suggestion ridiculous, but apparently he was right. The pediatrician's attitude was different from our first appointment. She was now acting as though the psychologists did exert some mysterious ownership over us. For some reason she was refusing to complete Tony's evaluation at the March-of-Dimes Clinic. If the psychologist told her we rejected our child, did she just accept the indictment without question? Or was the child-guidance clinic involved in some research project? I could understand how some doctors might regard research more

important than individual patients. In any case, this doctor obviously wasn't going to discuss any research project with us.

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I've often thought about one thing the pediatrician said - that autism just means some children relate to people differently. She seemed to understand what most doctors now, fifty years later, are just beginning to realize - that the mental disabilities of children called autistic stem from a variety of causes. Autism is mostly defined by behaviors, and it is not a specific illness. Autistic personalities can be associated with all sorts of disabilities, such as Rett syndrome, fragile X defect, Down syndrome, allergies and numerous gastro intestinal deficiencies. I doubt any of those were the cause of Tony's retardation. He seemed to have a superior nervous system, and he could eat anything. The main characteristic of an autistic personality seems to be a lack of social skills, an inability to effortlessly absorb the culture, language and attitudes of people around them. Tony never imitated anyone. People of normal intelligence can also have autistic personalities, and Tony's personality seemed to be an exaggerated family trait. Many of his relatives have been a bit socially inept.

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The next day when I took Tony for his play therapy, I was still suffering a bleak, heavy feeling of despair. We seemed so helpless against a united, all-powerful medical profession. It had been a couple of weeks since I ran off and left Colonel Mann standing in the middle of the waiting room. He hadn't tried to speak to me again. Since then we nodded warily to each other whenever we happened to meet around the clinic. On this particular day, however, as I was getting Tony, I glanced up and saw Colonel Mann again come out of his office. He started toward me with that big smile plastered all over his face.

What was he up to now? Why was he choosing this dreadful day to try to talk to me? Was he aware that the pediatrician at the March-of-Dimes clinic had dismissed us the day before with her appalling words about death in a gas chamber? Had she assured the psychologist over the phone of her cooperation? In frozen panic I watched Col. Mann advance toward me. I've read of the "fight or flight" response, and I admit that mine is seriously off balance - all "flight" and practically no "fight". Oh, I might occasionally manage a confrontation if cornered, but I instinctively choose "flight". My reaction may have been painful for Col. Mann. Therapists probably choose their profession because they want to help people, and the horror and revulsion the psychologist read on my face probably didn't indicate much appreciation of his help. Nevertheless my "flight" instinct took over before he crossed the waiting room, and I managed to recover from my paralysis. I grabbed Tony by the hand and yanked him out the door with me, making another escape.

Colonel Mann didn't try to catch me again. He phoned Ike's office and asked him to come to the clinic for a meeting. Dr. Lavalley was in the office with Colonel Mann. They made it clear to Ike that they had no intention of continuing to see Tony every week unless they also had an

opportunity to “help” his mother. As Dr. Zircon had done the year before, Colonel Mann was transferring to another hospital. Ike mentioned that I sometimes complained that Dr. Lavalley, the only psychologist who spent time with Tony, had never spoken to us. Ike suggested that I might be willing to talk to him.

“Col. Mann seemed upset at the meeting,” Ike commented later when he told me about it, “At one point the colonel slammed his hat on his head and stalked indignantly out of the room. Then after a few moments, he returned in embarrassed confusion to remove his white coat and put on his Army uniform jacket, before making another indignant exit.” Knowing how I felt about the psychologist, Ike apparently thought I might have relished Col. Mann's disarray.

“We do seem to have an even more disastrous effect upon psychologists than they have on us,” I commented dejectedly to Ike. I certainly didn't enjoy being around people who believed I rejected my children, and the psychologist's good intentions didn't make it any less uncomfortable. So far, both psychologists who tried to administer therapy to me had transferred away from the hospital. Dr. Lavalley was still spending an hour every week with Tony, and since we hadn't found any other medical help, we felt we had no choice but to continue at the Child Guidance Clinic. Tony's psychologist had always seemed pleasant, and I was still naively confident I might convince psychologists I didn't need any psychiatric treatment. I agreed to talk to Dr. Lavalley.

Question 19: Should we have official committees to define scientific knowledge? Or is an ever-changing, constantly-challenged, general consensus our best way to keep our understanding of reality vibrant?

Tony had his sixth birthday. Summer passed, and Colonel Mann had transferred away from the clinic before arrangements were made for us to again resume weekly talks, this time with Dr. Lavalley, Tony's psychologist. Dr. Lavalley seemed a little less manipulative than the other psychologists, but like the others, he was also waiting for me to confess some pathological attitude toward my child that might explain his slow development.

"I believe...Tony is of at least...average intelligence," he said at our first meeting, and beginning our third year of therapy. He spoke slowly and deliberately, weighing each word and continuing to convey the impression of reticence we'd felt for the past two years. "And I feel certain that within a couple of years..." He seemed to be searching for words.

"That Tony will catch up with children his age?" I finished impatiently for him.

Dr. Lavalley nodded thoughtfully.

"I disagree with your theory that Tony's slow development is caused by something in his environment," I said apologetically. Dr. Lavalley had always seemed pleasant, and feeling no dislike toward him, I hoped to achieve some kind of honest relationship.

"You don't know what my beliefs are," he corrected me agreeably.

This nice young man didn't seem any more eager to put such an awful accusation as "maternal rejection" into words than the others had been, and still wary of more confrontations, I remained silent. But if Dr. Lavalley was going to keep his views to himself, I wondered how we could have honest discussion?

Tony's play therapy had been cut short earlier that day when Dr. Lavalley phoned Ike to come for him. The psychologist reported that Tony had refused, for the past few weeks, to go into the playroom. He preferred to play out in the busy waiting room.

"I can't keep up with him out there," the psychologist said. "He's all over the place and into everything. Today I put my foot down. I sent him home."

"It's hard to keep up with Tony," I agreed. Tony sometimes appeared to be in pain, and I wondered if he might have cavities in his baby teeth. I explained my concerns to the psychologist.

"You might ask a dentist about it," he said. "Today I told Tony he could go into the playroom, stay out in the hall - or even go outside if he wanted. But I can't explore his emotions in that waiting room among all those people."

Explore Tony's emotions! They'd always called whatever Tony did at the clinic "play therapy".

"One has to be firm with Tony," I said. "I try not to give him orders I can't enforce. About Tony's teeth though, I don't think a dentist could get his hand in Tony's mouth."

"He'd never get it back out with all five fingers attached," Ike commented.

You might mention the problem to a dentist," the psychologist continued. "Today I explained to Tony exactly what I expect of him. I believe he desperately needs this direction in his life."

"Reasoning isn't effective with Tony yet," Ike said. "You have our permission to paddle him, if you think that might help."

I was startled at Ike giving the psychologist permission to spank Tony. I couldn't remember Ike having spanked any of the children. But Dr. Lavalley seemed a gentle person, and his spanking surely wouldn't be more than the swat on the diaper, such as I used to try to discipline him.

"I'm concerned about Tony's teeth," I continued. "He sometimes screams for no apparent reason. Or knocks his head against a wall. I suppose his screams might be in anger or frustration, but Tony would be unable to tell us if he were in pain."

"It would probably be a good idea to get his teeth fixed," the psychologist agreed. "I don't disapprove of spanking. I even spank my own children. But Tony is old enough to reason with. Today I explained to him, reasonably and simply, how he must behave if he wants to continue coming to the clinic. He craves this structure in his life."

If play therapy was beginning to bore Tony, I doubted Dr. Lavalle would get him into the playroom by reasoning. Tony knew what he wanted, and I'd never been able to talk him into much of anything. The psychologist seemed uninterested in any of our real problems, and I gave up trying to discuss Tony's teeth.

The next week when I brought Tony to the clinic, I waited to see whether he would go into the playroom, or if the psychologist would send him home again. Tony had a contented little smile on his face, for he now felt at home around the clinic. He took Dr. Lavalle's hand and walked down the hall with him. Tony was wearing his cherished, old, tattered sweater, but he still looked cute and mischievous. When they reached the playroom door, Tony stopped. The psychologist bent over and spoke to him. Tony laughed and stamped his little foot rebelliously. He turned and ran back up the hall, glancing over his shoulder to see if Dr. Lavalle followed.

"Unless you go into the playroom like a good boy, you'll have to go home," the psychologist warned sternly, as he followed Tony back to the waiting room.

Tony gave a squeal of laughter and darted behind the reception counter. He stood peeking impishly out at the psychologist, with a crooked little grin on his face. His eyes sparkled and he obviously hoped the psychologist would chase him. Dr. Lavalle sent him home. Tony was still smiling enigmatically as we left, causing me to wonder about his "craving for structure". Maybe Tony didn't enjoy therapy any more than I did.

That afternoon Ike and I went for our appointment with Dr. Lavalle. "I was startled last week to hear you speak of trying to explore Tony's emotions," I said. "I can't believe he talks enough to discuss anything that complicated."

"Tony has definite emotions," Dr. Lavalle insisted. He hesitated, and then continued cautiously. "Tony has strong feelings. . . about both of you. . . One day I gave him a mama doll and a daddy doll . . ." I had read enough psychology books to know a common method of diagnosing a child's hostility toward his parents was to hand him a mama doll, a daddy doll and a baseball bat, all of which were apparently standard equipment at child-psychiatry clinics. "Tony threw the dolls on the floor . . ." the psychologist continued gravely.

Dr. Lavalle's pause hung heavy in the silence.

"Then he took a baseball bat . . ."

I tried to conceal my horror. *Get on with it*, I thought. *What did Tony actually do?*

"...then ...Tony beat on a chair with the baseball bat," Dr. Lavalle finished in a hushed tone.

I fell back in my chair with relief, and let out the breath I'd been holding. The hostile children I'd read about beat on the dolls, not a chair. If the psychologist was convinced Tony had some secret desire to attack his parents with a baseball bat, I wasn't sure what I might say to dissuade him. I knew Tony's only interest in dolls would be trying to take them apart. He would enjoy whacking anything with a baseball bat. Tony never imitated people, and he was remarkably unsusceptible to suggestion. Some children might respond to a psychologist encouraging them to beat on the dolls, but Tony might have been oblivious to such urging.

"Tony doesn't feel any suppressed hostility toward us," I assured Dr. Lavalley. "He's like a happy little two-year-old. All two-year-olds love their parents."

"Maybe you don't allow him to express his feelings openly," the psychologist suggested.

Tony was the most uninhibited child I knew. When displeased he threw an unrestrained tantrum. I dearly wished I could persuade him to be a little more inhibited. However, as usual, such comments never occurred to me until later.

If only Tony would start using the toilet," Ike said. "Those diapers bother me more than anything." Like me, Ike didn't seem concerned that Tony might have some secret desire to hit him over the head with a baseball bat.

"Our television broke last week," I said. "I didn't have the nerve to tell the repairman I'd caught Tony peeing into a hole in the back of it."

"And he did it while Dr. Kildare was on," Ike joked. "I wonder if that has any sinister significance." Ike had just made that up. The television wasn't even on when Tony peed into it. Ike was trying to tease the psychologist.

Dr. Lavalley frowned, apparently failing to find humor in Ike's suggestion. Maybe he was even a little offended. "It might indicate some of Tony's feelings toward doctors," he said stiffly, trying to show he wouldn't be personally bothered by Tony's alleged hostility.

"Tony didn't mean anything personal by it," I tried to assure the psychologist, but going along with Ike's attempted humor about Dr. Kildare. "Tony pees at everything these days if I don't watch him. Last week I caught him trying to extinguish the pilot light on the furnace." I checked the pilot light often to make sure it was still lit.

Ike and I went home laughing about how seriously the psychologist seemed to take Ike's comment. Our sense of humor was wearing thin however. Before the evening was over we had another argument about psychiatry. Dr. Lavalley had tried to convince us we weren't strict enough with Tony. The next week he tried to convince us we disciplined him too much. Since child psychiatrists believed all deviant child-behavior was caused by parental abuse, they could only try to persuade parents to confess to some subconscious, pathological mistreatment. At that time it was psychiatry's one and only treatment – for children or adults. Such tactics had apparently convinced many psychiatric patients of some pretty bizarre Freudian concepts. But

whatever therapy might consist of, Tony was no longer getting any. Dr. Lavalley sent him home each week without any treatment. Dr. Lavalley was apparently unable to make Tony do what he wanted, but he still hoped that if he could convince me to acknowledge some hostile attitude toward Tony, I would then be able to make Tony do as I wanted. I didn't have the choice of "sending him home" if he didn't cooperate! In any case, since Tony wasn't getting any therapy, I saw no reason for Ike and me to continue those tedious sessions at the clinic. Ike agreed.

The next week I took Tony to the clinic to give him one more chance. I watched as Dr. Lavalley told Tony "firmly and reasonably" he must go into the playroom. If I had wanted Tony in that playroom, I would have picked him up and put him there. However I was secretly on Tony's side in this particular contest of wills. I certainly sympathized with Tony's aversion to spending an hour in the room with a psychologist. I concealed my satisfaction at Tony's attempts to tease. I felt light headed with relief when Dr. Lavalley told Tony he must go home. I thanked the psychologist for being Tony's friend for the past two years. "We aren't coming to the clinic anymore," I told him.

A look of alarm flickered across the psychologist's face. Then he conceded, "This treatment is supposed to be voluntary."

"Yes," I agreed uneasily.

Taking Tony's hand, I turned to go. *Would they actually allow us to leave?* Fearful someone might call me back, I found myself walking faster, pulling Tony down the hall at a run. People in the waiting room stared as we rushed across the room and out the door of the clinic. With pounding heart, I dashed across the parking lot, shoved Tony into the car, and sped away. I didn't slow down until I noticed a police car. I could imagine a patrolman's reaction, if as an excuse for speeding, I claimed I was making an escape from a psychiatric clinic.

Thus we "suddenly" quit the psychologists. When we first went to the clinic, therapy wasn't yet such a pervasive part of our culture as it later became, and Ike and I were rather ignorant about its nature and purpose. I've since decided many of the formulas of psychology were silly. Nevertheless, child psychiatry was an esteemed branch of the medical profession. Ike's father and grandfather had been doctors. Raised in a family of physicians, Ike had trouble believing the medical profession could be so wrong. I wanted to do everything possible to help Tony, and that included everything Ike thought might help. Those were some of the reasons we endured the ordeal for over two years. Nevertheless, for us, leaving the psychologists felt as though we had been suffering from a toothache and we weren't aware of how much it hurt until the pain ceased. In spite of our continued fear about Tony's future, I felt ten pounds lighter and ten years younger. Ike had some leave coming. In celebration, we took the children camping in Mexico. Feeling capable of anything now the psychologists were out of my life, I quit smoking.

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Do psychologists have some special comprehension of love, hate, jealousy and other human emotions that the rest of us don't understand?

I doubt it! They may be familiar with some statistical studies about people's self-reported feelings, but if they have some special ability to understand individuals, their discussions in the psychology books didn't seem to reflect it. They definitely had no understanding of me.

Question 20: Could lying on a couch and obsessing over a traumatic childhood ever be therapeutic?

In spite of his increasing differences from other children, it was years before I was able to relinquish a secret belief that Tony might grow up to live a normal life. Doctors consistently declared him to be extremely bright. I didn't believe anything else the psychologists said, but for some reason I believed them when they said Tony was extremely bright. He didn't look or act retarded; he was always busy trying to satisfy his monumental curiosity; and it was hard to think of a child as delightfully independent as Tony growing up to be helpless. He exhibited such self-confidence. If I had accepted Tony's retardation, I would have grieved. Then surely we would have all recovered and gone on with our lives, doing our best for Tony and for the rest of the family. Most people manage to accept the blows fate deals them - a disability or death of a loved one. However each time Tony was denied a service or admission to a school, the feeling of being personally discriminated against by some doctor or psychologist plunged me into that malignant pit of anger and resentment.

Freudian psychoanalysis urged patients to remember long forgotten grievances, mother's rejection, or repressed, traumatic, sexual memories. I knew such treatment would not be therapeutic for me; it would make me feel worse, not better. For me there would be no joy, only pain, in dwelling upon some long forgotten, personal injustice. I kept reminding myself that these well intentioned "scientists" were merely pursuing scientific knowledge, and I should not take them personally. Their theories of the moment might be flawed, but truth was their goal, and truth would eventually prevail. The psychologists were devoting their lives to their theories, and their commitment to psychotherapy was similar to a religious faith. Medical doctors, ones who were not particularly enthusiastic about psychiatry, were harder to explain. That they were all cooperating in some research was the one explanation that seemed to save me from that agonizing feeling of being mistreated. Tony was probably enrolled in some research project, I told myself. Psychotherapy was the treatment to which our family had been assigned, and we interfered with their research when we tried to abandon our psychotherapy.

It did seem therapists everywhere were actively recruiting disturbed and autistic children as patients. Announcements in newspapers spoke of "spectacular results", although those

“spectacular results” were never spelled out. Cooperation among researchers might explain Colonel Mann's belief that psychiatry had some claim upon Tony which other doctors would respect. Certainly everywhere we turned, we encountered coercion to return us to therapy. The year Tony was six he attended public-school kindergarten. Both the teacher and the school psychologist tried to persuade me to return to the Child Guidance Clinic. “School is no substitute for treatment,” they would warn. I avoided them both. Tony flunked kindergarten. When school started the next year, he was obviously not mature enough for first grade. Marin County had excellent classes for retarded children, and unbeknownst to us, they even conducted a special class for autistic children. We were not told of the class for autistic children, and Tony was not allowed in classes for the retarded. The school psychologist claimed it was illegal for autistic children to attend special-education classes. For a while I was filled with bitter resentment toward the entire California legislature for enacting such a law.

Then common sense reminded me that such a law, if it even existed, could only have been passed at the instigation of scientists doing research. What possible motive could legislators have for maliciously denying education to autistic children? Some parents pretended participation in therapy in return for schooling for their autistic child. However now that Ike and I had a better understanding of the nature and purpose of psychotherapy, we didn't feel capable of such hypocrisy. Tony did not attend any school for the next three years.

One day I read in the newspaper of a proposed meeting in San Francisco for parents of "disturbed children".

"Let's go," I suggested to Ike, "and find out if those children resemble Tony."

"We don't want to become involved with more psychiatrists," Ike cautioned.

"I won't argue," I promised. "I won't say a word. We'll just sit and listen."

Ike agreed. We rarely went anywhere without the children during those years. No babysitter could be expected to cope with the startling things Tony might do. However a close friend agreed to keep the children for that one evening. Ike and I found the address where the meeting was to take place. It was a residence, and there didn't seem to be other cars in front. We were probably early. The president of the organization, the father of a disturbed child, answered the door. Ike and I discussed our children with him and his wife while awaiting other parents. A psychiatrist and a social worker arrived, both young and pleasant. Again, we tried to think of things to talk about while waiting for the meeting to start. After a while it became apparent Ike and I were going to be the only parents to show up for this meeting, making it impossible to sit and listen.

"We may as well begin," the psychiatrist finally said. He explained that the organization conducted a school for "disturbed children". They had six students, and counselling for the mother was a basic part of their program. Ike and I remained silent.

"We really called this meeting in the hope of doing something nice for the parents of our disturbed children," the pretty young social worker said. "Perhaps you have suggestions?" Ike and I, sitting together on the couch, drew uneasily together, and she continued. "Maybe we could form a little study-group to discuss such things as - when Daddy comes home from work, tired, and the roast is burned? What Daddy says? And how we react?"

I had promised not to argue but I cringed.

"I bought my wife a meat thermometer," Ike said. "There is no excuse for burned roasts around our house."

It was a flippant comment, but I was grateful to Ike for it. "I sure prefer a meat thermometer to any little study group," I muttered.

"Well, I suppose a meat thermometer might be one solution. . ." the social worker agreed vaguely, as she lapsed into a disconcerted silence.

I turned to the psychiatrist and asked what happened to disturbed children when they grow up. He said he didn't know, but thought some of them might grow up to be eccentric. I'd always thought of eccentricities as charming quirks of character, signs of individuality, but apparently the psychiatrist regarded them as serious defects. I tried to tactfully explain my distaste for psychiatry to the likable young doctor, and he seemed to acknowledge such feelings were within our right. Ike and I got up to leave, promising to "keep in touch" - and to think over the possibility of enrolling Tony in their school.

"There is more than one kind of psychiatrist," the doctor said, as though wanting to explain his position. "One kind treats patients; others conduct research."

I should have asked which kind he was. From the way he spoke, I suspected he was involved in research. Why else would he be making all this effort to recruit patients for free treatment? But my mind was in slow motion again. I still had not mastered the ability to pin down doctors. I assumed the research would eventually be published, and I saw no choice but to await the results.

I never expected to wait for the rest of my life.

One day a social worker knocked at our door and claimed she'd been hired by Marin County to go from house to house searching for disturbed children not in school. She urged me to resume therapy and enroll Tony in a school for disturbed children. A new school for disturbed children was announced in the local paper. Psychiatric treatment for mother was a condition of admission. The school never opened, for they were apparently unable to find mothers willing to undergo therapy. A story about an autistic child was shown on television. The mother didn't like psychiatric treatment any more than I had. However in the story she finally agreed to submit to psychotherapy in return for her child's admission to a special school. She agreed that

anything she said during therapy might be used in research. Whoever was promoting such research seemed to have unlimited power and resources. I felt alone and powerless.

I kept in touch with the mother whose little boy, Eric, had been diagnosed minimal brain damaged and autistic at the March-of-Dimes clinic. She introduced me to an organization for parents of "neurologically handicapped" children. Many of these parents had also rebelled against psychiatry, but their children took various drugs, such as Ritalin, tranquilizers or antidepressants. The children attended a special school, which charged the parents a modest fee, and was said to be partially funded by the county. I applied for Tony to be admitted. Again, reports were requested from the Child Guidance Clinic, the March-of-Dimes clinic and all doctors who had ever seen Tony. After months of waiting, someone finally phoned to say they had made a decision. When I arrived for my appointment, I was surprised to be greeted by that same psychiatric social worker who had interviewed Ike and me two years earlier at the March-of-Dimes clinic. Could this man hold some position with this nursery school, while also working at the March-of-Dimes clinic? I knew instinctively that it was not a question he would answer. He said Tony would not be allowed to attend their school unless he were under the care of a psychiatrist.

"The other children aren't under the care of psychiatrists," I protested, fighting back tears of disappointment and frustration. I was acquainted with several of the mothers whose children attended the school. Their children took an assortment of drugs, but their parents didn't have to undergo psychotherapy.

Your child is disturbed." He seemed to notice my disbelief. "That was the opinion of the pediatrician at the March-of-Dimes clinic," he added sternly.

I remembered that the pediatrician at the March-of-Dimes Clinic had used rather dramatic language about death in a gas chamber, as she urged psychiatric treatment. But she had also admitted, somewhat reluctantly, that neurologists called such children brain damaged and psychiatrists called them disturbed. I would eventually realize that such diagnoses were determined by whichever treatment the child was receiving. Children under the care of psychiatrists were diagnosed disturbed or schizophrenic. Similar children receiving drug treatments were diagnosed as neurologically damaged. When behavior modification became popular, children receiving those treatments would be diagnosed as autistic. This social worker apparently held some official position at both the March-of Dimes-clinic and this school, and his job seemed to be trying to prevent patients from straying from their assigned treatments. I hadn't yet figured out their bizarre diagnostic system, though, and if Tony were the subject of some "scientific study", it was something the medical profession was concealing from the public. (Medical ethics have changed since those days. A law was eventually passed prohibiting enrolling children in scientific studies without parents' knowledge and consent.)

"Your child needs help," the social worker warned. "You can't allow him to just stay home and vegetate."

Whatever those doctors were doing, they were apparently convinced it was for the benefit of society, and I felt powerless against such righteousness. Sensing that it would be futile to argue, I burst into tears and jumped up and fled. He wouldn't call it vegetating if he had to cope with Tony's mischief for one day, I thought bitterly.

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Since he stopped attending school Tony devoted himself full time to exploring the world and trying to take it apart, an activity for which he had talent. Some autistic children have unusual artistic or musical abilities. Others, like Rainman, in the movie by that name, have special skill with numbers. Tony's genius was for creating havoc. Many toddlers do things Tony did, but Tony was a terrible-two-year-old for more than ten years. He appeared surprised and a little puzzled when we scolded him, but every day he seemed to think of something new and startling to do. He poured pancake syrup in the piano; sprinkled pepper in the stew; dismantled the sewing machine and all the clocks; filled the sugar canister with water; sent an old tire crashing down the hill through a window; threw rocks at the neighbors and laughed gleefully when they protested; and swung from telephone cables which he could reach from the top of a fence. He smashed anything breakable. I once found him slinging coca cola bottles from an upstairs porch onto the concrete walk below, apparently enjoying the sound of splintering glass. He poured salad oil all over the kitchen floor. Then, with the notion maybe he should clean this up, he added a bottle of dish soap and mixed them together with a mop. My feet flew out from under me when I entered the kitchen. I tried to crawl back out of the room, but the floor was too slippery for crawling. I floundered for several minutes before reaching the door. He demolished beds by playfully jumping on them. He slammed his bedroom door so hard it split in half. Once we were all on the walk leaving the house when a window up in the third story suddenly shattered. That window was a long way from where Tony was standing. Nevertheless we all assumed Tony was somehow responsible, that he had managed to throw a rock without anyone seeing him do it. I've since wondered if Tony inherited a little poltergeist talent from some of his séance-loving, Vandegrift ancestors. Tony liked heights and watched television from the top of our big old upright piano. He spent much of his time up in trees. He never fell or injured himself. A neighbor was frightened late one night when hearing noises outside her third-floor, bedroom window. She watched in alarm as the window opened. Then, a small, bare foot appeared over the sill. Tony crawled in the window, laughed, and ran down the stairs and out the door. Getting out of bed, he had climbed over her roof and along a ledge to reach her window.

Exuberance, curiosity and love of teasing were often behind Tony's destructiveness. He did love to tease. He also had a temper though, and sometimes acted like a "disturbed" child, tearing up books and ripping his curtains or clothes to shreds, for instance. However when Tony was happy, he was exuberantly joyful. For a while, he would leap, squealing with laughter, from the top of the refrigerator onto the shoulders of whoever passed through the kitchen. All Tony's emotions were exaggerated, and his senses were acute. When angry he was

more furious than other children; when busy, he was quiet and intent. If someone mentioned the word 'doctor' during conversation, Tony could hear from another part of the house, and would yell, "NO DOCTOR!" He could find Christmas fruit or candy hidden in the back of a closet by his sense of smell. He had an uncanny ability to remember directions. We once went to Disneyland, having been there three years earlier, and Tony pointed out street directions to us.

Refusal or inability to make eye contact is sometimes listed as a characteristic of autism. However Tony's gaze was strikingly direct. He insisted things be done in certain ways. He kept rugs perfectly straight. He saw that all cupboard and closet doors were closed. During a trip to the hospital, I was amazed at the number of drawers doctors carelessly left open. Tony was busy darting into offices, startling doctors, nurses and patients, as he slammed their drawers closed, and then dashed back out of the room, leaving everyone with a "what was that?" look on their faces. His objection to open drawers wasn't because he was fastidious. Tony's table manners were atrocious. Many of his unusual behaviors disappeared after a while, to be replaced by new ones. Tony was a beautiful child. A radiant smile lit up his face, and his big blue eyes sparkled with fun and mischief. Strangers rarely suspected the mental development of such a busy, alert looking child could be retarded. I took him to the playground, but he got along badly with other children. If they so much as touched him, he might lose his temper and throw sand at them. Once he playfully pushed over a baby, making her cry.

"Why you little devil!" the mother exclaimed. She jumped up to chase Tony, who laughed and ran.

"I'm sorry," I apologized, my face burning with embarrassment. "My little boy doesn't understand."

"I bet he'd understand my shoe on his behind if I could catch him," she muttered, unconvinced there was anything wrong with Tony but devilry.

Someone told me about another autistic child. I phoned the mother, and then took Tony with me to visit her. I told Tony to play out in the yard, hoping he would get into less trouble than in the house. The woman's child was in school, but she offered me a cup of tea, and we began discussing our children. I didn't have much time for visiting in those days, and I relaxed with my tea. Suddenly, a cat raced through the room. It was soaking wet! We had passed a swimming pool as we approached the front door. *Tony must have thrown her cat in the swimming pool! Apparently cats can swim, and it got away. But what if Tony had drowned it!* The woman didn't say anything, but I felt humiliated. Then she tried to turn on a lamp and discovered that her electricity wasn't working. Tony hadn't been anywhere near that lamp, but I suspected he was somehow responsible. He was usually involved when mechanical devices disintegrated. I decided I'd better take him home, and I abandoned my tea. Later the woman phoned to say Tony had found her fuse boxes and disconnected them, With an atypical child of her own, she expressed amusement instead of indignation.

Life wasn't simple in those days. We were too busy to wonder if we were "happy". Today I remember with pleasure those years when the children were small. (Except for my encounters with doctors, whom I avoided when possible.) I was still ironing to help with the family finances. Ironing had become so automatic that I could relax and indulge in all sorts of thoughts while doing it. Tony seemed to enjoy our trips in the car to deliver it. Some of the women for whom I ironed were interesting people, with whom I became friends, and my ironing customers were my social life. (Years later I would spend a summer in Paris with one of my former ironing customers.) Ike and I also found time for Little League games, Blue Birds, Cub Scouts, the children's dance and music recitals, school performances, picnics and trips to zoos and museums. Fishing was Ike's recreation, and Tony did well on camping trips. On Sunday mornings during the summer, we cooked breakfast over a campfire at a nearby park. Afterward the children played in the creek while Ike and I played scrabble. At times I felt desperate, but I tried not to think about Tony's future. I reminded myself that the possessions Tony destroyed were expendable. By forcing myself not to care what strangers thought, I managed to endure Tony's mischief and destructiveness with a show of serenity. I felt I had no choice, remembering the long list of psychologists eager to listen if I wanted to complain.

We finally persuaded Army dentists to fix Tony's teeth. He had to be hospitalized and given a general anesthetic. The mysterious pains in his ears, nose, teeth or head continued. Occasionally they were in his arms or legs. He was ingenious at thinking of remedies, and rubbed mashed potatoes, toothpaste, pancake syrup or mayonnaise on his hurt - usually in his hair. Sometimes when he got one of these mysterious pains, he would scream and slap the painful spot, or knock his head against the wall. He was careful to pick a wall where he wouldn't injure himself, such as the soft, crumbly plaster of our old house. Tony was knocking huge holes in all the walls, and our house looked as though it was undergoing some demolition process. From time to time we repaired the damage, but Tony soon knocked more holes. Being unable to do anything for our little boy was heartbreaking. I occasionally tried to find medical treatment for him, but doctors just suggested, helplessly, that we return to the psychiatric clinic.

Once at a neurology clinic I was surprised to learn one of the neurologists was also a psychiatrist. "I understand neurologists consider children like Tony brain damaged, and psychiatrists believe they are suffering from maternal rejection. Which theory do you favor?" I asked.

"I'm not partial to either theory, but there is one matter on which we all agree: These children don't stand a chance without some treatment, either psychotherapy or some type of drug therapy," he warned.

The neurologists prescribed a tranquilizer. I gave it to Tony for several weeks. It seemed wrong to give such a drug to a child if it obviously didn't help him, and I hated the responsibility of making medical decisions, but after giving those pills to Tony for a couple of weeks without any effect, I threw them out. His head banging continued off and on for several years.

Tony was nine and hadn't attended school for two years when the school psychologist contacted me and assigned Tony a home teacher. Tony had no understanding of reading and writing, and didn't talk as well as the average four-year-old. However that teacher worked patiently with Tony, and I was grateful for someone outside the family to interact with him for those few hours a week. At Tony's end-of-the-term school-conference, the school psychologist tried to persuade me to try a drug therapy, offering a choice of several - tranquilizers and antidepressants. I'd read that school psychologists all over the country were prescribing drugs for hyperactive children. I knew the effectiveness of these drugs had not yet been demonstrated. No doctor had made a serious effort to find out what was wrong with Tony, and I didn't fancy giving him drugs on such an experimental basis.

"Drugs might relax Tony and allow him to learn more," the psychologist argued.

"I've already tried a tranquilizer and an antidepressant. Neither had much effect."

"Are you afraid of side effects?"

"Oh I suppose there are no grossly harmful side effects, but the long-term side-effects of these drugs are unknown. I don't want to give a drug to Tony without some evidence it might help."

The psychologist argued a few more minutes, then finally lapsed into silence.

"I hear you won't be with our school district next year," I commented to change the subject.

"That's right," he answered absently. "I'm going into private practice. My only connection with the school district now is a research project on which I'm still working." At that time conducting scientific research upon school children without the knowledge and consent of parents was considered perfectly acceptable.

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Brain-washing can be effective, especially when respected members of society cooperate to impose some concept upon vulnerable, frightened parents. The False Memory epidemic, which occurred a few years later, at the end of the 20th Century, demonstrates the possible dangers of psychotherapy. Suddenly women began "retrieving" memories during therapy of being sexually abused as children, or even as infants. The women had supposedly remained unaware of such abuse during their entire lives - until a therapist "retrieved" awareness of them. Some of them "remembered" fantastic, satanic ritual-abuse ceremonies, and one even "remembered" being forced to have sex with a horse. (I do wonder about the details of that one - even imaginary details.) Some of the women developed "multiple personalities". *Men ended up in jail because of these emotional allegations!* Finally an organization, the False Memory Syndrome Foundation, was organized to try bring some sanity to the concept, and address some of the injustices caused by these hysterical accusations. Some women later retracted their accusations, admitting them to be the result of imagination, encouraged by a therapist. I'm not sure if a retrieved memory of a traumatic event has ever been verified, but

many of them have been shown to be false. Skeptics of retrieved memories argue that forgetting is the problem for people experiencing traumatic events; painful memories are difficult to escape. We might forget some of the details, but if an event is traumatic, it remains painfully stark in our memory.

Question 21: Would it even be possible to conduct a scientific study to determine whether psychological treatments are effective?

A clinic at San Francisco State College, funded by the State Department of Education, was frankly and openly involved in research. I knew several parents with “neurologically handicapped” children who had been diagnosed there. The doctors were reputedly not psychiatry oriented. The clinic was headed by a neurologist, and they were said to look for physical causes of abnormal development. I consulted a civilian pediatrician and asked him to arrange an evaluation for Tony. The waiting list was long, and Tony was nearly ten when we went for his examination. A social worker interviewed me.

"What did the Child Guidance Clinic diagnose your son?" he asked when I explained that Tony had been treated there for over two years.

"No one ever told us," I answered.

"Do you mean six years after first taking your little boy to a doctor, you still don't know his diagnosis?"

I shook my head, grateful someone finally agreed our experience seemed outrageous.

"When we finish examining your child, you and your husband will meet with all the specialists examining Tony. Each will report their findings," he promised. "We'll answer all your questions and definitely give you a diagnosis."

His sincerity and concern seemed obvious. *Had we finally found doctors we could trust?* My naturally optimistic nature surged, and I forgot the bewilderment and heartbreak I'd felt after each doctor had been devious. Maybe this time was finally going to be different.

For the first time Tony was thoroughly examined. Doctors, speech and hearing specialists, teachers and psychologists tested him for four days. I watched some of the tests. Tony could work jigsaw puzzles and fit things together. He completed one test labeled “space relations” in an instant - even before the tester told him what to do. He had no comprehension of ones requiring him to distinguish articles found in hardware stores from those found in clothing stores. He was kept busy, and didn't seem to get into any mischief during the week. He lowered the flag out in front one day, but their fire-alarms, something that always fascinated

Tony, were apparently where children couldn't reach them. The physical examination was not extensive. Doctors still lacked technology to reveal much of what went on in the brain. Tony was examined by a neurologist. In order to determine dominance, the neurologist suggested Tony kick him. Most children might be a little shy about kicking an adult, but not Tony. He enthusiastically hauled off and delivered a whack on the doctor's shin. The neurologist winced and rubbed his leg, apparently not expecting such enthusiasm. Tony was left-handed, but right-footed.

We drove to the clinic on the fifth and final day. On the way I stopped by the Child Guidance Clinic at the Army hospital to pick up Tony's records, which had been requested but never sent. Then I stopped the car in Golden Gate Park. Prying the staples out of the folder, I spent a few minutes reading it. I read the letter from the doctor at the Child Guidance Clinic stating their treatment had been curing Tony of his "illness", but he regressed whenever he was returned to the family situation, "and when this became apparent to the mother she suddenly withdrew the child from treatment." It was a terrible accusation, and obviously not true. I didn't "withdraw Tony from treatment", until he wasn't getting any. Dr. Lavalley was sending him home every week for refusing to go into the playroom. Should I remove the letter from Tony's file, I wondered. No, I decided, it was a ridiculous allegation. The psychologists were angered by my rejection of their therapy, and this report only revealed their petty vindictiveness. The social worker's assurance that they would give us a diagnosis had been emphatic. I hoped all these specialists and scientists, associated with a university, wouldn't have wasted four and a half days examining him if they were going to take the word of some Army psychologists who saw him four years ago. I didn't know how to defend myself against the psychologists' declaration of my emotional pathology, but removing something from this file would only show their same sort of petty dishonesty.

"Let's go! Let's go!" Tony urged. He was enjoying the tests and was eager to get to the clinic. I closed the file, restarted the car, and drove on for the final day of his evaluation.

Before our concluding conference that morning, I was scheduled for an appointment with a psychiatrist, a man who hadn't appeared to be an important member of the examining team. He seemed to be the only psychiatrist at this clinic, and today was the first day he'd even been here. Only fifteen minutes was allotted for the appointment, and I assumed it was probably an unimportant, routine interview. The psychiatrist turned out to be a small, dark haired man who appeared to lack enthusiasm for his job. His woeful brown eyes suggested a permanent expression of melancholy.

"I see from Tony's records that a child guidance clinic already diagnosed him," he said.

"Tony was seen there," I answered, "but they never told us their diagnosis."

"Autistic is what they say here in their report."

"I remember a psychologist mentioning that term, but he didn't explain what it means."

"Would you consider taking Tony to Langley Porter Psychiatric Clinic?" he asked after a moment of gloomy silence.

We parents of defective children often managed to seek each other out and compare our miserable experiences. I'd talked with parents whose "disturbed" children were treated at Langley Porter. The treatment consisted of psychotherapy for the mother. "No. I'm sorry. I don't believe in that type of treatment," I said. The psychiatrist frowned. "I don't really believe in psychotherapy as a treatment for any illness," I added apologetically.

I suspected psychiatrists might be annoyed by a suggestion that psychotherapy couldn't cure anything. I didn't feel comfortable challenging a doctor, and I did my best to appear contrite rather than assertive. I'd read that a growing number of doctors were convinced mental illness has physical causes. Surely I was also entitled to such a belief.

The psychiatrist sat staring despondently at the floor. He waved his hand, indicating I could leave. I returned to the waiting room. In a few minutes the social worker came out and motioned me back in to his office. This was the man who had promised all our questions would be answered today.

"So far as you are concerned this is the first time anyone has actually examined Tony, isn't it?"

I'd already told him that, but he apparently wanted me to repeat it, "just for the record". He seemed upset. *Were he and the psychiatrist having some disagreement about Tony?*

"Yes, this is the first time anyone has given him a physical examination," I said. I returned uneasily to the waiting room. *Had something gone wrong? Surely after all these years we didn't still "belong" to psychologists!*

The psychiatrist sent for me again. "Have you ever noticed Tony sit and rock back and forth, and stare into space, unaware of his surroundings?" he asked.

"No, the most abnormal appearing thing Tony does is demand we repeat things."

"He makes you repeat words or phrases with the same tone of voice?"

"Yes. And sometimes if we touch him, he insists that we touch him again in the same spot."

Still looking glum, the psychiatrist dismissed me again. I returned to the waiting room. All these professionals had seemed straightforward and candid all week. Now with the arrival of the psychiatrist, things were getting strange. *"Oh please, please don't have this evaluation turn into another disaster!"* I kept repeating to myself.

I felt too nervous to sit and talk to the other mothers in the waiting room. Their children only had problems in school, and doctors usually diagnosed them as having a learning disability. Tony didn't seem to have much in common with them. I went out to walk up and down the hall in an attempt to work off my growing apprehension. As I passed the social worker's office, he

stuck his head out. He furtively motioned me in and closed the door. He didn't ask me to sit down.

"You are going to listen to our diagnosis today - pardon me, I mean our opinion - and then do what you think is best for Tony, aren't you?" he asked. He stood uneasy by the door waiting for my answer.

"That's what we've always done."

"Yes," he agreed distractedly, as he cautiously opened the door for me to leave.

As the door closed behind me, any hopes to which I had been clinging plummeted. This examination was turning out to be as bewildering as all the others. The arrival of the psychiatrist, and Tony's records from the Army clinic, must have somehow revealed our participation in the research project. They were evidently planning to tell us something with which the social worker seemed to disagree. Most medical doctors who felt compelled to be devious during those years appeared uncomfortable at being less than candid. Psychologists, on the other hand, rarely appeared embarrassed when trying to maneuver patients, apparently considering manipulation of people to be one of their skills. This social worker was the exception, and I remember with gratitude he at least seemed to feel badly, and tried to warn me about whatever they were doing.

I returned and sat woodenly in the waiting room with growing dread and fear. Tony and I had been coming to the clinic alone all week, but Ike had arranged to join us from work for our final conference. By the time he arrived, I'd become so apprehensive that my insides felt like they were made of lead. The somber looks on the faces of the three doctors, who were seated behind a long table up on a stage, confirmed my dread. The dozen-or-so people who had examined Tony during the week were not there to "answer all our questions", as the social worker had promised. Only the psychiatrist, the social worker and the neurologist in charge of the clinic looked down at us from behind the table. To my surprise, the pediatrician from Marin County who had arranged the evaluation was also there. He sat off to one side and didn't say anything. Ike and I sat down in the front row of empty chairs. The silence felt oppressive. The psychiatrist began to speak in a bleak tone.

"We're sorry to tell you your child is just severely retarded - not educable..." He dropped Tony's records on the table in a gesture of hopelessness. "Eventual institutionalization is his only prospect. . . .He's not autistic, as I first thought..." The psychologist kept hesitating as though expecting us to argue. *He hadn't even examined Tony. If he thought Tony was autistic an hour ago, how could he now be so certain of another diagnosis without examining him?* "Or if your son is emotionally disturbed," the psychiatrist continued despondently, "the condition has already gone so long without treatment that the illness is probably now irreversible..."

"I guess I've begun to suspect retardation," Ike said.

"We believe public institutions are better than private ones. You people are not as young as you might be. There are advantages to making your child a ward of the state."

I believe it was the neurologist who said those words. At the time, I was so shocked by their urging us to institutionalize Tony that nothing but the words themselves became engraved upon my consciousness. Whoever uttered them, the other doctors in the room appeared to acquiesce by their silence. I sat there, immobilized, trying not to feel anything. I was determined not to fall apart, struggling not to cry. I couldn't think of a question to ask; my mind was paralyzed again. *I should think of a question, I kept telling myself.* But my brain refused to cooperate. The doctors were watching us gravely. Apparently our conference was over.

Ike and I got up and left. The social worker had remained silent throughout the conference, with that dour expression on his face. A few days later the neurologist would send us a letter, urging drug treatment, and offering a choice of several: Dexedrine, Librium, Valium, Ritalin. They didn't care which we chose – just so Tony participated in some experimental drug treatment. At the time I doubted if any of those drugs cure retardation, and I'm still skeptical. I no longer trusted the doctors who were promoting such medication, and we chose not to participate. Maybe I can understand such determination by the psychiatrists to keep us in their research. The concept persisted that autistic children sometimes "recover" – although, of the thousands of children diagnosed autistic, Temple Grandin seems to be a rare example of such recovery. However people sometimes diagnose famous scientists, such as Einstein, as having been autistic as a child. Tony was so quick and responsive, and so bright appearing. If any autistic children recovered, it seemed like he might surely be one of them.

Those doctors had actually urged us to institutionalize our child.

The thought of Tony in an institution devastated me. Tony loved to eat. Sometimes he could consume a pound of hot dogs at one meal. Pizza and spaghetti were other favorites, and he would devour leftovers the next morning for breakfast. And cookies - no one in a public institution would bake cookies for Tony.

One night recently he had called from his bedroom, "Mommy, bwing you toof pick!"

Tony confused pronouns. Fortunately it isn't necessary to clarify pronouns for normal children. Anyone who attempts to explain "you" really means me, and "I" means you, will soon discover how entangled such explanations become. Gestures only add confusion. By whatever means young children learn to use pronouns, it is not by having them explained. As adults we can't even remember how we managed to learn their proper use - and we did it without being aware that rules of grammar even exist. Tony was obviously deficient in that mysterious ability.

I got out of bed and took Tony a tooth pick. But Tony didn't want it for his teeth. He was lying in bed with a dish of olives on his chest and a self-satisfied sparkle in his eyes. He wanted the tooth pick with which to eat his olives. The rest of the family came in and laughed at him. In spite of the problems he caused, we all enjoyed Tony. He was always laughing and teasing, and

the children's friends thought he was "neat". He was like a three year old, a delightful, independent, imaginative, mischievous little three year old. I remembered how quiet and lonely the house had seemed while Tony was in the hospital having his teeth fixed. Tony's independence didn't mean that he didn't love us. He would be frightened and unhappy in an institution among strangers.

No one could force us to put Tony in an institution, I finally reminded myself. Perhaps we should have sued someone. However our generation did not expect financial compensation for every personal misfortune, and in those days, even lawyers probably agreed that pursuit of scientific research justified any tactics. I felt such resentment that I was unable to discuss doctors without bursting into tears. We had neither energy nor money for lawsuits. The law had not yet been passed requiring parents' informed consent before involving their children in research, and social scientists were still confident that their wondrous, twentieth-century, psychoanalytical technology could eventually remake all of humanity into similar, successful, untroubled, perennially contented, useful citizens. At that time most professionals seemed to assume such a goal justified coercion.

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I never found any published results of all that research on autistic children. I did find description of a research project in one of the many psychology books I read. In 1935, a massive effort was undertaken to prove crime can be prevented. It was called the Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study. Boys who had been in trouble, and considered pre-delinquent, were referred to the project by welfare agencies, police, churches and schools. To avoid stigmatizing the group, an equal number of untroubled boys were included. The boys, an average age of nine, were divided into pairs. Each pair was equated, as nearly as possible, as to health, intelligence, emotional adjustment, economic class, home atmosphere, neighborhood and delinquency prognosis. A substantial number of families dropped out of the project (*could it be that, once they experienced a sample of it, some parents failed to appreciate all that psychiatric "help"?*). The study continued with 325 matched sets. The flip of a coin determined which boy of each pair would be treated, and which would go into the control group. The families of those in the control group were interviewed, but otherwise left to the resources of the community. The boys in the treatment group received regular attention from doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists and tutors, and constant guidance from their own personal social worker.

The project ended in 1945 when the boys were in their middle teens. Twenty and thirty-year follow up studies indicate all that treatment had very little effect. Actually, the treated boys fared slightly worse than those who were left alone. The treated group committed a few more crimes, became alcoholic slightly more often, had more mental illness and were a little more dissatisfied with their lives.

The follow-up was conducted long after the treatment had ended, and I'm sure it was a disappointment and surprise to everyone. Probably the most important thing they learned was

to never again attempt such a study. Psychologists seem to have realized that it is best not to try to seek a scientific evaluation of their treatments. And maybe such an evaluation really is impossible. Normal, self-confident people might quickly resent such psychological intrusion, and the people most willing to submit might be the individuals with the most problematic futures. If Tony was ever involved in such a study, it was massive. Yet no information about such a project was ever published. Psychiatry no longer believes "maternal rejection" causes autism, and psychotherapy is rarely used as a medical treatment. However autistic children are still subjected to a variety of "treatments". It would be wonderful if someone could figure out a way to determine whether or not they actually accomplished anything.

Question 22: What is racism?

Are inhibitions and personality traits inherited, or do they merely consist of habits acquired after birth? Most parents notice that their children seem to be born with distinctive personalities, which sometimes bear uncanny similarities to relatives. Tony's lack of inhibitions was striking. He didn't fear strangers, and I never saw him act shy or embarrassed. Tony also lacked all fear of heights. I had rather expected Tony to resemble his older brother. Guy was also a little slow to mature. Our only child to suffer serious illness, Guy was born with *pyloric stenosis*, an obstruction between the stomach and the intestines. Ike and I were terrified when our first-born had to undergo surgery at the age of two weeks, but he quickly recovered, reinforcing our faith that modern medicine could fix anything. Guy didn't talk until he was three. His first words were, "Was ist los?" (*What's the matter?*), which he would cry when he wanted out of his crib, repeating what Frau Bleicher, our German housekeeper, would say to him. Guy was slow to learn to play with other children and to acquire social skills. Before he started kindergarten, I attempted to teach him a little about numbers and the alphabet. He tried, but obviously wasn't yet capable of such learning. However by the first grade he seemed more average. While he didn't lack all ability to imitate people, as Tony did, Guy had less of that talent than most children. A quiet little boy when not asking questions, he was inclined to daydreaming and absent mindedness. He was often preoccupied with the significance of prehistoric men, molecules and infinity. Once when he was about six, he had a disagreement with a neighbor boy and wrote him an angry letter:

Dear Elmer, You are a pithecanthropus. Love, Guy. (He wrote thank-you letters for gifts from relatives and knew they were all supposed to end with "love, Guy.")

"I'll bet that'll make him mad," Guy said, "'Cause he won't know what a pithecanthropus is."

Nothing upset Guy more than not understanding the meaning of something. Like Tony, he was independent, and announced at a young age that he was now too old for all that hugging-and-

kissing stuff. I sympathized. I also felt dismayed when friends or acquaintances greet me by grabbing me and making smacking noises near my ear. A wet kiss would be even worse. Guy considered fairy tales and children's fiction a hoax, and preferred to read science books. When I first took Tony to the pediatrician, and got the impression doctors suspected high intelligence, Guy was in the third grade. He finished reading his first set of children's encyclopedias and requested a more advanced set. He was obviously bright, and I actually worried that I'd be presented with some difficult decision such as whether he should skip a grade in school. To my chagrin, Guy's school problems turned out to be quite different. He had to struggle to learn some things other children pick up effortlessly. He began coming home from school crying, not sure himself why he was unhappy. Our attempts to discover the cause of his misery often ended in a discussion of arithmetic.

"Arithmetic wouldn't be so bad if sometimes four and four could be seven and sometimes it could be nine. But it's always eight." he protested. "And the next day it's still eight. I hate it!"

"But Honey, you had no trouble with arithmetic in the first and second grades," I said.

"I did it with my fingers." he confessed morosely. "This year I don't have enough fingers."

Memorization wasn't one of his greatest talents. His mysterious unhappiness vanished the moment school was out for the summer. When school started in the fall, Guy admired his fourth-grade teacher, a man, and he enjoyed school again. However Guy puzzled the teacher, and at our end-of-term conference he said,

"This kid has me baffled. He's smart, attentive and interested - but he doesn't do especially well. He's peculiar . . . Well, I don't actually mean peculiar," the teacher apologized, as he noticed me cringe to hear another of my children called peculiar. "He's a terrific little boy, but he's Just, I don't know...Just doesn't do as well as he should. . ."

The school provided funds for a special project for the "more able learners" in the class. They made rockets. The teacher invited Guy to participate even though his learning ability obviously wasn't exceptional. Guy enjoyed the rocket project, but it didn't turn him into a "more able learner". The teacher also asked the class to write a composition describing a personal problem, and what the student had done to resolve it. Guy's compositions were always concise, and this one consisted of a single sentence: "My personal problems are my own personal business."

Guy's attitude probably reflected my dislike of therapy, which was well discussed at our dinner table. However I was privately pleased that Guy felt responsible for his personal problems. Maybe he wouldn't run to a psychologist looking for someone to blame for his troubles when he grew up. Guy's fourth-grade teacher was concerned his grades might not be good enough for college. I never worried though. He was consumed by curiosity.

"I think it was a big 'slosion, myself," he might say.

"What was a big explosion?"

"The beginning of the universe. Cause there sure had to be a lot of heat to produce all that 'tomic energy," he would decide.

"Well I guess there are two theories--"

"I know what all the symbols stand for, but I wonder what the whole thing *really* means?"

"What symbols?"

"E equals M,C squared. Mommy, yesterday the teacher said light always travels in a straight line. I raised my hand 'cause I wanted to ask about Einstein saying it travels in a curve. The bell rang though, and I didn't get a chance."

Too bad the bell rang just then. It might have been interesting to know how fourth-grade teachers answer such a question.

Guy used to insist he was incapable of memorizing anything. The Boy Scout oath was his first success and required weeks of effort. He is grown now and has apparently acquired an adequate memory. Happily married to a Russian wife, he has learned to speak that language so fluently they speak it at home. Recently he remarked that I taught him algebra when he was a child. I didn't remember doing such a thing.

"Well I guess you didn't actually teach it to me," he agreed. "You just showed it to me, and it made sense."

Although Guy hadn't talked much until he was three, the label of autism wasn't yet common, and it would never have occurred to me to consult a doctor about his development. Today he gets along with people just fine; he is unselfish, kind and considerate. Becoming a physics professor, he had to learn to communicate. Actually, it seems to me that he has acquired quite a charming talent for social conversation. Like the rest of the family, he is concerned with philosophical questions and committed to pondering the difference between right and wrong. He is beloved by his family and well-liked by his students and colleagues. As far as I can judge, his life has been a spectacular success. When he was about nine, he once declared,

"Even if I can't learn the multiplication tables, I'm still glad I'm me!"

How wonderful if everyone had such an attitude! Like Guy, I have become attached to my talents and am willing to work on my deficits. I admit it would be nice to have a dynamic, extroverted personality, with an ability to entertain people. However I do have abilities, and from what I've read, even the most talented among us harbor imperfections. Given a choice, I don't know of anyone other than myself whom I'd rather be. I've tried, but I never really succeeded in overcoming my regret over Tony's retardation. Today Tony is obviously happy and contented, but sometimes I can't help feeling a poignant speculation about the life he might have led if. . . *if?? . . if he were someone other than Tony?* I try to repress such feelings, for

while I hope all my children and grandchildren make an effort to overcome their faults, I wouldn't want any of them, including Tony, to waste energy deploring their own unique natures.

From birth, our daughter's personality differed from that of her brothers. An affectionate, outgoing child, she talked early. She loved fairy tales and was people oriented. When she started kindergarten she would rush home every day, eager to share her experiences. One February afternoon she breathlessly related,

"Today, Mommy, the teacher told about a blinkin. This blinkin just roamed through the woods all day, looking for books, 'cause it wanted to read. And when it grew up, Mommy, it became THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA! Or maybe it grew up to be a man. I'm not sure which. Anyway, there's another man. I think his name is George. And George and the blinkin both have birthdays this month."

Once when Sherry was playing house, Guy asked how many children she planned to have when she grew up.

"Three," she answered, "a boy, a girl -- and one like Tony just for fun."



Sherry, with her stepson, Nick, and her husband Michael. (Dr. Jampolsky's office was off to the left, behind those yachts.)

Some people have reported feeling embarrassed about a retarded sibling. I don't think Guy and Sherry suffered embarrassment over Tony. He was cute and funny, and pity was one of the last emotions Tony might have evoked when he was small. Feelings of inferiority were obviously something Tony never experienced, and the things he did were startlingly unexpected. In any

case, many children learn to cope with problems such as a retarded sibling, without suffering emotional damage. If Tony were less attractive, I hope Guy and Sherry would have profited from learning to deal with such painful feelings at an early age.

*_*_*

One of my Russian granddaughters was about seven when she arrived in this country. She was a dedicated communist and planned to be a member of the Supreme Soviet when she grew up. She didn't speak any English when she was admitted to a first-grade class, and our schools had no Russian interpreters. Within a few months she spoke fluent English, and her attitudes had quickly become American. I remember a few years later we were watching ET on television. Government scientists tried to capture ET and take him to their laboratories. Elena exclaimed indignantly,

"The government can't just do that to someone without their permission! Why I'd haul them into court and sue their socks off!" Surely "suing someone's socks off" would not be an expected reaction from a member of the Supreme Soviet.

My other Russian granddaughter has lived with a diagnosis of mental illness. I'm not sure of the specific label. She has led a productive life, holding down high-paying positions as a computer programmer. Her achievement is something to be respected. However she blames her mother, my very loving daughter-in-law, for all of her troubles. I suspect most psychiatrists have stopped blaming mothers. However mentally ill people in our culture have spent many hours on couches, obsessing over mother's maltreatment, and the concept has become imbedded in our culture.

*_*_*

Some years ago, I attended the christening of a grandchild, Guy's firstborn daughter. "You came all the way from California for the christening," the Russian priest exclaimed approvingly. Actually I had just learned of the event upon my arrival in Pennsylvania the night before, but I smiled in demure acknowledgment of his praise. Three flags decorated the little Russian Orthodox Church, the flag of Pennsylvania, the American flag, and the flag of the Tsar. The priest was six and a half feet tall and weighed more than two hundred pounds. He wore velvet robes under his embroidered robes and he had a long black beard. There were no chairs in the Russian church; everyone stood. The godmother belonged to another denomination than the church my daughter-in-law attended. Christening ceremonies of both were performed, each seeming endless. The priest and his attendants circled the room, swinging a smoking bronze incense burner and chanting in Russian. Finally they returned to the altar, and the priest began painting crosses on each of the baby's tiny toes with a little watercolor brush dipped in holy water.

"What's he doing?" I whispered to my son.

"He's exorcizing demons and rebellious thoughts," Guy whispered back.

Just one moment, I was tempted to protest as an indignant grandmother. *What's wrong with a few rebellious thoughts?* The priest had probably been in this country since the Russian revolution, but some of his attitudes had remained Russian. Our society once valued obedience more highly. Wives obeyed husbands, children obeyed parents and teachers, students accepted academic authorities without challenge, and memorization was stressed in school. Citizens obeyed their rulers, and no one questioned the dominant religion. When heads of government wanted war, everyone obediently fought. I'll admit that an obedient society might function more smoothly, but where is it written that "smooth" is supposed to be the purpose of Man's existence? Many people seem to feel a life of blissful contentment should be our goal. I'm not so sure. Most of us find a way to avoid such bliss. Boredom seems an aspect of our natures, a stimulus that provokes us into abandoning contentment in a search for challenge.

The priest finished painting crosses on each of Eve's toes. Then he picked her up and dunked her three times in the pot of holy water. Eve exploded into a violent bundle of screaming rage. I relaxed. Any granddaughter of mine would surely always be capable of a few rebellious thoughts, I decided. In fact, by the time she was sixteen, Eve was a full-blown rebel -- a vegan with green hair, tattooed and wearing a ring in her lip, an animal rights activist, a circus trapeze performer and a self-proclaimed anarchist. (Actually, rebellious appearing teenagers might not even be nonconformists. Like members of unusual religious sects, they may merely be conforming to a different set of attitudes.) But whatever Eva turns out to be, I hope she remains confident of her ability to change and grow, while not deploring her basic nature.



Guy and the godmother at Eva's christening

I do not believe nonconformists are superior to conformists. Or more intelligent. Perhaps even more intelligence is required for a conformist to reject an obsolete concept, to which they are

emotionally committed, than for a nonconformist whose commitment is weaker. I acknowledge that society would be in trouble if everyone were like me. Society probably wouldn't function if everyone were like Einstein. Or Mother Teresa. Variety is essential to our complex, creative culture.

One of my granddaughters has a degree in biophysics and is working on her Ph.D. But I also have a grandson who became addicted to drugs for many years, something that broke all our hearts. However he entered treatment and has been free of drugs for over three years now. If he succeeds, he will have accomplished something that most of us are not called upon to achieve, and as a result, will be a stronger than average person.



Hunter's first day of school

I have a great-grandson who seems to have been born with a double dose of self-confidence and “free will”. I baby-sat him just before he turned five. He explained, politely, “Now you are supposed to do what I say, because I’m the boss. OK?”

I told him he was a cute little rascal.

“Yes,” he agreed. “I know.” He has an abundance of people skills. He sometimes complains in exasperation, “Why are people always telling me what to **do!**”

Yes, people feel entitled to tell four-year-olds what to do, I was tempted to tell him. Most four-year-olds don't question it. I've seen Hunter show a remarkable sensitivity and consideration for other people, especially children younger than him. He seems to be developing an exceptionally kind, loving personality. But whatever my grandchildren grow up to be, I'm confident none of them will consist of all talents and no faults. Our family seems to be variable, including tragic failures and also spectacular successes. (Spectacular success as human beings, that is; none seemed to have pursued fame and fortune.) We are all far from perfect. Perfection is not a fate I would wish upon any child. I fear perfect children might grow up to be similar, successful, untroubled, perennially-contented, useful citizens - people who could only age, never grow. And a life of blissful contentment might not even be the most rewarding.

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Society seems to acknowledge statistical personality differences between men and women, while still recognizing their shared humanity, so I'll dare to suggest that personality traits are inherited, and Freudian psychoanalysis might be most relevant to Jewish people, known for their guilt and angst, and apparently suffering from inhibitions. Jewish culture has persisted throughout centuries of dispersal among other societies. Perhaps such a strong, cultural cohesion is why so many famous psychoanalysts have been Jewish - members of one of the strongest, most persistent cultures in human history. Freud openly fretted that psychoanalysis might remain a Jewish science, and Jewish people themselves sometimes concede the phenomenon of “Jewish angst”. (That same "angst" may also have been a stimulus for growth, thus accounting for apparent Jewish over-achievement.)

If personalities and cultural attitudes are real, they could have physical components. I understand that someone named Nicolas Wade has written a book, *A Troublesome Inheritance*, in which he speculates that cultural traits might be detected in the genome. Wade has been denounced for promoting racism. Many people notice the apparent inheritance of culture, but some people seem to think it would be wrong to acknowledge such things – racist – and we shouldn't even talk about it in public like this. However everyone's attitude toward racism might change as science learns more about epigenetics, and we relinquish the notion of biological change occurring only by random mutation and natural selection. (The ability to respond to the environment is how we define life, as distinguished from inanimate matter, and if the genome were incapable of purposeful change, it might be the only living organ to which science attributes such inflexibility.) I'm confident that culture is one way that organisms

participate in their own evolution, and the growth we achieve after birth is just as significant as that which occurred in the womb.

Question 23: Does free-will exist?

Do we have any choice about what we think? Our brains work while we sleep, and we sometimes awake to find solutions that were unresolved problems when we went to bed. Some people have speculated that we each develop filters to determine which thoughts we allow ourselves to consider and which ones we just automatically dismiss. Children, before developing such filters, can believe any thought that pops into their heads. Filters seem to be less effective when we sleep, and we believe all sorts of things in our dreams. (Could inadequate filter systems be an aspect of some mental illness?) All this seems to have led some scientists to conclude that our mental activity is a nothing but a mechanical process, of which we are merely passive observers. However I agonize over some of my thoughts, and I am conscious of doing so. I am confident of some limited ability to change and overcome my thinking habits by exercise of my free-will. I have the ability to either accept or reject any idea that occurs to me. I read one philosopher speculate that this ability to reject thoughts may be the most significant aspect of free-will. We may not have complete freedom of thought, but we have some. We are each responsible for maintaining a view of reality that fits together as consistently as possible, and that requires mental effort. I can't imagine not believing in my own free-will.

*_*_*

The clinic where we were told Tony was hopelessly retarded was part of San Francisco State College, funded by the State Department of Education. Tony, aged ten, and with a diagnosis of retardation, was surely now eligible for special-education classes. I again contacted our school psychologist. Tony was admitted to a class for autistic children, an experimental class using operant conditioning. (When I first took Tony to the psychologists, few people had heard of autism, but since then it had increased dramatically in our society.) The children in the class to which Tony was admitted were rewarded with an M&M candy for each desirable response.

"It's illegal to use special-education funds for this class because the children aren't retarded," the school psychologist sometimes told the parents conspiratorially, "but we do it anyway."

Most of the children had been in the class for some time. They had received many diagnoses, including disturbed, autistic, schizophrenic and neurologically impaired. Their retardation probably had many causes. Unlike Tony, most of them appeared to have less than perfect nervous systems. The school district had refused to admit Tony to this class while he was diagnosed autistic, but he was now allowed to attend with an official diagnosis of retardation. I

hoped we had finally escaped from that “scientific study” that had seemed to plague us for so long. It had not been a pleasant experience. I was grateful that Tony was finally in school. The first day he sat down in his little chair, squeezed his eyes shut and stuck his fingers in his ears.

"Did you ever see such determination not to learn?" the teacher commented with a laugh.

Tony's negative attitude was short lived however, and he soon loved school. A bus picked him up every morning and delivered him home in the afternoon. Keeping up with Tony had been a full time job, and having a few hours to myself felt luxurious. Life became more relaxed for our entire family. Academics were stressed, and the teachers were convinced they were going to cure the children's retardation. They encouraged the parents to think of their retarded child growing up to be a doctor or lawyer. Tony was toilet trained by operant conditioning, for us, one of the most exciting accomplishments of his childhood.

Psychotherapy was the first treatment the medical profession proposed for autism. Parents formed organizations and rebelled against psychotherapy for mothers of autistic children. Dr. Bernard Rimland, himself the father of an autistic child started one such organization. However they wrote in one of their first newsletters, “We aspire to be more than just an anti-psychiatry organization; we must also be *for* something”. Many imaginative treatments were tried. Drug treatments included LSD and anti-psychotic drugs. Vitamins were also prescribed, but with no pharmaceutical industry to promote them, they never attracted a wide following. Other treatments were *rage therapy* (a psychiatrist screaming at the child), playing with dolphins, hypnosis, *Sensory Integration* (playing soft music into the child's ears though ear-phones), a multitude of teaching techniques and *patterning*. This last consisted of constant manipulation of the retarded child's arms and legs by the entire family and an army of volunteers. The manipulators, working in relays could rest, but the autistic child was subjected to the treatment for most of his non-sleeping hours. *Facilitated communication* was another treatment. A therapist supported the autistic child's arm while the child typed messages. Some of these children didn't even know the alphabet. In fact, some of them didn't even look at the keyboard. Nevertheless the occasional profound messages were attributed to the child. And of course the idea persisted that being confined to a room and interacting with a highly educated, well-paid professional, such as a psychologist for a few hours a week might do the trick.

I would have taken advantage of any "treatment" I thought wouldn't harm Tony. The fact is, I endured psychotherapy for two and a half years so he could spend an hour a week with a psychologist. Perhaps the hardest thing we do for our children is acknowledge that we can't achieve things for them. I remember when Guy was having trouble with arithmetic in the third grade. I put up papers all over the house, including covering the bathroom walls, with $5+8=13$, $8+9=17$, etc., in an effort to help him. Guy was offended. He indignantly took down all my signs. In other words, "Butt out, Mom!" I felt Tony deserved the same respect. No child should experience his family's disapproval of his basic nature. It was a time when scientific studies were regarded with reverence, and some awful experiments were inflicted upon the public without their knowledge or consent. (Before we were aware of its harmful effects scientists

subjected entire populations to atomic radiation, just to see what would happen.) Many of the psychological exercises and "treatments" devised for autistic children were probably beneficial - might help any retarded child, not just those with autistic personalities. However I feel compassion for gullible parents who suffer under the illusion that some behavior-modification exercise might cure their child's retardation.

Tony remained in the class for autistic children for three years, and was then transferred to a regular special-education class for "trainable" retarded children. Thus Tony's retardation seemed to gain more official recognition, and it was one of my painful moments. I was forced to stop fantasizing about him attending college. Tony's special-education teachers were skillful, dedicated and patient. I was once told that the school system hired a specialist for a few weeks, just to try to teach Tony to read, a service that other children in Tony's class didn't seem to be receiving. I could only conclude that Tony was still benefiting from that secret "scientific experiment". Tony didn't learn to read, but I was grateful for their efforts. Most children grow, including those diagnosed autistic and retarded. Tony's teachers taught him many things, such as to follow orders and function as part of a group. He learned to distinguish between men and women on restroom doors; not to cross streets at a red light; to make his bed; and to wash his clothes and fold them neatly in his drawer. Special-education helps retarded children learn to live in protected environments. It doesn't claim to cure anything.

I joined *Marin Aid to Retarded Children* and volunteered to serve as secretary. The parents I met there sometimes commented that only here, among other parents who understood, did they feel comfortable laughing about their retarded child. Laughter is something all children deserve, but parents who have no experience with retardation are usually too terrified of the condition to do much laughing. Professionals who teach and work with retarded children have overcome such inhibitions, and special education can be a joyful place. We managed to provide Tony with a happy childhood, one that included laughter, and I don't think he has ever felt regret or shame over who he is.

Guy and Sherry used to declare with amusement that Tony was only mildly retarded, but severely lazy. After he was taught to make his bed he would sleep on top, instead of between the sheets, so as to avoid that chore. He could talk when he chose to, but speech seemed to require great effort, and he usually preferred not to bother. Talking was like a foreign language for Tony, and I was reminded of how I struggled to carry on a conversation in the foreign languages I had studied. He did have talents though. His curiosity and imagination were unusual for such a retarded child. Tony's class went roller skating and an invisible playmate, a "big brown pussy-dog named Achi-Cha-Cha", supposedly skated with Tony. Tony's mischief was imaginative, and he sometimes told on himself with appealing innocence.

"Tony didn't break your flower," he protested one morning. I examined the house plants and found one broken at the stem, but neatly mended with scotch tape.

A stranger, unaware of Tony's retardation, once asked him, "What do you plan to be when you grow up, young man?"

"Bald on top," Tony replied innocently.

Although Tony didn't often speak, his occasional startling statements were sometimes delightful. One evening at dinner I was silently nursing a pique because Ike had stopped by the officers club for a few drinks, and he was trying to tease me out of my bad mood. Guy and Sherry were eating in silence, electing to remain neutral.

"Daddy's up to no good!" Tony suddenly exclaimed in a voice suggesting that he'd just reached a shocking conclusion. All of us, including Mommy and Daddy, burst into laughter. (Ike's drinking caused us unhappiness, but we learned to live with it, and it didn't destroy our marriage.)

The most startling of Tony's behaviors was echolalia, which lasted several months. At about the age of eight and a half, he began echoing, with utter lack of comprehension, long sentences he heard on television. He could say "justification for escalating the conflict in Vietnam" without mispronouncing a syllable. Much of the time Tony was happy and playful, but he could suddenly become enraged and destructive. We were eating in a restaurant one day. How handsome and well behaved Tony is today, I thought, watching him with pride. Then maybe he hit his knee on something under the table. We were often not sure of the cause of his rages. He screamed and began throwing glasses and dishes. I jumped up and tried to hurry him outside past all the silent, stunned people who had stopped eating to gape at his tantrum. He managed to grab one more glass from a table we passed and smash it on the floor.

He would spin things. He'd twirl a rope or chain, or he'd pick a branch off a tree or bush and walk around vigorously shaking it. He became unable to tolerate scolding. Although we tried to correct him in a calm, quiet voice, he would become upset and demand that we repeat whatever we said. His little quirk seemed harmless enough at first. Then he began insisting we repeat - again, and again. We were unable to prevent irritation from creeping into our voice, which further upset Tony. He came home from school, angry, exited from the bus, and then turned and kicked a dent in the side of it. As punishment he had to stay home for a week. Tony seemed indifferent to his suspension, but I lived in fear that the teachers might decide they couldn't handle him. The first day he was allowed to return to class, he kicked a window out of the bus. I remembered the years Tony hadn't attended school and dreaded the possibility that we might be forced to return to that life. Tony's insistence that we repeat things became more exasperating. There seemed no end to the number of times he demanded something be repeated. I tried to joke about it. I threatened him. I tried to bribe him. One evening I was running Tony's bath, and he started to get into the tub.

I said, "No, it's not ready yet."

"Say no it's not ready yet," Tony ordered.

"No, dear, it's not ready yet."

I had tried to suppress my annoyance, but apparently Tony sensed my irritation. "Say no it's not ready yet!" he again demanded.

"No, Tony I'm not going to repeat it again," I said, and I forced myself to remain silent. I made him get dressed. He went out in the back yard and screamed, and kicked the house and threatened to break windows. I kept a serene expression frozen upon my face, and for some reason Tony didn't carry out his threats. Later I was cooking chicken. Tony came in and tried to take a drumstick.

I said, "No, it's not ready y-- " Oh damn, I thought, biting off the words. Now he would start all over again.

"Say no it's not ready yet!" Tony demanded.

I gritted my teeth and remained silent. Tony finally went off and tried to persuade his brother and sister to repeat the words. We didn't cure Tony of making us repeat things, but eventually he relented a little. Everyone in our special-education department made heroic efforts to solve the problems of each retarded child, and the teachers decided some older, bossy boys on Tony's bus might be upsetting him. They assigned him to transportation with quieter children, and Tony stopped trying to demolish the bus. However if we sometimes thought we'd found reasons for Tony's rages, at other times no one could fathom their cause.

"Tell me how much is four and four or I'll tickle you," Guy would say. This was Guy's scheme for teaching Tony, and it was one of Tony's favorite games. His face would light up with delight.

"Six!" he would declare impishly, deliberately giving the wrong answer. When Tony had enough tickling, he would squeal, "EIGHT! Four and four is EIGHT!"

However without warning Tony's games and laughter could turn into a nightmare. One evening Guy accidentally bumped into him, making him angry. Tony grabbed a plate from the table and ran out of the house, slamming the door and cracking the glass. He smashed the plate on the concrete walk and threw an old piece of iron crashing through a window. Although splintered glass lay everywhere, Tony never cut himself. I got him and took him into his room, removed his shirt and made him get into bed. (Tony sometimes ripped up several shirts a month, and I bought them in thrift shops.) Guy and Sherry were trying to help me restrain him. He managed to break loose and kick hole in the wall – just another big gaping hole added to those in every room of our house.

"The things he does look - well - almost psychotic," Guy said in a frightened voice. I felt frightened too. If Tony had no control over his rages, we were all helpless.

"Tony need spanking?" Tony taunted. We did nothing, and he continued, "Go tell Daddy Tony broke a wall."

Ike appeared. Tony grabbed the curtain, pulling the curtain rod out of the wall. Ike pulled down Tony's pants and spanked him, (one of the few times I ever saw Ike spank any of the children.)

"That's what he wants," I said. "It only makes him worse."

"I know," Ike agreed, "but I'm only human."

Tony picked up a chair and tried to hurl it through a window. We wrested it from him. He caught Sherry's long hair and pulled. We forced him back onto the bed.

"We're not going to be able to handle him much longer," Ike warned. "He's getting bigger and stronger every day. Something has to be done."

If Tony lacked free-will no one would be able to cope with him. None of us ever came out and spoke of putting Tony in an institution, but the prospect lurked in all our minds. I felt sick with fear. Strangers would be less able to handle him than we were. People working in institutions wouldn't love Tony. They would only lock him up. Sherry began to cry.

"There's no point in talking about *if* we can handle Tony," Guy said. "We just have to do it!"

I felt grateful for his support. "If only we had a way to discipline him," I said. "There's doesn't seem to be anything we can take away from him as a punishment. And he enjoys fighting like this. I wish there were a hospital where we could put him, just for a few days. It might give him a reason to try to control himself."

Tony stopped struggling. He sat up in bed with a look of alarm in his eyes. All his frantic activity ceased, and there was a sudden silence.

"Tony be good boy," he promised meekly.

We stared at him in disbelief. My knees felt weak and I sat down on the bed with a laugh of relief. *Tony wasn't possessed by some mysterious, uncontrollable, psychotic rage! Maybe we did have a way to motivate him. 'Hospital' may have been the only word of my sentence that Tony heard, and ever since Tony had his teeth fixed, he feared hospitals. For several years we used that fear. He had his next tantrum while in the car, and tried to kick out the windshield. I turned the car around and drove toward the hospital, telling Tony where we were going. Tony stopped kicking at the windshield and sat up in his seat. He pleaded with me to turn back, promising to be a good boy. We reached the hospital. We drove slowly by the emergency entrance, and Tony cried,*

"Oh no, Tony's going to get a little new baby. No! No! Tony doesn't want a baby."

I couldn't resist laughing, which only increased Tony's alarm. I took him home. A few days later Tony again declared he didn't want a baby, apparently still worrying about how dangerously close he had been to acquiring one.

"Boys and men don't get babies," I said, "just ladies."

"And Rin-Tin-Tin?"

"Rin-Tin-Tin?"

"You know - Tippy Toes."

"Oh," I said with a laugh, "you mean Tiny Tim."

A newscaster had announced that Tiny Tim, a television comedian who sang *Tip Toe Through the Tulips* in a falsetto voice, would become a father. Apparently no one had made it clear that Tiny Tim's wife, Miss Vickie, would have the baby. Like Sherry, Tony had observed our friend arriving home from the hospital with a new baby, but Tony had a different reaction than his sister. Tony wasn't looking forward to a baby of his own, and had no interest in the little bracelet on its wrist. (I don't remember anyone discussing Rin Tin Tin around Tony. Many people are convinced autistic children have some ability to read minds, and perhaps he read the name, Rin Tin Tin, in someone else's mind. It does show Tony's crude comprehension of spoken language.)

Tony behaved for a while, but about a year later he threw rocks and broke windows at school. I warned him doctors had an injection to cure boys of throwing rocks, and if he threw any more I'd have him inoculated. Terrified of shots, Tony behaved for a few weeks. Then one day someone phoned from school to say Tony had gone on a rampage, smashing all the dishes in the school kitchen. I drove to school and got him. Tony didn't plead with me not to take him to the hospital. He seemed to realize the seriousness of his behavior and appeared resigned to endure the consequences. When we got home, I told him to pack his suitcase - just in case the injection didn't work. Doctors might decide surgery was necessary, I added.

As we drove to the hospital, I kept waiting for Tony to beg me to turn back. He remained solemnly silent. We drove by the emergency entrance. Unless he begged to go home, Tony was about to learn we had been bluffing for the past two years. *Without this threat to control him, whatever could we do?* I parked the car, and we walked slowly into the emergency room. Tony was carrying his suitcase and seemed courageously prepared to undergo his treatment. I glanced desperately around the room and saw two nurses. They didn't seem busy. They looked at me inquiringly, waiting for me to explain what I wanted. There had been a time when making foolish requests would have been more difficult for me, but Tony's antics had somewhat inured me against caring what people thought.

"We want one of those inoculations to cure boys of breaking dishes and throwing rocks," I finally requested, as I held up an index finger and winked frantically. At the same time I attempted what I hoped was a pleading expression on my face. The nurses stared at me - and at Tony, stoically carrying his suitcase. Finally a look of comprehension flooded across the face of the older nurse. That wonderful, compassionate, understanding woman took Tony's hand and pricked his finger, producing a drop of blood.

Tony screamed in agony.

It was a powerful injection, curing him of throwing rocks for several years.

Question 24: Would obsessing over a traumatic event ever cure any mental illness?

Psychotherapy, trying to talk people out of their psychosis, was the treatment of mental illness during most of the twentieth century. Trauma was the assumed cause of it all. Once a mentally ill person understood the trauma that had damaged them, it was assumed they would become healthy. Supposedly if a mother could be persuaded, during therapy, to acknowledge that she rejected her autistic child, the rejection would disappear, and the child would stop being autistic. No therapist ever succeeded in convincing me I rejected my children. I didn't even believe traumatic experiences could cause mental illness. People survive some awful experiences and remain sane. We mothers of autistic children were apparently among the first to rebel against psychiatry's "treatments". I'm sure the psychologists who tried to administer psychotherapy to me must have speculated about easier ways to earn a living. By this time my efforts at the typewriter had grown into a manuscript. I hadn't found anyone interested in publishing it, but I let teachers and anyone concerned with autism read it. I even sent a copy to my congressman, as a protest against government funding of secret, scientific studies.

One day I summoned the courage to return to the Child Guidance Clinic. I glanced uneasily around that familiar waiting room, the scene of such unpleasant memories. Dr. Zircon, Colonel Mann and Dr. Lavalley had all been transferred away from the clinic by this time, but I saw the same assortment of mothers and children who had populated the waiting room when we had been patients there. A psychologist in a white coat was behind the reception desk arguing with someone on the phone.

"That report was just our professional opinion," I overheard him declare indignantly. "We regret you don't find our suggestions helpful." Apparently I wasn't the only parent to be skeptical of their scientific, psychiatric diagnoses.

I placed my manuscript upon the reception counter. "I've written a book about you guys. If this isn't an accurate account of what occurred here, maybe you can tell me what did happen." I couldn't think of anything to add except, "Here's my phone number. Call me when you finish."

They kept my story for a month, but someone finally phoned me to come for it. I returned to the clinic, wondering uneasily what they might possibly say. However they didn't say anything. A psychologist merely handed my manuscript back with a stony, expressionless look on his face, and a tight lipped, "We have no comment." There wasn't much I could do but pick it up and slink away.

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In California, state agencies, called Regional Centers, are responsible for retarded people during their entire lives, providing appropriate services. Tony didn't need anything at the moment. He was attending school, had no health problems, and we had learned to cope with his mischief. We were thinking of his future needs when we applied for Tony's acceptance by the Golden Gate Regional Center. We signed a release allowing them to send for records from all of the people who had ever examined him. A psychiatrist from the Regional Center observed Tony briefly at school. When I met him in his office he said,

"Tony's teacher tells me you've written a book about your son. If I could read it, we might save time evaluating him."

When Freud first published case histories, the medical profession was horrified, accusing him of violating the confidential, doctor-patient relationship. Freud insisted that revelation of patients' private lives was acceptable so long as he didn't use real names. Psychiatrists had been publishing case histories ever since. In fact case histories were about all they published; so far as I could tell, they still didn't conduct studies to determine whether their "treatments" were effective. However most psychologists apparently weren't prepared for the possibility of patients writing a "case history" about them. I did not use the real names of most of the doctors in my book. Nevertheless, their reaction to my story was always similar - a grim-faced, "no comment". Now, this psychiatrist who was evaluating Tony for the Regional Center was *asking* to read my book. I suspected it might offend him, but I didn't see how I could refuse. I took the manuscript to his office. After finishing it, he phoned and said I needn't come for it. He drove by our house and left it in our mail box early one morning before we were awake.

We returned to talk to the doctor at the Regional Center. She said Tony could not obtain services from the agency. "Your son is not retarded," she said. "He's schizophrenic. You'll have to request services from an agency dealing with the mentally ill."

"Schizophrenic!" I repeated. "How did you make that diagnosis?"

"Retarded children don't have the superior nervous system your son has."

The first day we came to the Regional Center, the doctor had asked Tony to draw a boy. Tony, always impatient to be done with doctors, quickly drew a boy with a penis, five fingers on each hand and five toes on each foot, without lifting the pencil from the paper. The doctor had commented that such a feat was difficult for normal children and indicated a superior nervous system. (I doubt Tony's nervous system is still superior. He has been taught to print his name and does so crudely and laboriously.)

"May I talk to the psychiatrist who made the diagnosis?" I asked.

"That won't be necessary," the doctor replied uneasily. "I diagnosed him myself. We merely asked the psychiatrist to confirm my opinion." She made it clear she had no intention of explaining Tony's "schizophrenia".

I went home and phoned the psychiatrist anyway. "I understand you believe my son is schizophrenic," I said. "May I make an appointment to discuss his diagnosis?"

"No," he answered, "That would not accomplish anything."

The psychiatrist had evaluated Tony for a state agency. His salary came from tax money. Tony had been diagnosed retarded by a government-run clinic. I was secretary for Marin Aid to Retarded Children, and Tony attended classes for the retarded. *How could this psychiatrist, who had only observed Tony briefly at school, declare such a diagnosis as schizophrenia was official, and then refuse to discuss it with us?* But I didn't argue. Doctors and government agencies apparently felt entitled to use such diagnoses however they chose, with no obligation to explain anything. I remembered the child psychiatrist I'd consulted some years before, Dr. Gerald Jampolsky, the doctor who advised me to go tell Dr. Zircon "exactly what I thought of him" - and only charged me half-price for that advice. He had seemed like such an intelligent, forthright man. I phoned him for another appointment.

As I again seated myself in the psychiatrist's big comfortable chair and glanced through the big window at the small-boat harbor, I explained that I'd consulted him several years earlier. This time I didn't want to discuss my child, I said, I wished to inquire about the general subjects of autism and childhood schizophrenia.

"Autism is one of my specialties," he said.

Then I guess you've read Dr. Bernard Rimland's book on autism?"

"Well, no. . ." he shook his head.

I was taken aback. Dr. Rimland, a psychologist and the father of an autistic son, was one the founders of the *National Society for Autistic Children*. His book had questioned that maternal rejection could cause autism, but it was the only scholarly, factual book I'd found in this country on the subject, the only book that wasn't full of discussions about damaged psyches. It had won a scientific award. I couldn't imagine why anyone concerned with autism hadn't read it. I had also sent to England for books about autism and I asked if the psychiatrist had read those.

He had not.

I had sent to Germany for books and asked a German friend to make sure I translated them correctly. I didn't ask Dr. Jampolsky if he had read any books in German, but surely a psychiatrist claiming a specialty in autism must have read something on the subject. I asked if he'd read publications I had been unable to find. He mentioned a scientific paper written a decade before and offered to obtain a copy for me. It would never have occurred to me that I might know as much about the diagnosis of atypical children as the psychiatrist. The truth was,

there were no guidelines at that time; each doctor felt free to invent their own diagnoses. The possibility that the entire field of child-psychiatry could be so chaotic was still too fantastic an idea for me to fully grasp.

"Do you still believe children become abnormal because of something in their environment?" I asked, again trying to refer to "maternal rejection" euphemistically.

He smiled and shook his head. "No. Many of my views on child psychiatry have changed in the past few years."

Someone once said, "Obsolete ideas don't fade away; their proponents just die off." Maybe in the interest of stability, nature seems to have made flexibility a trait of the young. A psychiatrist who could discard beliefs to which he had devoted much of his life might be the reasonable, open-minded doctor for whom I'd been searching. *If only I could persuade him to talk to me!* I told him I'd written a story about Tony, adding that I'd described my consultation with him some years earlier.

"Have you!" he exclaimed in surprise.

"Would you like to read it?"

"I certainly would," he answered eagerly. "I'll call you when I finish," he promised, as he took the manuscript and began leafing through it with interest. My naturally optimistic nature surged. Rational discussion seemed so simple and easy. Maybe I'd finally found someone who would discuss Tony's diagnosis.

A month passed before the psychiatrist phoned and gave me an appointment to return for my manuscript. "Just knock on my inner office door if I'm busy," he said.

Arriving at the appointed time, excited with anticipation, I knocked. A muffled "just a moment" sounded from within. There was a chair by the door, the same chair in which I'd placed Tony five years earlier, and I sat down in it. Presently the door opened a few inches, and I watched as the psychiatrist's head and one arm with my manuscript appeared.

"Well, er--ah, thank you," he stammered, handing me the envelope. His head and arm disappeared, and the door snapped closed.

Unable to move, I stared at the door. Apparently the psychiatrist was busy with a patient. He must have changed his mind about the scientific paper he had promised. *Why? There was nothing unflattering about him in my book.* I sometimes had trouble separating what I actually said to doctors from what I later wished I had said - things I just wasn't able to think of at the time. Nevertheless I was confident I had remembered my conversation with this psychiatrist accurately enough. He had given me a specific time to come for my manuscript, ten-thirty, a time when he apparently planned to be busy with another patient, so he was obviously determined not to speak to me - not even for a moment. I sat staring at the closed door, again immobilized by frustration as I slammed against the mysterious, invisible wall that prevented

doctors from even talking to me. After so many disappointments, I must not allow another one to evoke such painful feelings, I told myself. Finally I got up from the chair and went home to cope with my anger at yet another doctor. The bill Doctor Jampolsky sent me that time was full price, despite the fact that we never had that discussion about autism and childhood schizophrenia for which I'd made the appointment.

I've since realized that I was placing doctors in an impossible position. *What did I expect from them? An admission that concepts to which they had devoted their lives were nothing but nonsense?* If psychotherapy doesn't cure autism, maybe it doesn't cure anything. Discussion - any kind of therapy - might increase understanding and help patients address their personal problems. But what does the therapist contribute? What scientific training can turn psychiatrists into professional personal-problem solvers? Psychiatrists may know more about medicine and biology, but I doubt they have exerted any more effort dealing with ordinary personal problems than the rest of us have.

Dr. Jampolsky was intelligent enough to be embarrassed. Whatever the medical profession was involved in concerning autism, it was apparently something they had agreed to conceal from the public, and Dr. Jampolsky must not have felt confident of his ability to deal with any of my questions. He apparently didn't want to have anything to do with me. He managed to pursue his career for several years after that, but I think he gave up trying to convince mothers that they rejected their children. He seemed to devote most of his efforts to children with terminal illness and wrote books on that subject. Other psychiatrists and psychologists continued for several more years to psychoanalyze mothers as a treatment for their "disturbed children". I abandoned my search for a doctor who would discuss Tony.

Public opinion changes slowly. We abolished slavery, but it took more than a century before we began to regard those former slaves as ordinary human beings. I suppose the amount of time we devoted to Freudian analysis was short in comparison to some of our other bizarre concepts. Science does progress though; it abandons concepts and adopts new ones. We don't have an institution to define science, or a committee to decide which science is valid. When courts and religious institutions have assumed such authority, they have generally turned out to be enforcers of some dogma. Fortunately a new consensus among scientists seems to eventually overturn most dogma. Public opinion can play a role when scientists become so dogmatic that even laymen notice. Waiting for a new consensus of the experts may seem agonizingly slow, but like democracy, it is merely the best of all known alternatives.

(Ike and I reapplied several years later, and Tony was accepted by the Golden Gate Regional Center, where he continues to receive excellent care.)

Question 25: Could a creative intelligence be an innate aspect of all Nature?

All Living organisms have some limited ability to change and adapt. But what does the adapting? Is it the environmentally sensitive organism? Or its genome? Perhaps the genome might merely be where the organism records well-established adaptations in order to pass them on to descendants. The individual organism has an innate ability to correct most random mutations (genetic accidents). "Natural selection" might play a role in the expansion or contraction of populations, but I can't imagine how biologists can believe random mutations, genetic accidents, could mindlessly organize themselves into complex biological adaptations. If we think we take a medication, even though it may be nothing more than a sugar pill, our bodies sometimes purposefully heal themselves. It's called a placebo effect, and is an intelligent, purposeful process. Wouldn't such an innate organizing intelligence be a more reasonable explanation of biological adaptations than the Darwinian notion of "natural selection" somehow turning genetic accidents into complex biological systems? I realize that proponents of mechanistic science might fear that any recognition of an innate intelligence in Nature might give credence to religion. Personally, I could acknowledge the existence of intelligence as a natural aspect of Nature without thinking of it as a God. Certainly not as a God that expects people to worship it.

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Some autistic children grow up to function in society, but I finally realized Tony was not going to be one of them. My older children continued to grow, but Tony's development was agonizingly slow. There were many such painful moments, for it was not a sudden realization. Admission that Tony was not going to lead a normal life came upon me gradually. Raising a handicapped child should never diminish anyone's life, and while coping was a challenge during Tony's childhood, we also experienced fun and laughter. In fact Tony's imaginative mischief was often a delightful spark that guaranteed our lives would never become dull. Tony added purpose to my life. It was not a purpose I would have chosen; no one would choose for their child to be handicapped. But if life has some purpose other than just existing, I suspect it is to do what life has always done, to grow. Conflict and dealing with adversity contributes to growth. It surely contributes more than existing in a state of blissful contentment would. If creatures were allowed to choose the life they lead, maybe evolution would not have progressed beyond the complexity of bacteria. Certainly if people were allowed to choose the life we think we want to live, none of us would choose stressful conflict. So I am indebted to fate for the challenges life bestowed upon me. I survived and I know I am more of a person than I would have been leading a less challenging life.

*_*_*



buenos dias

For most of his life, including the years of Tony's childhood, my husband was reasonably happy. Dealing with Tony and living on the salary of an Army sergeant, while providing the children with the activities of their up-scale, suburban friends, wasn't always easy. Our social life was mostly doing things with the children. After he retired from the Army, Ike got a civilian job on an Army post, where he wrote and published a one-man, monthly newspaper. I know he enjoyed that. However his last few months were difficult. His health deteriorated. Ike blamed his drinking, about which he had always felt a little guilty. He developed emphysema, but was unable to stop smoking. I think Tony's retardation eventually became too much for him. Feeling defeated, Ike seemed to lose interest in everything. He died after surgery on an ulcer. I lost the one person with whom I was most able to share my thoughts and feelings. I'd have to wait for my children to grow up before I again found adults with whom I experienced such close understanding.

About a year after my husband's death, I got around to thinking about what Tony and I might do with our lives. It had become obvious that, even with special-education, Tony would never achieve much independence. I decided to go live in Mexico, where Tony and I could live together, and inexpensive help might give me some freedom. I sold my house, and we drove leisurely down to Guadalajara. It was several weeks before the start of school, and Sherry and one of her college roommates decided to come with us. I'd never seen Tony have so much fun.

"He doesn't have any worries, does he?" one Mexican exclaimed with a laugh of admiration, as he watched Tony's delight at new sights and experiences, and saw how eagerly he interacted with people. Today Tony looks retarded, but at the age of fifteen, he still appeared bright, mischievous and fun-loving. The number of things Tony feared was not yet great, and he still had an appetite for adventure (which, like many people, he lost as he grew older). Near a motel in Mazatlan, where we stopped for a few days, workmen were digging a well. They would lower a bucket into the hole and fill it with dirt. Then one of them would walk out into a field

with the end of the rope, pulling up the bucket. One day we heard cheering at the well. We looked out and saw Tony pulling up the bucket as the Mexicans applauded. When we left, they all came and waved goodbye to him.

At that time Tony was fascinated by profanity. I couldn't imagine where he heard some of the words he repeated. When he realized everyone was speaking another language, he begged us to tell him some dirty words in Spanish. Finally, with exaggerated reluctance we agreed, warning him to never repeat them. Tony promised, with his mischievous little grin and impish sparkle in his eyes.

"Buenos dias (*good day*) is the most terrible thing anyone can say in Spanish," we confided.

Tony ran up and yelled "*Buenos Dias!*" at everyone. Most Mexicans reacted with surprise, and while it wasn't the shock his profanity usually evoked, it was apparently enough of a reaction to satisfy Tony. We pretended horror and outrage, scolding him and punishing him by denying him dessert when he said the forbidden words. Tony became fascinated with his new profanity and forgot all English swear words. I rented an apartment in Guadalajara, and Sherry and her friend returned to college in the States. I hired a Mexican woman to watch Tony. One of the first things I did was locate the local bridge club, which turned out to be only a few blocks from our apartment. Thus I acquired a group of instant new friends. One afternoon I suggested Maria take Tony shopping while I played bridge. Maria apparently thought I said Tony would take her shopping. Happy for someone to obediently follow him, Tony, led her all over Guadalajara - mischievously exclaiming "*Buenos Dias*" at people. I wondered who was watching whom. Always an optimist though, I didn't worry. Retarded people grow, and I assumed Tony would gradually become a little more responsible. He seemed to love Guadalajara - the music, the parks, the food, and shopping in the big colorful, crowded markets. Mexicans drive like rodeo cowboys, and the bus ride to town was sometimes wild and exciting. We joined a sports club and went swimming every morning. I took a painting class, held outdoors in a park where a karate class was also taking place. Tony laughed with delight as the karate students yelled and leaped. A willow tree in front of our apartment provided plenty of the limber sticks Tony liked to shake. A music group practiced in a nearby house. Tony, an enthralled listener, spent balmy evenings outside on the sidewalk, contentedly shaking his stick and listening to the music. Tony also made friends with some Mexican men who spent their days around a little shack on a vacant lot next door. Most Mexicans seem easy-going and non-judgmental. No one tried to make Tony talk in Guadalajara, and I'd never seen him happier.

Then, one day he seemed to become upset, unexpectedly, and for no apparent reason. That evening he refused to go to bed, staying up all night and laughing in a way that did not suggest humor. He lost his temper often and sometimes became defiant. One morning we were shopping in a big produce market. Persistent little Mexican boys aggressively competed to carry shopping baskets, jumping on cars several blocks from the market and fighting to be hired. I always gave one a few pesos to avoid harassment from the others. My little Mexican boy, in addition to carrying my basket, was busy fending off tough little competitors. As I was

leaving the market, having paid off my little Mexican helper, I looked around for Tony and saw him surrounded by policemen. They seemed to be wrestling with him, bending his arm behind his back. I dropped my produce, spilling it all over the parking lot. I ran back to where Tony and the policemen were scuffling. I tried to persuade them to allow Tony to get into my car, and then tell me what he'd done. In my panic I lost my ability to speak Spanish. I couldn't remember the words to explain that Tony was retarded. One of the policemen kept insisting Tony was "a very dangerous fellow". They finally allowed Tony to get in the car and stood guard over him, their hands hovering over their pistols. One of them took me to the police station, where someone spoke English. The police captain was apologetic when he learned Tony was retarded, but frantic to get back to Tony before one of those policemen shot him, I neglected to ask what he'd done. Perhaps something happened between him and one of the little Mexican boys. Tony was twice their size. He was bigger than the policemen.

Oh why did such a thing happen to Tony! I didn't want him to fear the police. It seemed important for handicapped people to look to the police for protection. But as was often the case, Tony's reaction was unexpected. He had no fear of those policemen. Tony was born lacking many of the fears that most children suffer. On the other hand, when he did decide something was dangerous, he couldn't be talked out of it. (He didn't realize airplanes might fall out of the sky until he was about forty, and there was no way anyone could have persuaded him to get on an airplane after that.) However Tony had never encountered anything but kindness from people. Close supervision had even spared him from normal conflicts with children his age, and to this day, it would never occur to Tony to fear another human being. In this instance he seemed to think the police were playing with him.

"Tell about the time Tony wrestled eight Mexican policemen," he would gleefully urge me to repeat the story for several years afterward.

Nevertheless at the time I was terrified. I decided a foreign country was a dangerous place for a big, unpredictable young man who didn't look retarded. Frantic to return to the States, I packed the car. A fan belt broke. A mechanic patched it, but said I should install a new one before starting on the long journey to California. He phoned Laredo, Texas, and ordered it put on a bus, saying it would arrive *mañana*. According to a Spanish dictionary *mañana* means tomorrow, but in Mexico it apparently means "in the future". For two weeks I returned to the garage every morning with all my possessions in the car, and was again told, "*mañana*". Tony became more upset. I felt alone and helpless. Never sure what he might do next was like living with a ticking bomb. It was during this time that a Mexican woman with whom I'd played bridge told me that the shack next door to my apartment was actually a smuggler's station, and Tony's Mexican friends were probably smugglers - maybe even drug dealers. Could they have given Tony some drug? Perhaps. But the truth was, Tony sometimes had unpredictable episodes when no one gave him anything. In those days a long-distance phone call to California would have been difficult and complicated, and Guy and Sherry were unaware of our troubles. Sherry later said she had a dream in which she saw me sitting on the side of the bed crying.

That was how I spent many of my nights during those two weeks. (That was the only example of what may have been telepathy that I remember in our immediate family.)

The part for the car finally came and we drove back to California, stopping by Disneyland on the way home. Tony returned to the same class for retarded children he'd been attending a year earlier. By that time he had recovered from his emotional upset. That broken fan belt and the amusement park, which gave him time to recover naturally, protected him from experimental, anti-psychotic drugs for three more years.

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During the next few years I managed to create a good life for Tony and me. He attended classes for trainable retarded children. The little yellow bus picked him up every morning. On weekends he participated in Easter Seals recreation-programs for the handicapped. He became so responsible that I occasionally left him alone in our apartment in the evening. I took courses at a community college. On days when Tony wasn't in school, he played on campus while waiting for me. Tony attended a camp for retarded children every summer, and I discovered a fascinating way to travel. I would go to a foreign country and enroll in a language school. I spent a wonderful summer with five other women from my community-college, French classes, living in a dormitory at the *Cite Universitaire* in Paris, and studying French at the Sorbonne. We were all housewives whose children had left home, and that summer in Paris was a lovely adventure. My roommate was a woman for whom I'd once ironed. The next summer I went alone to Vienna and studied German at the Goethe Institute. My classmates were European businessmen, diplomats, aspiring young opera singers, bright young priests, college professors and students from all over the world. The language classes were stimulating, but I was even more fascinated by my fellow students. Many of their lives were quite different from mine, and I loved talking to people with such diverse beliefs and experiences. The Goethe Institute didn't offer much organized social life, so I appointed myself an unofficial social director and arranged boat-trips on the Danube and picnics in the Vienna Woods. In the "wine gardens" of Grinzing we spent evenings at long tables laughing, drinking cheap wine and talking German. The young people appreciated the outings I organized, and we all became good friends. I didn't speak any English during that entire summer. As part of the language class, I once gave a talk in German about Freud, entitled, "Was Freud just a funny fad, or an ineffective fraud?" My talk was received with interest, but I didn't sense any indignation over my ridicule of Freud. The psychiatric practice of blaming mothers had never really gained the prevalence in Europe that it did in the United States. However I had gone to Vienna, Freud's home town, and denounced him in German, I mused with satisfaction. Since no one had shown any interest in publishing my book, I decided I'd have to be satisfied with that.

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Tony continued special education classes. Guy and Sherry no longer lived at home, they were busy pursuing their careers, but Tony and I saw them often. Then, just as I was again deciding

we'd overcome all our problems, my world suddenly became unraveled once more. One day at school Tony was working in the garden. He lifted his rake and hit the boy next to him on the head, wounding him so seriously as to require stitches. Tony had never been aggressive. He had thrown rocks at windows and broken things but he had never struck anyone. When asked why he'd done such a thing, Tony replied,

"Because I was mad".

"Why were you mad?" we persisted.

Tony merely shook his head. It was a reason which he thought needed no further explanation - or perhaps the answer was too complex for him to even attempt. Tony was nineteen years old, beyond an age that the school system was obligated to provide an education program, and he had to stay home. He seemed to be going through a particularly bad time, losing his temper every few days. I was afraid to take him anywhere and I was afraid to leave him alone. We both stayed in the apartment. I couldn't think of ways to entertain him, and Tony had nothing to do but lie in bed - and eat. He gained a lot of weight. For years the threat of my baby in an institution had horrified me. I realized Tony would outlive me, and I hoped to eventually find a safe life for him. I'd planned to decide where he might live as an adult before he became too old to adjust easily. Tony was still childlike however, and I had postponed thinking about him becoming a man. Now I had to find a something for him, and no one had any suggestions except the state hospital for the mentally ill. I visited the hospital. The buildings and grounds were nice enough, and the people working there seemed kind, but being around so many handicapped people was depressing. I had managed to cope with Tony's problems for nineteen years. His commitment to the hospital seemed an admission of tragic failure.

Both Guy and Sherry were having problems. Guy, for some years near the head of his class at the university, was in graduate school, working for his PhD. Surrounded by some of the brightest young physicists in the country, he was feeling inadequate. Furthermore, he was a teaching assistant, trying to teach a class in which he'd had difficulty as an undergraduate. Some of his students knew as much about his subject matter as he did. Sherry was having difficulty in nursing training. She did well academically, but her superiors kept telling her she wasn't assertive enough to deal with doctors and become a nurse. I understood, for I had once feared doctors and been unassertive myself. It was the year of a severe drought in California, but it was a damp spring around our house. I shed tears about Tony; Sherry wept because she feared she might not become a nurse; Guy, with problems of his own, tried to console us.

In California parents can't apply for their child's admission to a state hospital; application must be made by a social worker. I was unable to move my social workers to action. They called meetings to discuss Tony, always coming to the conclusion the hospital was the best place for him. No one got around to filling out the papers. Instead, they called more meetings. Perhaps they were intentionally deliberate to prevent parents from making impulsive decisions, but I

felt frustrated and was again reminded that psychologists and social workers felt their role was to manipulate people.

After several months Tony was finally admitted to a program for autistic boys held at the mental hospital, a special, experimental program that stressed academics. He lived in a separate cottage on the hospital grounds with about thirty young men. I brought him home on weekends and soon realized Tony enjoyed living there. *Like any nineteen-year-old, he regarded a cottage full of young men more fun than living in an apartment with Mom!* I visited Tony, and we went to the hospital snack-bar. A patient at a nearby table was talking to himself, gesturing and laughing out loud. Tony laughed too. I found such bizarre behavior depressing, but Tony seemed to regard it as entertaining.

One weekend I brought Tony home, and he asked if Guy and Sherry were coming to dinner. I said no. He asked if we were going to visit Grandmother. Again I said no, not this weekend.

"Then why did you bring me home?" he asked.

He wanted to return for a dance that evening, so I took him back. He ran into the cottage, laughing and yelling, "I'm here! I'm here!" (He did, somehow, finally learn the proper use of pronouns.)

Tony lived there for two years. The social workers and teachers seemed dedicated. Most professionals dealing with the handicapped are tolerant, caring, compassionate people. For a while Tony attended a special-education class at the local high school. One day he apparently became bored and activated all the fire alarms, causing fire engines with flashing lights and screeching sirens to appear from all directions. Tony seemed to regard fire alarms as irresistible invitations to such glorious pandemonium. They are often behind a glass and accompanied by a little hammer. Breaking the glass is the obvious purpose of that hammer, and Tony couldn't resist activating them. However those fire alarms convinced the high school that they couldn't handle Tony, and that ended his attendance in regular school. He didn't feel any particular desire to do things normal people do, and was just as happy attending a class held at the hospital.

After a couple of years the State began closing mental hospitals. Since Tony seemed happy there, I would have preferred the safety of an institution. Nevertheless Tony was placed in a group-home in San Francisco with five other retarded young men. The State provides activity-programs to occupy handicapped people during the daytime, and Tony had something to occupy his time. Bio babble was replacing psychobabble as a treatment of mental illness, and anti-psychotic drugs were supposed to control his disruptive behavior. When one medication didn't work, doctors seemed to just add another, until he was taking a big fist full of pills every day. However I no longer had any say about Tony's medical treatment. I realized Tony would be happy wherever he lives. Maybe he inherited my cheerful nature.

None of my children, including Tony, had much need for me anymore. Guy had finished his PhD. and Sherry had become a nurse. Suddenly, I had a choice of what to do with my life. It seemed a little late for me to start a career. Being wealthy might be defined as a lifestyle costing less than one's income, and my lifestyle was modest. After buying Tony's shirts in thrift shops, I did much of my shopping there. (Buying something in a regular store might be a chore, but finding something in a thrift store is an adventurous achievement.) With my Army pension I had enough money to live as I always had. Some people apparently feel an urge to change the world, to think of ways to improve society, and I considered volunteer work. My problem was that I found the world fascinating the way it was, and I was rarely confident of specific changes that might improve things. Still, my late fifties seemed a little young to sit around waiting for old age. Having survived the psychologists, I was convinced I could accomplish anything to which I set my mind. I finally decided to try to live my favorite fantasy. I disposed of all my possessions, except for what would fit into a couple of suitcases, and set out to travel around the world as adventurously as I could manage.

Question 26: What would define economic theories as materialistic or non-materialistic?

My secret fantasy had always been to travel around the world in a sailboat. Personal accounts by such sailors were my favorite reading, and I also escaped into my own imaginary adventures. A picture of my boat, cut from a sailing magazine, made my journey over the oceans seem real and exciting. Actually, sitting alone in a sailboat day after day would probably be uncomfortable and boring as hell, but physical discomfort is easily endured in a fantasy. I found books in the library describing the places I imagined visiting. I planned meals in detail, and imagined sitting out on deck eating them. Making lists of provisions, and plotting my course between exotic islands created compelling make-believe.

Ike and I once took the children and some of their friends for a two-week houseboat vacation on Lake Shasta. "Let's pretend we are sailing around the world instead of around a lake," I suggested. The houseboat rental company sent us a big map of the lake. I traced it, renaming campsites Patagonia, Ceylon and Zanzibar. Warnings of fantastic dangers, such as pirates, head-hunters, wars and mythical beasts covered my map. I tacked it up on the bulkhead of the houseboat, and all of us except Tony amused ourselves by pretending we were visiting such exotic places, instead of Eel River Camp or Pine Flat. The houseboat broke down in "Bora Bora". The children paddled their inner tubes to "Australia" for help, evading "Fiji cannibals" along the way. When the vacation was over I suggested we leave our map on the boat for someone else to enjoy. The children were at an age where they didn't appreciate being considered different. Perhaps having Tony for a brother bothered them a little, after

all. Embarrassed that someone outside the family might learn about Mother's extravagant imagination, they indignantly took down my map.

However that was ten years ago, and Guy and Sherry were no longer embarrassed by my imagination. They expressed interested approval when I announced I was leaving to travel around the world. (By more conventional means than by sailboat, I hastened to add.) Tony's destructiveness had convinced me of the unimportance of possessions, and I didn't have much of value. Giving up my apartment, I stored a couple of boxes of personal belongings in a friend's basement. By not paying rent at home, living in foreign countries shouldn't be more expensive than living in California. My Army pension could go directly to my checking account, and an American Express card allowed me to obtain cash in most countries of the world.

I had already discovered lone travelers do face one danger: a debilitating feeling of isolation. Always self-sufficient, my need for a certain amount of social interaction had surprised me. A few years earlier, during my first trip to Europe (while Tony was at summer camp), I'd found I wasn't having as much fun as I had expected. Here I was doing what I'd always dreamed of, traveling the world, but instead of having fun, I was miserable. Physically, I was fine. I felt no pain anywhere. I just seemed incapable of enjoying myself. I took a day cruise in the Balearic Islands. The other tourists on the boat were French, Spanish and Italian. I was aware of people glancing uncertainly at me, the only person not speaking to anyone. Probably no one knew which language to use. Ordinarily I'd have been delighted to attempt all three, but in my despondent perversity I refused to utter a word. I had become so isolated that I spurned friendly overtures. I could understand feeling miserable in response to a tragic event, but there was no reason for the distress I was feeling. I must be suffering from -- well -- *from depression!* Naturally cheerful, I'd always considered myself immune from that strange malady, but this must be what it felt like, I decided. I aborted my vacation and bought a plane ticket back to California.

At home in familiar surroundings, I tried to understand what had happened to me. I had always thought of myself as self-reliant. I would never have guessed that isolation from friends and family could cause such a devastating feeling. It was true that I had blithely sailed off to Alaska when I was in my early twenties. But I had apparently changed since then. Thirty years of family life must have left me with a need for intimacy and a lack of practice approaching strangers. I decided I'd have to learn how to initiate conversation if I wanted to travel. I determinedly tried another trip. I'd probably never be talented at sophisticated, cocktail-party chatter, but I did force myself to learn to approach strangers and to interact on a personal level. The solution seemed to be trying for meaningful conversation, rather than attempting to indulge in social talk. I also discovered that inviting someone to express their opinion always seems to produce an enthusiastic response. "What do you consider the most serious problem in your country?" or "How do you view your society as differing from American society?" were questions I learned to ask in order to get the ball rolling. Once on a cruise in the South Pacific, my dinner companions announced on the first evening, "We don't discuss religion, politics or

anything controversial. *If there were nothing controversial about a topic, I wondered what there would there be to discuss?* I suspected I would be unable to contribute much to the dinner conversation on that cruise, and I'd have to get my social interaction from other people on the ship. I don't scoff at people with the ability to indulge in chit-chat. I truly enjoy and envy people who come up with entertaining comments about nothing important. Many people don't just come up with one amusing remark, but are able to think of one after another for hours upon end. I struggle to participate, but social chatter is just not one of my skills. Clever retorts always come to my mind a week later. However by the time I started around the world, I'd discovered that most travelers are quite willing to engage in all sorts of dialogue, and don't fear controversies - so long as you make it clear that you sincerely respect their right to disagree. One wouldn't think of starting a philosophical discussion with someone in the supermarket, check-out line at home, but for some reason such conversations seem unremarkable with people you'll probably never see again.

I couldn't deny a feeling of apprehension as I boarded that first plane for Hong Kong, but this was to be the great adventure of my life, and my excitement outweighed any trepidations. At my first stop, Hong Kong, I spent one night in an expensive, first class hotel. Such hotels always have available rooms, I'd discovered, but price is not the only reason to avoid them. Guests in first class accommodations are less likely to talk to strangers. Conversations with people traveling on-the-cheap come easier. Many such travelers are young and curious. Those older travelers staying in third class hotels often seem to retain some of that youthful curiosity and openness. The next day I rented a room at the Kowloon YMCA, across the street from the Star Ferry. There I found adventurous, approachable people from all over the world. Evenings we drank tea in the "tea garden" on the roof and watched the lights of Hong Kong across Victoria Harbor. Sailboats, fishing boats, freighters, barges, junks, san pans, ferries and hydrofoils scurried about, miraculously avoiding collisions.

A local tour seemed a prudent way for a lone woman to experience local night life, and *Hong-Kong-by-Night* included dinner at a floating restaurant and a nightclub performance of Chinese opera. My companions were French and Portuguese tourists, and I practiced talking French with them. When struggling with a foreign language, comprehension is all anyone expects, and what you say doesn't have to be clever or entertaining. The Chinese tour guide spoke only English, with a very proper British accent. He explained that most residents of Hong Kong were proud to be British colonials, with no desire for independence. New construction was everywhere, and our guide expressed a veritable reverence for private enterprise. China was scheduled to regain the colony in 1997, when a ninety-nine-year lease with England would expire. "Private enterprise has spent millions in Hong Kong, and China wouldn't dare retake it," the guide assured us. He was also confident China would not develop tourist facilities for many years. "How could they accomplish such a thing without free-market capitalism?"



Traveling the world

I had become hard of hearing and used a hearing device to carry on a conversation. It also helped my social interaction. Few people could ignore a hard-of-hearing lady pointing a microphone at them.

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One day I boarded a municipal bus for the northern mainland area of Hong Kong. We passed through towns, their narrow streets lined with tall apartment buildings. People seemed to all do their laundry on the same day. Clothes dryers were not yet common, and long poles stuck out from each window, filling the sky with drying clothes. Hundreds of identically dressed children were on their way to school. Their uniform included a gleaming white shirt, a necktie and a jacket with a school emblem on the pocket. They looked very British. I enjoyed the temples and other sights, but was also eager for something more than the usual tourist experience. At lunch time I got off the bus to look for a real Chinese restaurant, one where only Chinese ate. The restaurant I chose was enormous and full of noisy patrons. A waiter, threading a way through the tightly packed chairs and big round tables, found a place for me at a table with seven other people. The appearance of a Western woman caused them to stop talking for about three minutes. Then they resumed their noisy babble. The waiter didn't

speak English, so I pointed to something on the menu. My food, when it arrived, looked strange and wasn't very tasteful. The din of Chinese voices rang in my ears. Across the table a woman was holding a baby with *Dienstag*, German for Tuesday, embroidered on its bib. The baby was chewing on a big gray chicken claw. As the only Westerner in the room, I must have looked conspicuous, but the Chinese were too polite to stare. They continued laughing, talking and eating. I began to experience an unpleasant sensation of feeling invisible in that huge room of noisy Chinese. I waved for the waiter and gave him some money. Dumping the change in my purse, I left.

I got on the bus to return to Kowloon. A good-looking, blond young man sat down next to me. He wore a coat and tie, and his hair was short and neatly combed. It had been years since I'd noticed an American kid looking so well-groomed. He must be a British resident, I speculated.

Then a warning bell went off in my head. I was feeling hesitant about initiating conversation with the boy. My experience in the restaurant had caused feelings of isolation, feelings I knew could grow. I realized I'd better start talking to someone soon, or my adventure might fail before I got much further. There were other vacant seats on the bus, and the boy wouldn't have sat down next to me if he wasn't willing to talk, I told myself.

"Are you visiting Hong Kong or are you a resident?" I finally made myself ask.

"A little of both," he answered with an American, Western drawl. He explained he was a Mormon missionary from Utah.

"Have you made many converts?"

"None," he replied with a laugh. "Some of these people are Buddhists and some practice a form of ancestor worship. Actually, most people in Hong Kong seem to worship money," he added wryly.

"I've noticed their reverence for *laissez faire* economics," I agreed with amusement.

Like most of the young people I met, he appeared eager for conversation and explained that most Mormon boys traditionally spend a year on a mission, often in a foreign country. After learning the language, he had spent his time visiting Chinese families to explain his religion. Most had listened with polite interest, and he became fluent in Chinese. Now it was almost time for the young missionary to return to the States.

"And then what are your plans?" I asked.

"I love living here," he said, "and would like to come back. Chinese is a difficult language, but I speak it quite well now. Maybe I'll go back to college and get a degree in business administration. I might get a job with some American company doing business here."

He was a delightful, intelligent young man, and I agreed he probably could. I doubt he realized one might claim he was "going native". He was apparently converting to "private enterprise", something he regarded as the religion of the people he'd been trying to proselytize.

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Freud, Marx and Darwin are sometimes cited as the materialists of the 20th century. I understand why trying to reduce human consciousness to Freud's ids, egos and superegos might be considered materialistic. Darwin's "random-mutation-and-natural-selection" is the only explanation of evolution I'd heard that eliminates all possibility of purposeful organization. But I am unsure what would so define an economic system. I read one book claiming any economic system based upon eternal growth is materialistic. Certainly a system requiring an ever increasing population to consume more, and more, and more, requiring more and more goods and services seems unrealistic, especially when we should be hoping that the populations of this earth would stabilize. Nevertheless *Laissez Faire* economics, with its emphasis upon self-interest, seems just as materialistic as either communism or socialism. Surely any attempt to reduce human behavior to mathematical formulas is a materialistic effort. Like other scientists, economists haven't yet figured out that a process involving free-will can never be so simple. Anything in which creative human consciousness is involved will always produce unpredictable surprises.

Question 27: Is intolerance often the result of personal insecurity?

While Hong Kong might hold some dangers for missionaries, there didn't seem to be anything which might threaten a woman of my age. I spent a week in Singapore, and then arrived in Thailand, a culture that turned out to pose a possible danger for some Italians. I emerged from the plane into the heat and humidity of Bangkok. The French tourists in Hong Kong had recommended an inexpensive hotel across the street from the huge, fascinating, outdoor market. There, one could buy live frogs, plastic combs, pig's heads, bronze Buddha's, tiny birds plucked of feathers and ready to cook, orchids, edible insects and other strange objects. I bought a beautiful Chinese-style, straw hat, decorated with colorful straw flowers. It wouldn't fit in my suitcases, so I wore it for most of the next three months.

There were no other Americans at my hotel, and I usually found myself with Europeans on local tours. Once, on a crowded bus I got into a conversation with a New Zealander, a member of his House of Parliament. Among other things, he explained that lawyers and lawsuits had been almost eliminated in his country by a prohibition against awarding money for 'pain and suffering'.

"What a good idea! Why should people demand payment for enduring pain and suffering?" I agreed. "We ought to relish the challenges we are able to survive, instead of expecting someone to reimburse us. Besides, lawyers are the ones who get most of the money from such awards," I added, "and what pain and suffering do they endure? I know one thing, though. No American politician would get on a bus and talk to some ordinary tourist sitting next to him, as you are doing. Members of our legislatures have voted themselves huge salaries and would probably expect to be driven around in limousines."

"A politician in New Zealand who displays more wealth than his constituents wouldn't be re-elected," he said.

What extraordinary progress I had made in initiating conversations with strangers, I reflected blissfully. Here I was even discussing policy with a member of a foreign government!

The most pleasant way to get around Bangkok was by ferry and water taxi. From the street the Thai Capital was hot, drab and congested, but from the water it was lovely. Temples, hidden behind high walls, exposed their golden splendor to the *klongs* and other waterways. Intricately carved wooden houses could be glimpsed among the vegetation along the banks. Some had colorful tile roofs and some were thatched. Even shacks with rusty, tin roofs looked picturesque amidst the trees and tropical foliage. People along the rivers seemed to live half in the water, like exotic amphibians. They swam in their sarongs and washed their hair, clothes and food in the river. Water buffalo stood motionless in the cool water as children splashed around them. Ferries ran like streetcars, and women in canoes sold produce, flowers and hot cooked food.

The attractive Thai people displayed a serene manner, reputedly considering anger a sin. They sat patiently in the traffic jams of Bangkok, neither swearing nor honking horns, as people do in most big cities of the world. I'd read that Thai people also had an aversion to being touched. (The climate would seem to discourage temper tantrums or cuddling.) I was not fond of being touched by strangers, and was interested to hear that somewhere in the world the feeling was regarded as "normal". On a sightseeing trip down the river, the guide told us that a century ago the penalty had been death for touching the king or a member of the royal family. He related a pathetic little story about three royal children who drowned because of this Thai taboo. The children were out in a boat alone, and it tipped over. People stood on shore and watched them drown, rather than touch them.

After a couple of weeks I booked a *Golden-Triangle Tour* to northern Thailand. The corner where Thailand, Burma and Laos meet receives its name from the opium poppies grown there. I became friendly with a young Italian on the same tour. His culture included lots of touching. He never did anything more than pat the shoulder of our pretty little Thai tour-guide, or lay his hand on her arm, as he did to everyone. Nevertheless I watched her cringe at his friendly gestures. He must surely have been aware of the discomfort he was causing her; the Thai

aversion to being touched was discussed in all the guide books. But the Italian seemed compelled to deliberately challenge the tradition.

We rode elephants as they worked a teak forest. We visited an opium-smoking tribe, dirty, dull eyed, pathetic looking people who augmented their poppy growing industry by selling beads and trinkets to tourists. European explorers, during the last century, traded beads and trinkets to natives all over the world, I mused. Who would have predicted that natives would someday sell so many beads and trinkets to European tourists? One afternoon we were on a mountain road visiting a Buddhist temple. Several trucks full of soldiers with rifles came and announced the King would pass by shortly. They ordered us to stand by the side of the road, with our hats off, and respectfully await the royal car. The Italian was talking to our tour guide. I noticed the soldiers' sullen glances as he repeatedly touched her. Then he did something that must have outraged them. He reached over and deliberately patted her on the head. He would have probably attracted less attention if he had patted her on the fanny, where Italians might be expected to pat girls. To a Thai the head is the temple of the soul, and to touch it is an insult. The Italian seemed determined to publicly defy the Thai tradition. The Thai soldiers muttered angrily among themselves and glared at the Italian. They advanced menacingly toward us with their rifles in their hands. Controlling their anger, they ordered us to move back further. The Italian apparently felt no hesitation about offending soldiers carrying rifles. That evening I went to dinner with the Italian. He did wish he could find some spaghetti, instead of all this rice, but we were unsuccessful. As we were eating our rice the Italian asked,

"Aren't your children concerned about you traveling alone to uncivilized corners of the world? I'd sure worry if my mother decided to go off and ride elephants in a Thai jungle."

"My children don't worry," I said with a laugh. "They are convinced their mother is invincible."

Having summoned the courage to face hostile psychologists, I wasn't finding much to fear in a Thai jungle. My children seemed to sense the confidence I had achieved. Nonconformists are forced to develop self-confidence. Either that or conform. My confidence has been bolstered by the fact that, during my lifetime, some of my minority views have been adopted by the majority. It has happened often enough that I hold out hopes for any of my beliefs that are still not widely shared. Perhaps intolerance is sometimes evidence of personal insecurity. I disagree with many commonly accepted beliefs, but I actually enjoy controversies. I would never deliberately challenge other people's non provable, philosophical views though. I am a religious agnostic, I don't believe in a personal god, but I am disgusted by today's militant atheists who initiate law-suits to ban expression of the dominant religion in schools and public ceremonies, for instance. I'm grateful to live in a tolerant society, but the majority is still entitled to a few privileges. However, today's evangelical Atheists sometimes appeal to the courts to prohibit the mere mention of Intelligent Design in a classroom. They scornfully denounce everyone as "an ignorant creationist" who dares to question the concept of life as a mechanical device in which creativity originates as meaningless accidents. Life may be somewhat statistically predictable, but if free-will and consciousness exist as aspects of reality,

they will always produce unanticipated surprises and evade mathematical description. I am content to remain agnostic about the participation of a deity in the process of evolution. However if philosophical materialists were really so confident of their Atheism, they would welcome open discussion, in the classroom, or anywhere else, and should have nothing to fear from people who believe life evolves by some form of responsive, intelligent, biological organization. There is nothing supernatural about my own conscious free-will and purposeful creativity, and I see no reason why such a force should be unique to human consciousness. Surely some form of consciousness is an aspect of all life.

Question 28: Consciousness and free-will may be defining characteristics of all life, but do we have much understanding of what they actually are?

From Thailand I flew to Nepal, a tiny kingdom in the Himalayas. It was the dry season and everything was brown and dusty. I'd planned to join an overland bus tour to England in Kathmandu, and had a reservation at the hotel from which the tour was to start. I shared a taxi from the airport with some young Australians. It was a rusty old vehicle of Indian make, the stuffing bulging out of the seats. The starter didn't work, and two drivers were required, one to steer and another to push. We would drive a few blocks. Then they would cut the motor and coast, keeping both drivers busy. The Nepalese were under the impression this method of driving conserved petrol. At the hotel I learned my room wouldn't be available until the next day. For that first night, I was assigned to the dormitory, a sort of penthouse on the roof. Cots were lined up next to each other, and I'd never slept in a room full of strangers like this. Most of them were young Western tourists. In my traveling-on-the-cheap I would usually find myself with young people, and they never appeared to see anything unusual about finding a woman of my age among them. I was grateful for their acceptance. We were warned to keep the windows closed to prevent monkeys from stealing our belongings. Finally I'd arrived in a country so exotic that monkeys ran wild.

The next morning a dozen brown monkeys scampered away as we came out onto the roof. More played on the brown, dusty roofs around us. I looked out over the quiet little mountain Capital. It was not really a city; just a little rural town. I explored Kathmandu and the countryside on foot - or rode a rickshaw, a cart pulled by a boy on a bicycle. Amid chickens, geese, goats and cows, I saw Mongolian-looking, mountain people in colorful costumes and furs, holy men wearing nothing but a dingy cloth around their loins, women in bright silk saris, and brown children wearing only a skimpy shirt - or nothing. Western or Japanese mountain climbers in heavy boots were occasionally seen among the natives. On "Freak Street" Western hippies were allowed to indulge in drugs without interference from the Nepalese government,

and had become a tourist sight. I skipped that one. Imagine traveling half way around the world to look at American drug addicts!

While planning my trip during the past year, I had tried to read something about the places I would visit. For centuries the kings of Nepal had married two queens in one ceremony. This bizarre custom caused endless palace intrigue, as both queens and their assorted offspring vied for power. A particularly bloody episode occurred at the middle of the nineteenth century, when half the nobility of Nepal was massacred. A young army officer seized power and declared himself to be Prime Minister. He and his descendants ruled Nepal for the next century, keeping the royal family captive in the palace. All Westerners were excluded from the little country, and radios and newspapers were banned. In the 1950's the young captive king escaped to India. Organizing a successful revolt, he returned to rule his country, overthrowing the Prime Minister and keeping him and his family prisoner. This new king accepted Western financial aid and built the first road into the little capital. Until then everyone had arrived in Kathmandu on foot. A funky rope-pulley arrangement had hauled freight over the mountains into the little city. Because of the rugged terrain and Nepal's long isolation from Western civilization, the tribes of the little kingdom remained separate, each with its own language and customs. I'd read that among some mountain people, a woman could have two husbands - if they were brothers. Among some jungle tribes near the Indian border, a man was supposed to only marry a woman from a tribe to the east of his village. The fate of the men in the easternmost village was not mentioned.

"We seem to have our own private rickshaw," a New Zealand couple at my hotel commented with amusement. "A Nepalese driver is apparently devoting his services exclusively to us. Every morning we find him waiting outside the hotel gate. As we shop or walk around town, he follows us until we are ready to return to the hotel."

When the New Zealand couple left Nepal, to my surprise, I seemed to inherit their rickshaw driver, a friendly young man with a fun-loving sparkle in his big brown eyes. When I tried to walk he would pedal persistently along beside me, good-naturally extolling how cheap it would be to ride. Sometimes I resisted, enjoying the walk, but I would eventually succumb to his persuasion and climb up into his rickshaw. The driver called me Grandmother, under the impression this was a flattering term for a woman of my age. I could have explained that most Western women in their late fifties would not feel flattered at being called "grandmother", but it was merely his respectful term for any mature woman, and I didn't correct him. After a few days I began to understand my rickshaw driver's dogged devotion to one tourist at a time. He had once worked as a *Sherpa* on a mountain-climbing expedition. Someone in the group became fond of him and flew him to California for a backpacking trip in the Sierras. It had been a fabulous adventure for a Nepalese boy, and I'm sure he hoped something equally wonderful might happen again.

I loved riding the rickshaw. When we went downhill, I clutched the sides with both hands. We careened wildly along, dodging chickens, dogs, goats, cows and naked children. The horn

honked constantly, as both the driver and I laughed with delight. When we went uphill I felt sorry for him and got out and walked. In fact, on very steep hills I got behind and pushed. I realized I might look a little ridiculous pushing a rickshaw, but I was having such fun, and no one seemed to pay any attention as "Grandmother" pushed that rickshaw up the dusty, narrow, crooked streets of Kathmandu. Perhaps in my beautiful, Chinese-style, straw hat, I was mistaken for some kind of a native.

The rickshaw driver would call happily over his shoulder, "See Grandmother, this very bad road. Maybe you give me extra rupee this time?"

He saw no reason why Grandmother shouldn't help push the rickshaw, and even pay extra for the privilege. I gave him several extra rupees. When traveling with family and friends one observes the world from the comfortable position of a tourist. Traveling alone allows one to experience cultures a little more deeply, finding differences, but also discovering shared feelings and thoughts. I was fortunate to be able to do a little of it during that short window of time when it was relatively safe for lone tourists in that part of the world. Mostly we have to accept other people's descriptions of our world, or how it was in the past. But nothing can equal first-hand experience.

Question 29: Can we do other people's growing for them?

After several weeks in Nepal, the day arrived for my overland bus tour to depart. I met the people with whom I would share a leisurely drive through Asia, Russia and Europe to England, stopping for several days in the most interesting places. We first all met in the hotel room of Haggis, our tour guide, an enthusiastic young man with a Scottish accent. Most of us were strangers to each other, but that would soon change. These young Australians and New Zealanders would become my family, and for the next three months, I would give up my solitary traveling and revert to being a tourist - except for crossing the Khyber Pass. That would turn out to be as much adventure as a woman of my age could comfortably handle. Six of us were of retirement age, and I'm sure we each wondered uneasily how we might fit in with that exuberant bunch of young people. However ours was a unique tour, in which the usual personality conflicts and age gaps that might plague such groups were banished. Or perhaps I should say redirected. Oh, we had our conflicts. No battle took place, but we actually had our own Cold War. Maybe that's what made the cohesion in our particular tour unique.

Two separate tours were originally planned. Each tour had been under-subscribed, so the company decided to accommodate both groups on the same bus, with one tour-guide and one driver. We drove out of Nepal, and in India we met the rest of our travel companions. Our tour was inexpensive and consisted of mostly young people. The group we met in India, called an

Armchair Adventure, was for more mature, affluent travelers, and it provided first class hotels and restaurants. When we arrived in a city, the bus would drive to a first class hotel, and wait while the Armchair Adventurers (soon renamed the "Arm-pits" by the young people) unloaded their luggage. Then we continued on to the center of the city for our more native accommodations. The two groups saw each other only on the bus. I'm not sure why the young people resented the first-class travelers, but some of them apparently did. Some of the first class group wanted classical music played on the bus stereo. The young people retaliated by singing bawdy songs. We six seniors in the budget group might have preferred classical, but we claimed to share the young people's taste in music. There were a couple of complainers among the Armchair Adventurers, but I'm sure there were also some interesting people. The first class travelers were more isolated from the local culture than we were, and no one doubted our group was experiencing more of the countries through which we traveled. Maybe we even felt obligated to have more fun. No one in our budget group seemed to pay any attention to age differences. Mirrors were scarce in second-class Asian hotels, and we six seniors almost forgot we weren't the same age as our young companions. In addition to enthusiastically joining the young Aussies and Kiwis as they sang bawdy songs, we laughingly attempted their uninhibited dancing in noisy Asian discotheques with flashing colored lights.

We ordered dinner the first night. We heard a cackling outside and glimpsed a man chase a screeching chicken past the window. Those of us who ordered chicken suspected our meal would take a while. It was certainly fresh. We drove through northern India, stopping to visit exquisite monuments and temples, including the Taj Mahal. Haggis often arranged a local tour for us in places where we stopped for more than one day. One such demonstration, in the garden of a hotel, included an Indian turning a cobra loose a few feet from us. Then he let a mongoose out of its cage to kill the cobra. The mongoose was so fast we couldn't actually see what was happening. Later, one of the Arm-Chair Adventurers complained about being forced to witness a killing. I found it hard to work up compassion for the snake, but I did wonder that India had so many cobras that such a demonstration could be performed regularly for tourists. We rode a boat on the Ganges at sunrise. Along the banks people bathed, washed clothes, stood on their heads practicing Yoga, chanted religious music and cremated their dead. As we walked the ancient, narrow streets of Varanasi, the local Indian guide warned us to beware of cow-dung, pickpockets, aggressive peddlers, beggars - and the ubiquitous scrawny cows, which seemed to roam the streets like stray cats or dogs. When we felt overwhelmed by the hordes of people, we retreated to the secluded, walled garden of our hotel, often a building of decayed elegance left over from the British occupation. The red velvet drapes looked as though they could have hung in the dining room for a century. Silent, white-clad Indians waited upon us, as mice scurried about the edges of the room. No one disturbed the lizards on the walls, which were said to eat the mosquitoes that arrived in swarms after dark. The Indian countryside was lush and green. A tattered goatherd, or a lone woman in a faded sari, walking across a field with a clay jar on her head, looked picturesque, but when we approached a village we encountered the ever-present, tightly packed throng of humanity, which seemed to be India.

People converged from all directions to surround the bus and stare at us. They appeared to regard us an exotic a sight.

One whiff of Indian toilets and we put away our modesty and used a ditch, as the Indians did, especially when we were suffering from "Delhi belly". "Men to the right of the road and ladies to the left," the tour guide would announce. One day a bus full of Indians on a side-road drove by the little ravine in which we were squatting. They honked and laughed and waved. It was difficult to know how to react in such an undignified position.

We drove back up into the Himalayas to Kashmir. It was early spring, and we were among the first since that year's monsoon season to travel over the narrow mountain road. Huge waterfalls cascaded down from the snow covered peaks. We encountered washouts where great sides of the mountain had given way, taking the road with it. The bottom of the gorge was hundreds of feet below. I noticed a couple of abandoned, wrecked vehicles lying down the slope. At the most dangerous stretches we got out and walked. The bus and driver laboriously made their way along the narrow road being bulldozed out of the mud and rocks. We reached the snow level, and finally a six-mile tunnel. Emerging upon a dazzling, snow-covered mountainside, we looked down upon the fruit trees in bloom and the green valley and blue lakes of Kashmir.

During the British Raj, the English relished the cool climate of Kashmir for a holiday from the heat of India. The proud, independent people of Kashmir refused to sell land to foreigners, so the British built elaborate houseboats and floated them on the lakes. Kashmir now accommodated tourists in replicas of those houseboats, filled with intricately carved Victorian furniture and oriental carpets. Most tourist sites in Kashmir could be reached by water, so instead of rickshaws, transportation around the valley was provided by *shikaras*, little canoes full of cushions and covered with a ruffled canopy. A couple of natives paddled one of these canoes to wherever we wanted to go in the valley. There were no motor-driven craft on those high mountain lakes and streams, and the silence was crisp and lovely. Only the sound of our voices and the paddles hitting against the water echoed back from the snow covered mountains around us.

I shared a houseboat with five of the young Australians while in Kashmir. Playfully affecting accents and mannerisms of nineteenth-century English Colonials, we "dressed" for dinner. Akbar, our dignified, Muslim host, solemnly served us. At night he put hot water bottles in our beds. During that week on the houseboat in Kashmir we could almost imagine experiencing times of the British Raj. We respected the local culture, there were no missionaries among us, and Kashmir was serene and lovely. Mabe the Cold War between Russia and the United States had some influence on the harmony we were enjoying. After the Cold War ended, many of those countries would resume their customary hostilities. However, at that time Muslim people seemed to feel no resentment toward Westerners.

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Most of us are convinced of the superiority of democracy. Nevertheless the belief that ordinary people need an aristocracy to rule them was long accepted. Maybe enough individuals had to grow and achieve sufficient maturity before a population would be capable governing themselves. When we decide another culture is “primitive” and try to modernize the population, the people do seem to resent it. Just as we can't do our children's growing for them, we also seem unable to bestow democracy upon people who haven't developed it for themselves.

Question 30: Are Western democracies civilization's ultimate achievement?

Both groups boarded the bus to travel back down out of the Himalayas. We had stayed in small groups on separate houseboats during the week in Kashmir and didn't see much of our tour companions. We became aware that Bill, one of the older Australians on our “young people's tour”, had become ill. Pale and breathing with difficulty, he sat on the bus in his usual silence. Before this three-month bus-trip was over, we all became intimately acquainted, but the tour was just starting, and we didn't really know Bill. His wife, Celia, was a talker. She spoke with a lovely British accent, in a well-modulated voice, but she never stopped. She sometimes asked questions, but rarely gave anyone opportunity to answer. She had developed techniques which allowed no one to politely escape once she began one of her monologues. Bill and Celia always sat together on the bus. Bill looked out the window and nodded occasionally, while Celia talked.

Celia was silent now, worried about her husband. She called a doctor in the town where we stopped for the night and obtained an antibiotic. Bill improved somewhat. Lahore, Pakistan, was the next city with scheduled air-flights, and Celia and Bill decided to leave the tour there and return to Australia. However as we were about leave Lahore for the Khyber Pass, Haggis, the tour-guide, came and told us that Bill had died, suddenly, in their hotel room. We all stood by the bus in stunned silence on that hot, humid morning when we learned of Bill's death. The entire tour couldn't stay behind; hotel reservations had been made for the entire trip. People must have died on other tours, and I wondered how their spouses or companions managed in such a strange land where few people even spoke English. A young tour-guide-trainee happened to be traveling with us for a few weeks. It was decided that Robyn would stay behind to help Celia, and the tour would continue on as scheduled.

Another woman really should stay with the poor lady too, I thought, remembering my own husband's death. Even though Ike's illness had given me some warning, I remembered the feeling of being overwhelmingly alone. If I stayed behind with Celia and Robyn, I'd probably have to fly over the Khyber Pass to catch up with the tour. For me, crossing the Khyber was a highlight of the trip. I would have preferred going over with a camel train, if I'd known how a

lone woman of my age might arrange such a thing, but I was confident my imagination would allow me to feel like I was making the journey on a camel. I waited, wishing someone else would offer. However I was the only single, older woman in our economy group, and none of the young people should be expected stay behind. *But I hardly even knew Celia! In spite of its exotic history, the Khyber Pass is just a road over another mountain pass,* I kept telling myself. Finally, although I was aware it might not be much fun, my conscience won the argument, and I volunteered to stay behind with Celia. A nightmare at first, the experience actually turned into my most cherished memory of the trip.

There was a knock on the door. A hotel employee stuck in his head. "Remember to keep the fan on," he warned. "Bodies deteriorate fast in this climate."

I hadn't attended many funerals and couldn't even remember having seen a dead body. I looked at Bill's, lying there in his pajamas by the bathroom door. Could he suddenly begin to deteriorate? Maybe I was getting more adventure than I'd bargained for. "Can't someone pick him up off the floor," I suggested. The man returned with two more Pakistanis wearing those dingy white cloths tied around their waists as skirts, and they put Bill's body on one of the twin beds. Celia and I sat on the other one. Third-class Pakistani hotels didn't always offer the luxury of chairs. I tried to avoid looking at the body, but it remained a stark, silent presence.

Robyn returned and reported that cremation was illegal in Pakistan, for religious reasons, and burial must take place the day of death, because of the climate. He had located an Anglican missionary who agreed to conduct the funeral. We went to the police station to sign some papers concerning the burial.

"Why must I sign anything? My poor darling just collapsed there on the floor. And in this strange, land where one doesn't speak the language--"

The officials surrounding us didn't understand a word Celia was saying. They were shouting in Pakistani, convinced we would comprehend if they spoke loudly enough. Celia finally signed the papers, and we returned to the hotel. Three tall, thin, barefoot, Pakistanis came for Bill's body. They placed him in a box covered with black plastic. We followed as they carried it out through the lobby and put it in an old Ford station wagon. It had apparently been blue, but had been turned into a hearse by crudely repainting it black. We rode to the cemetery in a taxi with the missionary and his wife. Traffic on the streets of Lahore was crowded and hectic. Trucks, buses and motor scooters created a constant roar. Camels, horses, oxen, water buffalo and donkeys pulled carts and wagons, all contributing to an unbelievable chaos. Pakistani men standing in carts, wielding whips over mules and donkeys, sharing the congested streets with honking trucks and dilapidated vehicles - and noisy motor scooters darting in and out - that remains my vivid memory of Lahore.

A high, brick wall surrounded the Christian cemetery where the British had interred their loved ones. There, except for the murmur of traffic outside the cemetery, it was quiet. The sound of birds and the creaking wheels of the wooden cart, upon which the Pakistani men placed Bill's

coffin, broke the silence. A few unkempt flowers grew under the huge old trees. The missionary wore a long white embroidered robe, which moved gently in the slight breeze. We stood by the open grave and read scriptures together.

As we made our way back through the noisy traffic to the hotel, Celia talked to the missionary's wife. "You are ever so courageous to live out here and work among the heathen."

"One does what one must when one does the Lord's work, doesn't one--" the missionary's wife managed to inject.

"I'm thankful to leave my dear husband in a Christian cemetery. If one can manage, one should always leave one's loved ones among one's own kind, shouldn't one, even in uncivilized parts of the world. You have been most comforting, really, very understanding. It was a lovely funeral though, wasn't it--"

"Quite lovely," the missionary's wife murmured. The missionary nodded solemnly. Those quiet moments in the cemetery had been a peaceful respite in that nightmare of a day.

Back at the hotel the nightmare resumed. The hotel clerk expected me to share Celia's room and sleep in the dead man's bed. At my frantic insistence, he finally gave us another room, one for three. Celia, Robyn and I were to share. Someone else would sleep in Bill's bed that night. I hoped the sheets got changed. The tour we were on was cheap. The whole trip, including hotel accommodations for three months, only cost about nine hundred dollars. We sometimes slept four and five to a room. When the beds didn't come out even, a boy might sleep in a room with some of the girls. The young Australians seemed to pay no attention to each other as we awoke in the morning, and everyone brushed their teeth in their knickers and night clothes. The two older, married couples in the "young people's group" had always been given their own rooms. So while I had accustomed myself to sleeping in the same room with men, Celia was shocked to realize we were to share a room with Robyn.

"Really! What would my darling Bill think! His first night in the ground and I'm to sleep in a hotel room with a man? Just imagine! My poor dear must be positively turning in his grave. You don't suppose Robyn will try to rape us, do you Bertie?"

We went out to dinner and Celia told the waiter, "My dear husband died today. Just fell by the bathroom door. I had to leave him here in Pakistan among the heathen, you see. We had a lovely funeral though, in a Christian cemetery. An Anglican missionary conducted the service. A quite lovely service --"

"Yes Ma'am," the waiter responded.

Muslim men must have considered Western women like creatures from another planet, with their bare arms and faces, and their bold and fearless manner, exhibiting the power of men, rather than acting like properly demure and docile Muslim women. Hotel employees didn't appear surprised by anything Western tourists did or said. Celia repeated her story to the

waiter the next morning at brekkie (Australian for breakfast), to the taxi driver on the way to the airport, and to everyone in the airport who understood English. (And to several who probably didn't.) Because of recent political unrest, we were thoroughly searched. The discovery of a blond wig, false eyelashes and women's clothing in the suitcase Robyn was claiming caused some consternation.

"What's this?" one of the airport officials examining our luggage demanded of Robyn, holding up the wig.

"That's actually my dear, departed husband's suitcase," explained Celia indignantly. "Bill wanted me to be my usual glamorous self, even on the tour, and men don't need a whole suitcase, do they? I had to bury him here in Pakistan, you see. . ."

"Go get on the plane," the officials said hastily, probably overwhelmed by Celia's talking.

We had been unable to fly over the Khyber Pass, thank heavens. I wouldn't miss that legendary landmark after all. We were headed for Peshawar, a small town at the foot of the mountains. Robyn and I sat together on the plane, silently, resting our ears. Celia sat across the aisle and talked to a beautifully dressed Pakistani woman sitting next to her. When we landed in Peshawar, Celia introduced us to her seat companion. The woman was going to her niece's wedding. She felt sorry for Celia and invited us all to the *mendi*, a Muslim wedding feast held the evening before the wedding. Celia thought the party might lift her spirits. Robyn and I were thrilled by such a fabulous invitation, one that Celia had obtained for us by her incessant talking.

That evening we squeezed into an open, three-wheeled taxi and rode out into the suburbs to a Pakistani general's home. Thousands of Christmas tree lights lit the garden. A huge canopy had been erected, and carpets were placed on the ground. Musicians played strange, eerie-sounding, oriental instruments. Robyn was hurried into the house to join the men.

A *mendi* was a women's party, and men and women did not mingle socially in Pakistan. The women wore bright coloured tunics embroidered with gold, silk trousers and long scarves. All displayed diamonds, rubies and emeralds, and the family fortune on their arms in the form of gold bracelets. The younger women took turns dancing, moving sensuously to the strange, Asian music. Their movements were slow and sedate, and very different from any dancing I'd seen in the West. Older women placed money on the dancers' heads, which fell to the carpets and was collected for charity. It was an exotic performance, such as I wouldn't have expected women to perform so enthusiastically just for each other. The bride was led out of the house for a few minutes. She was heavily veiled and sat hunched over, staring at the ground.

"What's wrong with her?" I found myself exclaiming.

"She's just shy," someone said, and they all laughed. If this was her party, she obviously wasn't enjoying it very much. She looked about sixteen and terrified. An older, married sister of the bride was a medical student. Five of her classmates were at the party, all lovely girls with

smooth complexions, dark hair and eyes, and fine features. They spoke beautiful English and were eager to explain Pakistani customs. Marriages were arranged, and the bride was unacquainted with her future husband. She had been presented to the groom. He could reject her, but the bride had no say in the matter. She only felt grateful not to be spurned. One Pakistani woman insisted such marriages were more successful than Western, romantic matches. Several of the medical students, who had their husbands chosen in this manner, agreed. I could see their point. Expectations might be entirely different in an arranged marriage. They might view their spouses as just another fallible human being, rather than the one unique, soul-mate with whom we have "fallen in love", and selected to ensure our happiness. Theirs wasn't a custom I'd accept, but they seemed content with it, and I didn't presume to try to convince them our Western ways were superior; I only felt fortunate to experience that exotic world, alien customs, colorful dancers and oriental music. By obtaining an invitation to this party Celia had more than repaid me for staying behind.

Robyn also enjoyed his time with the Pakistani men. Back at the hotel, he and I exchanged stories of the party over a cup of tea. We began talking to the friendly, young waiter, who acknowledged that he had recently wed. He asked Robyn if he was married. Robyn said no, and the waiter asked sympathetically, "Your family is doing nothing to find you a wife?"

"In my country we find our own wives," Robyn said.

"How much do they cost?"

"I suppose a marriage license costs about three pounds."

"Three pounds!" the waiter exclaimed. "If that were all they cost here, I'd surely have a dozen."

The waiter explained that in Afghanistan, the country just over the Khyber Pass, wives were very expensive. Indeed, many Afghans lived their entire lives without affording even one. (A shortage probably caused by greedy rich men hoarding a dozen.) My excitement continued the next day, as I saw the brightly painted, Afghan bus in which we were to travel over the pass to Afghanistan. It was almost as adventurous as a camel train, I reflected blissfully. We squeezed into the rear seat with three Afghan tribesmen. Like many Afghans, they were tall, handsome and fierce looking. Baggage was piled on top of the bus. A box fell off a couple of times as we bounced up the pass. The Afghan riding on top would pound on the roof, the bus would stop, and someone would run back to retrieve the fallen luggage. Several times the bus stopped by a stream. The men jumped off and ran down to wash their feet, and knelt on the rocks to pray toward Mecca. Once, as they were returning to the bus after praying, two of them apparently got into some kind of a disagreement. They all took off their belts. They were apparently ready to sling them like whips, using the metal buckles as weapons. To our relief the argument was settled without violence, and the men put on their belts again. (Russia and the United States were soon to give them Western-style weapons, so obviously Afghans no longer have to resort to belt buckles to settle disputes.) The Khyber Pass was dusty, barren and rocky. I watched the nomads and camel-trains from the bus window. I was thrilled to be crossing the Khyber Pass

with a bunch of Afghan tribesmen. So much history had passed this way, traveling between Europe and the East. I could imagine that some of these people were still living lives very similar to those lived by their ancestors centuries ago. At the summit we stopped, and everyone paid a fee (it sounded more like a ransom to me) to the local tribe "to ensure our safety across the pass". One of the men on the seat next to us spoke a little English.

"Where you from?" he asked me.

"America," I answered, smiling at him.

"Ah, America!" he exclaimed, as he grabbed my hand and shook it. "How many husbands you got?"

He was young enough to be my son. Nevertheless, something in his attitude made me uneasy. "Two," I answered. It seemed prudent not to admit I didn't have even one, and maybe two would be even more of a put off.

"Good! I meet you tonight, your hotel," he announced. "Ten o'clock."

Robyn, sitting next to me suppressed a smirk. I must confess I felt touched to have a handsome young tribesman try to make a date with me at my age - especially after being called grandmother by the Nepalese rickshaw driver. Nevertheless I stayed close to an amused Robyn until we reached Kabul, and was careful not to make eye-contact with any more Afghan tribesmen. Afghan women wore a tent-like garment in public. They saw the world through a mesh covered slit, ensuring that no man other than their husband even caught a glimpse of their eyes. I wondered if Afghans, never seeing women other than their mothers, could even distinguish between a sixteen-year-old and a sixty-year-old woman. I sensed the power women of such a traditional culture possess, exerting a potent effect upon sex-starved men, and turning them into helpless creatures with no will of their own - all by doing nothing more than being women. Some women might be reluctant to exchange such heady power for mere liberation. And who knows? If Western men had succeeded in their professed intention to protect us from all conflict and hardship, perhaps we would have also been content to remain "little girls". Western women waged a long, difficult fight to attain their place in society; I doubt we can bestow "equal rights" upon another culture. I suspect such women will have to want liberation enough to participate in their own struggle for equality.

Recently, as Afghanistan has appeared in the news on television, I've noticed that Afghan men don't really seem as handsome as I remember them. Perhaps it was the lust in their eyes that made them appear so attractive. I realize the Muslim attitude toward women has always had a darker, more sinister side than we observed. Men are regarded as helpless to resist a woman's wiles, and in Muslim societies women are held responsible for any sexual misconduct. Women have been brutally murdered, stoned to death, for the mere suspicion of sexual activity. However at the time we drove through Pakistan, the Khyber Pass and Afghanistan, what we encountered seemed more like childish innocence. Ours must have been one of the last bus

tours to travel through that area. Soon, actually within days in that spring of 1978, their transition would begin to a more violent, dangerous society.

We caught up with our tour in Kabul. They were eating in a restaurant, the Istanbul Cafe. A delicious meal, including homemade American pie, cost about seventy two cents. The restaurant was dim and smoky, and packed with tourists. Asian music blared from a radio, and faded posters covered the walls. I sat with Celia at a long table, next to some other Westerners. I heard one of them ask if she was enjoying her trip.

"It's marvellously fascinating. We attended a Pakistani *mendi* last night. My traveling companions are most considerate. You see, my husband died day before yesterday and..."

The waiter arrived, and the tourists sat speechless, with dazed expressions on their faces, as Celia turned to give her order. Then she continued, "I miss him terribly. But there's no reason to return to Australia. One keeps busy and has less time to think, doesn't one. I'm going to look for an emerald ring..."

Celia did have time to think, though. I'd heard her crying at night when she was alone. She was doing her best to continue her life without her husband. Whatever her failings, she had the courage of an elderly Australian woman determined to continue her once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage to her "mother country". She was certainly adventurous and open to new experiences.

At the moment we seem convinced that our Western democracies are the ultimate in human culture, something that will continue to grow and expand to all societies. We appear intent upon persuading (or even forcing) the rest of the world to emulate us. However history seems to indicate that after a burst of creative progress, most civilizations spend centuries in stagnant decline. Both the Greeks and the Romans experimented with democracy, and then regressed back to autocratic societies. Are our Western democracies an exception? Or will we eventually stop progressing and go into decline? Modern democracies are only a couple of centuries old, perhaps in their infancy, and our society still seems to have plenty of imperfections that need addressing. At times, our governing institutions even appear dangerously dysfunctional, and our population growth seems relentless. Even our most stable democracies can sometimes become susceptible to irrational rabble rousers. Hopefully, we may resolve a few more of our problems before beginning to decline. As a political liberal, I suspect I'd always be happier living in an imperfect, evolving, dynamic society, rather than in a society of stagnant perfection. I'm sure conservatives place more value on stability. I acknowledge my prejudice for innovation, but I also recognize the value of stability. A society consisting of nothing but liberals could become unstable, I suppose.

Question 31: Which would produce the most psychologically stunted individuals? Being emotionally challenged? Or never encountering any challenges?

In Kabul we were told all tourists must be out of Afghanistan before the end of the month, because a revolution was scheduled to take place. We were in Iran exploring the ruins at Persepolis, the ancient Persian capitol, when the Russians first entered Kabul. (Carrying weapons more deadly than belt buckles.) The United States Government expressed shock when the Russians first entered Afghanistan, but no one in Afghanistan was surprised. Something of the sort had been announced when they warned us to be out of the country by the end of the month.

The tour continued through Iran and Turkey, and our “young people’s” group became even more cohesive. Iran was the one country where I was conscious of resentful looks because I was a foreigner. At that time Iran was full of Western oil workers, mostly Americans, and perhaps the two cultures were too different to coexist without resentments. Other travel companies were conducting similar inexpensive tours along the same route through Asia to England. We sometimes met them at hotels where we stayed, and they expressed envy at how much fun our tour was having. Something did seem to be making our tour unique. Haggis, our charming Scottish tour-guide was adventurous and enthusiastic. He knew of a “lit’l wee pub” in every town in Asia. During the bus rides Haggis lectured about the languages, history and customs of the areas through which we drove. He seemed a little harassed as he tried to manage both the first-class tour and the young-people's tour, each in their separate and very different accommodations, but he appeared to be having as much fun as we were. Haggis didn't carry cash for the entire trip. He collected funds sent from England to a local bank on the first of each month. Near the end of the month, the tour would sometimes run out of cash, and we would leave Haggis behind at some hotel until the tour company sent more money to pay the bill. The bus and driver continued on to our next destination. By traveling all night, Haggis would catch up with us.

One evening in eastern Turkey, Haggis organized a costume party for our group at a discotheque in the basement of a former monastery. I dressed as an Easter bunny, in pink flannel pajamas, with a pink scarf for ears. I found myself dancing with an amorous Turkish-carpet merchant. He seemed to be nursing a fantasy that some Western woman might find his charms irresistible and carry him off to the legendary pleasures of the affluent West. In earnest imitation of an Arab sheik, he tried to convince each woman with whom he danced that he had fallen suddenly and madly in love. Could anyone possibly claim my life had been unhappy, I reflected blissfully. I thought about Tony and my other children back in California. Guy and Sherry were adults now and would have to deal with their own problems. I was confident I'd done all I could for Tony. At least I hadn't allowed any psychologist to convince me I rejected my child, and my children seemed reasonably content. Someone who had led a different life

than mine might have found that trip mundane and our accommodations depressing, but for me it was the adventure of which I'd always dreamed.

Celia upgraded to the first-class group, and she found her emerald ring in the Istanbul bazaar when we crossed the Dardanelles into Europe. After exploring the Acropolis in Athens, we arrived at the Greek resort-town of Thessalonica on the Adriatic coast during Easter week. From there we would make a side-trip to Delphi, an ancient religious site. There was no problem at the first class hotel, where the Armchair Adventurers stayed, but all the rooms at our second class hotel were taken. They didn't turn us away, however. They put up cots on the mezzanine, and for a couple of nights we all slept together in a row. We discovered that some of us snored. After Greece we entered the Communist-bloc countries at Bulgaria, then Rumania and finally Russia. One couple from the Arm Chair Adventurer's group had been born in Russia and escaped. They left the tour before entering Bulgaria, fearful that the Communists might try to retain them. The Cold War was intense at that time, and the KGB was a sinister symbol of terror. Haggis warned us to obey all rules, for Western justice would be unable to help us if we got in trouble. If we bought black-market, Russian money, he urged us to use it for something consumable, such as champagne and caviar. The border guards would search our luggage when we left Russia to ensure that we didn't have more than could have been purchased with our officially exchanged currency. We learned to elude the surveillance of the official, communist tour-guides assigned to us in each city by splitting into groups and going in different directions. However interaction with the Russians was rarely possible, for few of them spoke English.

One evening we found ourselves at a nightclub in our hotel. The musicians, although unable to speak English, sang popular songs without accent and cowboy songs with a Texas drawl. The music was slow and the dancing sedate.

"You should teach these Russians how to dance," I urged the young Australians, having myself recently learned the uninhibited wiggle young people called dancing.

The evening wore on, and the Russians drank vodka. The music turned frenzied. Suddenly bodies were flying through the air, leaping and spinning and squatting on one leg. Somehow out of all that frantic activity a fight erupted, adding to the chaos. The police were called, and they sent everyone home. The Russians all left docilely enough, and contrary to what we would have expected, no one appeared to be afraid of the police.

We spent two weeks in Russia, driving the length of the country from the Black Sea to the Baltic, and exiting into Finland. As we traveled through Scandinavia, we stayed in youth hostels. In Copenhagen we stayed in an inexpensive hotel in the porno district. We walked along the street and looked at the prostitutes displaying themselves in windows, waiting for customers. Continuing on toward Berlin, we left Haggis at the porno-district hotel waiting for money to pay the bill. The bus driver was new to his job, this was his first trip, and as we arrived in Berlin we noticed the dilapidated buildings and feared that, without Haggis to direct

us, we had somehow wandered into East Berlin. I was the only one who spoke any German, and I kept jumping off the bus to ask the way to West Berlin.

"Gerade rous," (*straight ahead*) was always the answer. Skeptical, and feeling a little apprehensive, we spotted two police on motorcycles and asked them to show us the way to West Berlin. They obligingly turned on their red lights, and escorted us right up to the east side of the Berlin Wall. The East German border guards were indignant and angry. How could they allow us into West Berlin when we had no papers showing that we had properly entered East Berlin? Phone calls brought East German officials in big black limousines, and they held a conference. We waited uneasily, wondering what they might do to us.

"It's not our fault," Celia scolded. "Your police were the ones who brought us here. Really! One would think they should know what they were doing. After all that has already happened to us on this trip. My poor Bill passing on and everything. I had to leave him in Pakistan among the heathen, you see. ."

Finally the two policemen got back on their motorcycles and escorted us to Check Point Charlie.

"Where on earth did you come from?" asked the astonished American border guards. Check Point Charlie was where East Germans tried to escape to the West, and tour buses didn't usually appear there.

"India," drawled our Aussie bus driver laconically.

When we arrived in England, it was still spring. We all stayed together in the same hotel for a week, reluctant to break up the close family we had become. At the time we were unaware that we would be among the last to see some of those countries in their state of innocence, for many of them would soon erupt into revolution and chaos. Conflict seems an aspect of most human societies. Politics, freedom, religion, food, property, philosophy, culture, or just personal hubris - there are so many controversies over which people can disagree. If growth is one of mankind's purposes, I suspect some conflict is a necessary ingredient of normal life. I'm grateful to live in a society where conflicts have become less lethal. Many of the disagreements of this world have been caused by religion, but we even seem to have learned to settle religious disagreements without bloodshed. However a life without some conflict would surely be dull and lacking in purpose. Just amusing oneself might actually be an unsatisfactory way to spend a lifetime. We will never achieve ultimate solutions. Government and anything else involving human free choice will always be imperfect, and require constant adaptation.

Question 32: Could the purpose of life be to participate in the growth of the universe?

Evolution occurs in response to a changing environment, and man's mental behavior has changed dramatically in the past few centuries. We spend our childhood sitting at desks, and dealing with abstract concepts. Could autism (and perhaps some other "mental illness") merely be evidence of Nature's attempts to adapt to the dramatic change in our mental life?

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As parents, most of us would do anything to spare our children unhappiness - to present them with a life free from pain and strife. I was somewhat able to do that for Tony. If the rest of us didn't have problems, we seemed to go looking for them. Guy was sent to Siberia. (By our country, not by the Russians.) After he became a physicist, he applied for a year at the university in Novosibirsk on a scientist-exchange program. He fell in love with a Russian woman with two daughters. The Soviets kicked him out of the country. He managed to return and get married, but was again expelled from Russia. He offered to live in Siberia with his family. The Soviets refused. At that time Russia was having problems with a dissident physicist of its own, and they apparently had no desire to take on an American scientist with unconventional ideas. (Guy probably would have been allowed to stay in Siberia if he had been willing to denounce the United States.) When he returned to the States, the FBI learned of his willingness to live in Russia and interrogated him. Guy told them nationalism was a major cause of the world's problems, and since he had no excessive financial ambitions, and wouldn't be bothered by the austere Soviet living standard, the world would benefit from an American scientist living in the Soviet Union.

"Where did you get such a weird attitude?" asked the shocked FBI agent. "From your parents?" Russia was still our mortal enemy, and willingness to live there was considered treason.

Not sure how to convince the FBI agent he thought up his own weird ideas, Guy ventured, "From my father, I guess." It seemed a safe answer, and his deceased father could no longer be censured for any of his son's unorthodox attitudes.

The FBI agent kept Guy under surveillance, questioning him several times during the next few months. Nevertheless he managed to return to Russia once more. This time his wife became pregnant, and the Soviets finally allowed him to bring his family to the United States. After so many trips on Aeroflot, he was penniless when they finally arrived in California. I had just returned from a year in the South Pacific, and was living in a small apartment. I hurriedly found a place large enough for all of us. While living with me, Guy first got a job working in a restaurant as a short-order cook, until he could find a position at a university. (I respect him for that as much as I do for his academic achievements.) After Guy obtained a position at a college and moved his family to Pennsylvania, he quickly acquired financial ambition. Mere fiscal survival began to challenge him. His wife is a beautiful girl, a sweet, generous, loving mother,

who seems happy to cope with an absent-minded physicist, but the Russian attitude toward money was a little unique. In Communist Russia consumer goods, such as a pair of blue-jeans or a bottle of perfume, had value; money had very little. Russians didn't get evicted for not paying the rent and they didn't lose their job if they only showed up for work several days a week. As children they were taught that saving money was an evil, capitalistic practice. I watched uneasily as my daughter-in-law, when entering an American store, would exclaim excitedly,

"Oh, it's every Russian woman's dream to find herself in a store like this!" She still seems inclined to view "things" as more valuable than cash.

Guy has found providing for his increasing family of beautiful, Russian-speaking females a real challenge. (They have two more daughters.) Perhaps a slightly turbulent childhood dealing with Tony are some of the experiences that prepared him to function so serenely among his family of Russian ladies - with various financial needs

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Our society takes care of retarded people, and most of them are happy. Less unhappy than people leading normal lives, in any case – having been spared most of the daily problems the rest of us face. We visited Tony often, and he seemed content, always greeting us with a big radiant grin. Nevertheless some of his board-and-care homes seemed better than others. Once I went to see Tony and found the house where he had been living empty and abandoned. Alarmed, I rushed to a phone and called the Golden Gate Regional Center to learn what had happened to my child. I was told that the woman who ran the home had gone off on a vacation to Alabama and left the retarded men in the charge of her cousin – who turned out to be a drug dealer. The house was raided, the cousin taken to jail, and other accommodations had to be found for the handicapped residents. Actually, I'm sure Tony enjoyed all that excitement of the drug raid, rather than being frightened by it. I remembered how he laughed with delight once when I got a traffic ticket, and the patrolman observing Tony's glee with bewilderment. After that board-and-care home was closed down, I asked Tony if he would like to live with me again. He said no. I should have believed him. "You'll like it," I assured him, "and I'll cook all your favorite food." Tony seemed more emotionally stable, and there was a day-program for retarded people just a few blocks from my apartment, to which he could walk each day. He could again attend Easter Seals recreation programs on weekends.

I think Tony found living with me boring. He missed living with other disabled people. One evening I left him alone in the apartment, and he broke all my dishes. He didn't seem particularly upset; he merely smiled at my shock and frustration. However it seemed clear that he wanted to live in another board-and-care home, rather than with me, and breaking my dishes was merely his way of saying so. Because he was considered "difficult", Tony was placed in a quite wonderful facility, one run by a man who took very seriously his job of dealing with handicapped people.

I never tried to protect my other children from all of life's challenges, and allowed them to do their own growing. I was never able to teach Tony much, but I'm grateful that he has led a happy life. Unlike some more capable autistic people, Tony seemed unaware of his deficiencies. He never appeared to suffer from a lack of self-esteem. He was fortunate to be born into a family capable of laughing at his mischief. Perhaps he could have achieved a little more academically if he had been subjected to intensive psychological treatments, but if he could not live independently, contentment seems an important enough achievement. I always took advantage of any school or service offered to autistic children. But just as I knew no such treatment would have cured me of my deviations from average, I never believed they were going to cure Tony's autism - or change his basic nature. A few autistic people apparently grow up to live independent lives, and some are apparently even of high intelligence. Those autistic individuals deserve credit for their own achievements. Education is important for all children, including those labeled autistic. However education does not cure anything, and instead of being "treated" out of existence, autism has continued to increase dramatically in our society. Now a 55-year-old, somewhat arthritic, well-mannered gentleman (becoming bald on top), Tony recently announced he was planning "to go to college and get a job." He understands more than we sometimes assume, but it's difficult to know how much. He never learned to read. As he became older, even speech seemed to require even greater effort. But whatever his understanding of "going to college and getting a job", anticipating it seems to entertain him. I feel a deep gratitude to special education teachers for their contribution to the sweet, sunny disposition Tony has as an adult.

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Tony was forty-one, and I had moved to southern California. He was living in a board-and-care-home in the Bay Area, and I saw him whenever I visited Sherry. Then, Sherry called one night and said Tony was in the hospital and not expected to live. He had been operated on for *ischemia* (inadequate circulation) in the tissues of the bowel and stomach, but the damage was too extensive to repair. The surgeons merely closed the incision to await Tony's inevitable death. I drove all night to reach the Bay Area. It was as good a way as any to spend that awful night grieving for my forty-one-year-old child.

Tony was still alive, but the doctors said he probably would not survive being taken off the respirator. It was disconnected, and we sat numbed with dread, listening to his labored breathing. Nevertheless, hour by hour, his breathing slowly became stronger and more regular.



Sherry and Nick, her step-son, Guy and his wife, Valentina. She is holding Colin, and Elena decided she should also be held.

Finally Sherry said to me, "There is a cafeteria across the street, if you get hungry."

Tony suddenly regained consciousness and tried to get out of bed. "Tony, where are you going?" we exclaimed, for he was attached to a tangle of tubes and wires.

"To the cafeteria," Tony said. Eating had always been his favorite activity, and now he didn't even have a functional stomach or intestine.

Although Tony had regained consciousness, the doctors told us he would soon succumb to massive organ failure. For the next week I remained in the hospital room with Tony, sleeping in a chair. Sometimes he was alert and at other times he seemed barely conscious. The doctors explained that bacteria in his intestines would soon cause a massive infection. He developed a *fistula*, a drainage from his bowel, which smelled awful. He was diagnosed as dying of gangrene. We signed a "no code", agreeing that they not try to resuscitate Tony if his heart stopped. Someone asked us to think about arrangements for disposing of the body. I suggested donating it to research, thinking Tony might somehow contribute to science's understanding of autism. However we were told research doesn't want anything to do with a body infected with gangrene.

Once, as we sat by his bed, Sherry said sadly to herself, "Oh Tony, are you going to die?"

Tony suddenly became conscious. "Of course not!" he declared indignantly. His tone of voice and facial expression were explicit.

People of normal understanding might have died of despair during that time. However Tony had no comprehension of what was happening to him. I felt I had no choice but to accept the doctors' dreadful prognosis. However Sherry, a nurse regarding herself part of the medical profession, didn't. She took an active role in Tony's treatment, performing therapeutic touch on him. Therapeutic touch supposedly affects "fields" and resembles a massage without actually touching the patient. (There may be a bit of placebo involved.) Sherry's had a friend who was an Indian shaman, and she asked him to perform prayer ceremonies for Tony. She insisted he be given antibiotics and nutritional IV. The doctors complied, even though they still regarded Tony's condition as hopeless. After a few weeks Sherry managed to have Tony transferred to UC Medical Center in San Francisco, a bigger, more prestigious facility than the little hospital near the board and care home where he'd been living. Tony stayed at UC for the next seven months, being fed intravenously. He learned to get around the hospital with his IV pole. His personality didn't change. For instance when I visited him I noticed a big hole in the plaster of his hospital room, where he had apparently kicked it in. And I understand he activated all the fire alarms one day. But he seemed to adjust to life with an IV pole. Once he asked Sherry, "Did MASH do this to me?"

She said yes, and the answer seemed to entertain him. She bought him the MASH movie and also got him a surgical outfit, including a mask and some goggles. He would dress up like a surgeon and go stand by the surgical-suite door and greet the doctors as they came out. Tony knew he wasn't supposed to go into the operating rooms, but one day when Sherry was visiting him, he stuck his head inside the door and yelled,

"Larry, are you in there?"

Larry was the chief surgeon. The first question Tony asks when he meets someone is, "What's your name?" Apparently the surgeon had replied, "Larry". However the chief surgeon's colleagues didn't call him Larry, the nurses didn't call him Larry, and I doubt any of his patients except Tony called that surgeon by his first name.

I would never have thought Tony could tolerate all that happened to him, and all that was done to him during those months, but he appeared to adjust to hospital life. The doctors seemed reluctant to operate on Tony a second time. Any attempt to reconstruct Tony's stomach and intestines was expected to be long, complicated and dangerous, and the doctors did not seem confident of success. Finally Sherry said, "Tony loves to eat, and this is no way for him to live." She felt it might be better to take a chance on surgery, rather than for Tony to continue to exist on an IV. Although the doctors were apprehensive about its success, a second operation was finally scheduled. We settled ourselves in the waiting room, prepared to endure the hours while Tony's surgery was taking place, wondering if everyone had made the right decision. However "Larry", the chief surgeon, reappeared in the waiting room after only a short time. To everyone's astonishment most of Tony's tissues had spontaneously regenerated, and very little corrective surgery needed.

"I don't know why," the surgeon admitted with amazement, "but you'll be able to take him home and feed him in a few days."



Tony

Tony quickly recovered, having already grown part of a new stomach and intestine. Tony's body was able to organize a creative response to his injury, a complex solution that the doctors feared might be beyond the capabilities of modern medicine.

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Throughout history people have acknowledged the existence of creativity in nature, and have made up religious stories about it. However when philosophical materialists challenge religious myths, they sometimes replaced them with speculations just as fanciful. Cosmologists speculate about String theory, M-theory, imaginary time, extra dimensions, black holes, wormholes, baby universes, dark matter and reversing the arrow of time. Scientists propose parallel universes, somewhere out there where no one can detect them, and suggest that, by coincidence, we just happen to live in the one universe that appears designed for life. Anything for which they can devise a mathematical formula is considered a valid speculation. I doubt science will ever produce evidence for either multiple universes or deities. Scientists who try to describe Nature mathematically seek evidence of that illusive "random mutation" that was supposedly the origin of life. But what if living organisms aren't mindless contraptions, and our

mathematical descriptions are merely approximations of a complex, intelligent process that exceeds our present understanding? What if intelligence existed prior to physical existence? Mathematics always consists of just one correct answer, and all others are wrong (a rigid process, invented by man and without options) while in Nature, there are apparently many correct answers. Each individual is slightly different. Evidence does exist which convinces some of us that consciousness and "energy fields", whatever their nature, are involved in purposeful biological creativity. Wouldn't that seem to suggest individual, purposeful organization rather than rather than some rigid process constrained by mathematical formulas?

Question 33: Can science investigate and attempt to describe a non-materialistic version of the universe?

Richard Lewontin, a self-proclaimed materialist, wrote: *"We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, in spite of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, in spite of the tolerance in the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions somehow compel us to accept a materialist explanation for the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our priori commitment to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover that commitment is absolute, for we cannot allow a divine foot in the door."*

As Stephen Meyer wrote, *"Scientists committed to methodological naturalism have nothing to lose but their chains – fetters that bind them to a creaky and exhausted nineteenth-century materialism."*

Fritjof Capra wrote, *". . .there is approximate knowledge. This insight is crucial to all modern science. The old paradigm is based on the Cartesian belief in the certainty of scientific knowledge. . .all scientific concepts and theories are limited and approximate. Science can never provide any complete and definitive understanding."*

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If life is not a mechanical contraption, mechanistic science will have limited ability to describe it. During the age of materialism, materialists decided that science can completely describe reality, and nothing was beyond our comprehension. However most of our scientific knowledge is actually limited, tentative and fallible. We don't really understand life. We are surrounded by life, and observe it constantly, but we don't know what is deleted when a living organism

dies. We know some relationship exists between our thoughts and personalities - and our physical brain. We have little understanding of the details. We insist that moral purpose does not exist as an aspect of "scientific" reality; yet we regard immoral people as defective – lacking something. Materialism may have been an understandable reaction during the centuries that science spent under religious dominance, when the church wielded authority to punish people who dared to question religious dogma. But surely by this time that "divine foot in the door" is no longer much of a threat. Darwin's random-mutation-and-natural-selection was the first (and still, the only) explanation of biological novelty that eliminates any need for purposeful, creative intelligence. Indeed, "natural selection" became a sacred symbol for people promoting materialistic science, and it was defended with passion. The British evolutionist, Richard Dawkins, claimed neo-Darwinism allows him to live as an emotionally fulfilled atheist. I share an intuitive recognition with religious people that reality consists of "something more". I am a religious agnostic. Nevertheless, either the belief in a deity, or belief in the existence of a creative consciousness and volition as natural forces seems to me more consistent with reality than deterministic materialism.

The Flynn effect is the name given to a substantial and long-sustained increase in intelligence test scores, as measured in many parts of the world. Each successive generation of children has been scoring progressively better on older intelligence exams, to the point where test makers find they must modify the exams in order to keep them useful. The significance of the Flynn effect is debated, some experts claiming that the ability to answer IQ test questions is not really a measure of intelligence, that the cause of the increase in IQ scores is unknown – maybe due to improved teaching techniques. However the most intelligent people don't necessarily produce the greatest number of children, so natural selection obviously wouldn't have much to do with any increase of in our ability to manipulate abstract information.



These are my grandchildren. The two on the right were mugged on a street in Chicago. Eva was knocked unconscious. Bertha jumped on the mugger and beat on him. She managed to tear his shirt off him, but he got away with the purse. The size of the shirt was labeled "XXX large". Bertha weighs 109 lbs.

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When pieces of DNA from an egg and sperm come together and reorganize themselves into novel complexity, a creative, evolutionary process begins about which we can only speculate with awe. In humans it continues for nine months, but it doesn't cease at birth. We continue to grow and evolve as long as we live. I am baffled by biologists who believe that such an exquisitely complex process could consist of nothing but a series of random accidents. When under stress, biological systems are known to increase their mutation rate, and perhaps the creativity of biological systems is similar to our own conscious, creative processes. When we encounter problems in our conscious lives, we search for reasonable solutions. We have no understanding of what ideas actually consist of - or how they might originate. Nevertheless tentative solutions to problems appear in our conscious minds. We test one. However we don't usually wait around to be killed off by "Natural Selection" if a solution proves ineffective. We try something else. Most of the time biological creativity finds solutions that allows the fetus to continue to evolve. But creativity is never perfect, and, so long as the organism lives, growth can continue. Maybe we are labeling some of Nature's incomplete adaptations mental illness. It has sometimes been claimed that mental illness and creativity occurs in the same families,

and mental illness might be regarded as a stigma. Some of us are more stable than others, and some of us are more open to change. The stigma of mental illness might lessen if it were recognized as being a part of the evolutionary process. The most stable individuals might not be the most creative, and the most stable families might not be the most adaptive. Certainly, if I had any choice (which I don't), I might prefer being born into a family that was participating in the evolutionary progress of the human race – even if some of those innovations were not always successful.

Inanimate matter has also changed, slowly over eons of time. Perhaps a smidgeon of creative free-will is an aspect of all nature, but it would be too weak and subtle for us to detect in inanimate matter.

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It is true that religion was once intolerant of anyone questioning details of the dominant faith. However it seems to me that any religious intolerance pales in comparison to today's evangelical atheists' denunciation of anyone who questions their mechanistic philosophy. Materialism is a philosophy, not a scientific fact. If the universe is evolving and intelligently designed, rather than the result of a collection of meaningless accidents, there would be no way to determine whether or not a deity was involved. RM&NS was a simplistic explanation of evolution. There is nothing simple about trying to understand consciousness, free-will and purposeful organization. Simple is insisting that such things don't exist. A well-known saying claims, "Love makes the world go around." I suspect it might be more accurate to say, "Love holds the world together." Controversy and our natural curiosity are what keep the universe on the move, and pondering such matters should not be left to cosmologists. I realize most scientists feel the rest of us should accept their science on faith, especially theories we don't completely understand. I recently asked my physicist son if there were scientific theories he didn't understand. He said yes. He agreed that he accepts on faith some of the science that lies outside his field. Because of my experience with 20th century psychiatry, I am no longer able to do that. I wouldn't presume to declare any scientific theories invalid, but I don't accept them on faith either. I remain agnostic. However if science does ever achieve a more profound understanding of how the universe functions, I'll bet it won't be some obscure, convoluted, mathematical formula that only a tiny minority of us are capable of comprehending.

Freud and Darwin (and, yes, even Marx) contributed to our present understanding. So long as concepts are freely debated, they remain a creative force. Ideas only become malignant when someone claims to have achieved ultimate truth and tries to stifle dissent. We can at least try to ensure that questions are always permissible, and insist that skepticism be as honored as certitudes.

THE END

Instruction

I've written a book, which I've self-published a couple of times. I want to self-publish it once more and have it distributed to all my relatives after my death. (I work on it constantly, and I don't want to give up the opportunity to change it while I am still alive.) It is ahead of its time, and very controversial, and regular book publishers aren't presently interested. Maybe the research which I describe will someday be published, and my descendants can publish it for profit. I'd like to make the arrangements and pay some self-publishing company for it now. It is on the internet at: <http://30145.myauthorsite.com>

That version is up to date, except a couple of the pictures have been deleted.

Thank you,

Berthajane Vanderift

Make several dozen of printed copies of the book for each grandchild including those not yet born, and everyone else who might be interested.